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EXPERIENCING GOOGLE APPLICATIONS IN LEARNING BASIC STRUCTURE FOR EFL UNDERGRADUATES DURING COVID-19

by

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Abstract:

During COVID-19, learning through Google Applications has become the first option to enable students, teachers, and lecturers to discuss lessons more easily. It only needs one Google account, and all applications can be utilized and explored. Various research has been conducted on that issue. However, few studies have focused on basic structure learning in higher education. Therefore, it is interesting to discover the Google applications emphasizing and their influence on learning English for Indonesian undergraduates. In particular, the research highlighted the utilization of Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Google Form in conducting the Basic Structure course for the 2nd-semester students of the English education program. The sample seized 40 students of the Basic Structure course and administered an explanatory sequential mixed-method design with descriptive and narrative analyses. Through English structure assignments and questionnaires, the research emphasized Google Applications, which supports students in achieving the best output and experiencing a different learning atmosphere. The results revealed that fifty per cent of the students indicated increasing achievement from the first to the second cycle, while forty-five percent indicated the opposite. The findings bring benefits in decreasing learning obstacles and obtaining alternatives to different free online applications.

Keywords: *basic structure; covid-19; EFL undergraduates; google applications*

Abstrak:

Selama masa COVID-19, pembelajaran melalui aplikasi Google menjadi pilihan pertama bagi murid, guru, dan dosen untuk dapat mendiskusikan pelajaran dengan lebih mudah. Hanya dengan satu akun Google, seluruh aplikasi dapat digunakan dan ditelusuri. Beragam penelitian telah dilakukan terkait penggunaan aplikasi tersebut. Sayangnya, hanya sedikit penelitian yang berfokus pada pembelajaran Basic Structure di tingkat Pendidikan tinggi. Oleh karena itu, mengetahui pengembangan dan pengaruh penggunaan aplikasi tersebut dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris bagi mahasiswa di Indonesia menjadi sangat menarik. Secara khusus penelitian ini menyoroti penggunaan Google Classroom, Google Meet, dan Google Form dalam pembelajaran Basic Structure mahasiswa semester 2 pada Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Sampel yang dilibatkan sebanyak 40 mahasiswa dengan model penelitian explanatory sequential mixed-method design yang dianalisis secara deskriptif dan naratif. Dengan menggunakan instrumen tes struktur Bahasa Inggris dan kuesioner, penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya penggunaan aplikasi Google dalam meningkatkan luaran pembelajaran

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mahasiswa dan pengalaman pembelajaran yang berbeda. Terdapat 55% mahasiswa yang menunjukkan kenaikan hasil pembelajaran, sedangkan 45% menunjukkan kebalikannya. Hasil ini memperlihatkan manfaat dan memberikan alternatif terhadap penggunaan aplikasi daring dan bebas biaya dalam dunia Pendidikan.

Kata kunci: *aplikasi google ;covid-19; struktur dasar; mahasiswa EFL*

INTRODUCTION

From 2020 to 2022, the world has been confronted by emergency actions of COVID-19 in every sector of life, not to mention the education sphere at the university level, where the learning process should be shifted to fully online learning (Scull et al., 2020). The pandemic has driven all educational stakeholders to work collaboratively in the spirit of unstoppable learning where the learners can reach the best output. Teachers and lecturers have tried to find the most appropriate online application for their learning process. Therefore, in Indonesia, every institution has built its own Learning Management System (LMS) that takes some time to be well-organized and utilized (Garad et al., 2021). Fortunately, several free and online learning applications appeared, including the Google applications (Permata & Bhakti, 2020; Rosyada, 2020). Google Applications have supported the learning process, particularly English Language Learning for students and teachers/lecturers. Students, teachers, and lecturers can easily access all Google applications with one Google account. Familiar features and user-friendly directions helped the learning stakeholders choose them as the supporting tools in the ELT virtual classroom (Mulyani et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, the two-year online learning has caused students, teachers, and lecturers to demand more interactive applications. Some teachers and lecturers experienced difficulties in delivering their lessons and explanations. Meanwhile, some students encountered barriers in incompatible devices and internet connections, which made them miss the teachers' and lecturers' explanations (Apriani et al., 2022). The rapid changes and circumstances have urged teachers and lecturers to look for and employ suitable applications to achieve the best achievements (Amin & Sundari, 2020). Teachers and lecturers expected that the available applications could fulfil the learning requirements based on the requirements and objectives. In learning a language, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is pivotal to find the most acceptable applications that enable and enhance the student's engagement and output to meet the achievement indicators and satisfaction (Sutarni et al., 2021). The application must integrate with other aspects, such as the learning materials, the teachers and

the school support, the parents and family environment as the learning assistants, the internet connections, the digital devices, and others (Mansyur, 2020).

Regarding the barriers among Google applications, Google Classroom has become the most frequent application in virtual learning (Fitria, 2020). Some research on this application has proved the escalation of digital technology transformation in EFL learning, particularly in its easy access and operation (Astuti & Indriani, 2020; Suni Astini, 2020). Google Classroom also provides simple features with clear directions to make it easy for students to follow the lesson, instructions, and assignments from the lecturers (Rosyada & Sundari, 2021). Besides the students' benefits, Google Classroom also delivered several advantages for teachers, such as easy access, accessible communication, and ease of analyzing the students' data due to the teachers' assignments (Suhroh & Cahyono, 2021). Moreover, Google Classroom also brought comprehensive value with the support of other Google Applications, such as Google Form and Google Meet (Asfihana et al., 2022). The support of Google Forms and Google Meet resembles offline learning, where students can express their ideas and understanding of the subject directly while the teachers or lecturers can explain and elaborate on their knowledge and experiences (Al-Maroof et al., 2023).

This research recognized students' experiences utilizing Google Applications jointly and found possible alternatives with more accessible and interactive applications and influences. The research highlighted Google Meet as the answer to face-to-face circumstances through video communication, and many participants could participate (Aswir et al., 2021; Setyawan et al., 2020). In particular, Google Meet was also supported by other applications such as Zoom Meeting, Google Forms, and WhatsApp group as supplementary applications. Those supplementary applications have proven their support in online learning and increased students' achievements (Mahmud et al., 2022).

Inclusive online applications are pivotal in the English Language Learning (ELL). In ELL, the basic structure is a prominent knowledge for EFL learners in spoken and written language (Leki & Azar, 1982; Rosyada & Febriyanti, 2020). In basic structure for EFL undergraduates, students learn fundamental principles in tailing word by word and developing sentences, such as tenses, article, verb, noun, subject-verb agreement, and other basic English grammar. Those lessons were delivered before the students learned detailed English lessons related to the four skills of English. With basic structure knowledge, students are promoted to

level up different English knowledge and skills (Choemue & Bram, 2021; Mbau et al., 2014). Besides, the students need to practice implementing their knowledge with step-by-step instructions as a guideline.

The issue of learning the *Basic Structure* has been managed and evaluated through several online learning media, and how the media affected the students' achievement (Ahmad & Arifin, 2021; Otto & López-Medina, 2021). Likewise, in learning another international language (Rahmawati & Febriani, 2021), some studies indicated several problems in understanding basic structure through online learning, such as subject-verb agreement and word classes (Febtiningsih & Ardiya, 2022; Rehman & Perveen, 2021). Some studies encouraged teachers' communication and cognition skills to establish effective online learning by delivering clear instructions and presenting interesting teaching materials (Hamid, 2020; Setoodeh & Jadidi, 2020). The introductory structure course also needed an authentic module based on the student's perspectives and supported by sufficient digital literacy to achieve the learning goals (Iskandar et al., 2022; Pusparini & Astuti, 2019).

Based on the above descriptions, this research recognized students' experiences utilizing incorporated Google applications and found possible alternatives with more accessible and interactive applications and influences. Therefore, this research sets the following questions:

1. How did undergraduates experience the implementation of Google Applications in their Basic Structure course?
2. What barriers did the undergraduates deal with when using Google Applications?
3. How did the undergraduates solve the obstacles in using Google Applications?

METHOD

Design

This research applied an explanatory sequential mixed-method design where quantitative and qualitative data were integrated and interpreted comprehensively (Creswell, 2012; Subedi, 2016). The quantitative method implemented classroom action research with descriptive analysis to answer the first research questions. Meanwhile, the qualitative method applied a case study design where only distinctive results were selected to be evaluated. The

qualitative design was conducted to answer the second and third research questions. Figure 1 displays the details of the research design.

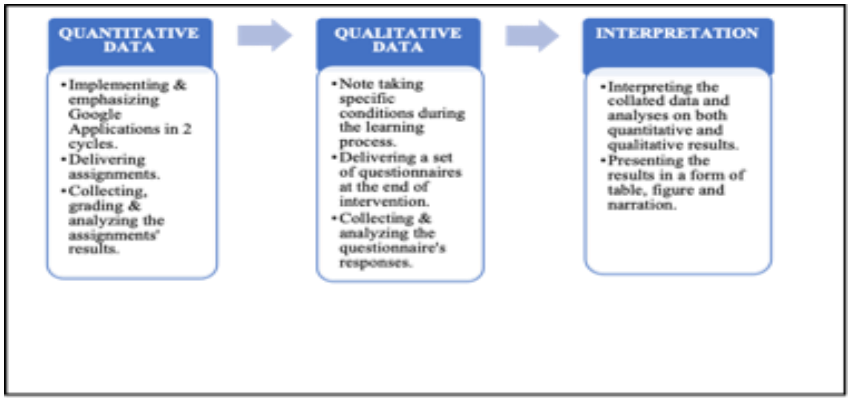

Figure 1. *Research Design*

Participant

The study involved 40 2nd-semester undergraduate students in the *Basic Structure* course among 61 students in two classes. The students comprised 31 female and nine male students. The students were selected purposively as the respondents who consistently completed the research process (Ulfah & Prahmana, 2018; Widodo et al., 2020) so the students could be entirely evaluated. All participants were EFL undergraduates of the English Education Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, a private university in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Instrument

The research designed two instruments of English structure assignments and a set of questionnaires. The assignments were prepared to answer the first research question, while the questionnaire was set to answer the second and the third questions. The first assignment contained 15 numbers of multiple choices with 20 blanks and graded 5 for each answer. The assignment only covered the basic tenses in English Grammar. The second assignment comprised four sections with 36 numbers of multiple choices and was graded proportionally, ranging from 2 points to 5 points. The second assignment included the basic tenses, articles, and singular/plural nouns. All the questions were modified from the Basic Structure handbook by Azar & Hagen (2009) and the internal Basic Structure module. After two cycles, the students were given a set of questionnaires on Google Forms consisting of 6 open-ended questions due to the learning process and experiences.

Data collecting technique

Based on the quantitative research with the virtual classroom action research (VCAR) approach, the study administered two cycles of the learning process. The first cycle consisted of five discussions through Google Classroom and one assignment with Google Form during the sixth meeting. It continued to the second cycle, with five discussions through Google Meet and an assignment during the 12th meeting through Google Forms. The first cycle was considered the baseline process, and the use of Google Classroom was frequently implemented during the pandemic. In this cycle, all students should join the Google Classroom, read or watch the materials attached, and do the material discussions in the comment space. All the interactions between the students and the lecturers were stated under the material column. In the second cycle, the teachers sent the students the materials through the WhatsApp group, but the discussions were conducted through Google Meet. All students must join the room and discuss the materials directly and interactively. At the end of both cycles, an assignment was conveyed in a Google Form that they had to complete in an hour. In addition, a set of questionnaires was assigned in a Google Form where the respondents should accomplish it. The questionnaire was assigned at the 12th meeting.

Data analysis technique

Based on the results of the assignments, the data were graded, collated, and analyzed by applying descriptive analysis to determine the student's experience from using Google Classroom to the applied Google Meet and Google Form in the Basic Structure course. Subsequently, the experience in using the applications was also analyzed through narrative analysis (Woodside, 2010) based on the student's responses to the questionnaire. The results of the analyses will be presented in the form of tables, figures, and narration to provide a clear result and an in-depth interpretation for the readers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides readers with the research results and a discussion. The results consist of the respondents' scores on the basic structure assignments and their expressions of their experiences. The results are displayed in tables and figures to make them easy to comprehend.

Result

According to the data collection on the assignments, findings showed that among 40 students, 22 (55%) students performed with increasing achievement while 18 students (45%) performed oppositely. Each respondent showed different inclining and declining scores with divergent experiences. Generally, the average scores carried out an elevated output from the first to the second cycle. Moreover, the maximum score in the intervention results appeared very close to the baseline results. The maximum result was similar to the minimum score, where the baseline results were slightly lower than the intervention results. All the data were displayed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Descriptive Data

Descriptions	1st Cycle	2nd cycle
Average Score	70	74.40
Maximum Score	95	96
Minimum Score	50	51

Table 2. Student's Achievement

Resp.	1st	2nd	Resp.	1st	2nd	Resp.	1st	2nd	Resp.	1st	2nd
1	75	87	11	50	67	21	70	87	31	75	96
2	90	64	12	50	72	22	55	72	32	50	69
3	55	66	13	60	67	23	95	84	33	60	51
4	55	69	14	50	67	24	85	55	34	70	62
5	70	84	15	55	68	25	90	69	35	70	96
6	80	72	16	75	89	26	85	82	36	75	61
7	85	76	17	95	78	27	90	81	37	60	90
8	85	84	18	50	75	28	55	64	38	60	73
9	65	66	19	75	67	29	50	73	39	55	92
10	60	54	20	90	77	30	90	82	40	90	88

To be more explicit, Table 2 performs the inclining and declining values from the first to the second cycle for each respondent. The data displayed that 55% of respondents attained rising achievements, and 45% gained conversely. In this way, there was a 10% gap between the increasing and decreasing achievements. We divided the increasing results into three categories: high improvement (over 10 points of progression), medium improvement (5-10 points), and low improvement (under 5 points). The categories indicated that 20 participants achieved high improvement, and one participant achieved medium and low improvement.

Afterwards, the data collection of the students' responses to the questionnaire was accumulated. The collated data varied for several reasons, including the respondents' different

learning circumstances. Most students responded positively to interactive learning with 12 responses, flexible time with seven responses, straightforward understanding of the lecturers' direct explanations with seven responses, independent learning with five responses, and new experiences with updated technology with four responses. However, five respondents declared that no positive experiences had been brought about by online learning. The distribution of the responses with positive experiences is displayed in Figure 2.

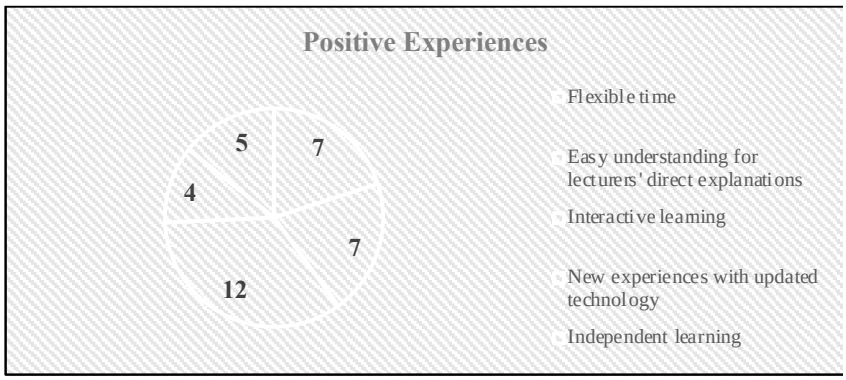

Figure 2. *Positive Experiences of the Respondents*

Nonetheless, a few adverse reactions still appeared from the students, including unstable internet connections with 14 feedback, limited time to discuss materials with eight feedback, miscommunication during the discussion section with eight feedback, quickly getting bored with one feedback, and being distracted by other activities at home with one feedback. Uniquely, eight responses declared no negative feedback regarding online learning. The detailed findings are displayed in Figure 3.

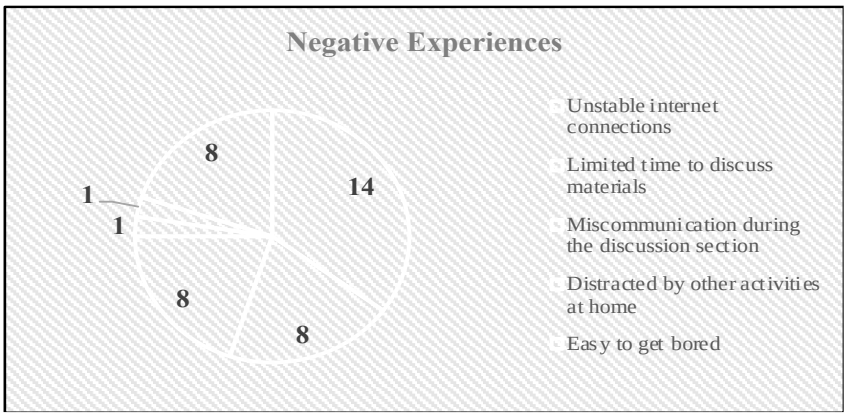

Figure 3. *Negative Experiences of the Respondents*

Furthermore, the students also expressed their preferences in applying Google

Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom Meeting, and WhatsApp Groups to achieve the best output in the Basic Structure course. Among all the applications, the students preferred Google Meet at the utmost with 23 respondents, followed by the WhatsApp Group with 11 respondents, Zoom Meeting with five respondents, and Google Classroom with one respondent. The distribution of the preferences is displayed in Figure 4.

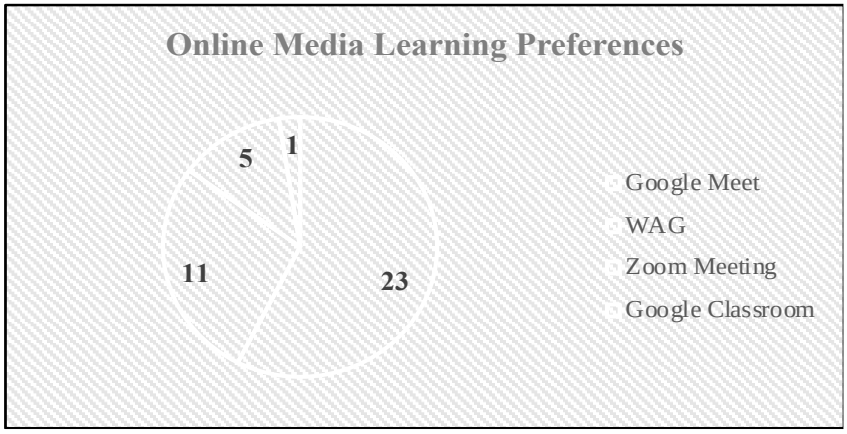

Figure 4. *Online Learning Preferences*

Discussion

Based on the findings, 22 respondents, or 55% of 40 respondents, revealed increasing achievements, while another 45% persisted oppositely. The gap between the inclining and the decreasing achievement showed a high differential score of 10 points or 25% of the increasing value. In addition, 20 high-achieving respondents indicated distinctive performances from the first to the second cycle. The following discussion comprised three sections to answer the research questions.

How did undergraduates experience the implementation of Google Applications in their Basic Structure course?

Starting with the respondents' positive experiences, seven gained 20 points and more in their achievements. The highest achievement was obtained by Respondent 39, who attained 37 points from 55 to 92. The respondent expressed high motivation to learn independently. The respondent claimed that flexible time and digital technology gave the respondent much time and material to self-explore. Besides learning the materials provided by the lecturer through the WhatsApp Group, the respondent self-explored the given topic through different websites. Learning independently with high motivation is one of the crucial aspects of

learning during the pandemic (Putra, 2021). Moreover, at undergraduate levels, learning self-explored, self-regulated, or self-managed to achieve the students' goals is in line with the principles of "Merdeka Belajar" that has been declared by the Ministry of Education and Culture and Research and Technology (Abidah et al., 2020).

Other respondents showed similar achievements, with 30, 22, and 21 points accomplished by Respondents 37, 12, and 31. The respondents agreed with the flexible time of using Google Meet, which helped the respondents wisely manage their learning time. By doing so, the respondents could achieve their goals effectively while other work could be fulfilled in sequence. During the pandemic, the respondents had to help their parents at home while learning from home. With explanations and negotiations with the parents, the respondents wisely managed time to do the homework time and learning time. Interestingly, some respondents showed that they joined several part-time workers to support their financial needs, notably to support their study costs. The results aligned with a previous study that recommended independent learning for undergraduates' language learning, where time was wisely managed (Agustina & Fajar, 2019).

In addition, another two respondents with 26 and 25 points attainment, Respondent 35 and Respondent 18, expressed a positive experience in interactive learning through Google Meet. Through Google Meet, the respondents were encouraged to ask the lecturer about the lesson, practice the exercises, and discuss the lesson and the exercises with their classmates directly and interactively. With those positive experiences, the respondents were highly motivated to join the virtual classroom and to discuss collaboratively with their classmates. The interactive virtual classroom through Google Meet was engaging and helped the students learn basic structure (Sajidin & Ashadi, 2021).

However, one respondent scored a 23-point achievement but denied any positive experiences using Google Meet during this pandemic. Respondent 29 stated that learning through Google Meet was just like other online learning media, and it was an answer to avoiding people from the crowd during the pandemic. The statement also showed that the respondents accepted online learning as a challenge to be dealt with during the pandemic and the disruption era, where students and lecturers should accept the learning challenge, like it or not (Neuwirth et al., 2021). In this way, the respondent showed that any online media in the learning process during the pandemic could be applied and accepted.

Based on the outstanding positive experiences during the pandemic, it can be said that interactive learning in similar environments to the face-to-face learning process is needed to construct students' engagement and enthusiasm (Septantiningtyas et al., 2021). The emphasis of the Google Meet application had provided the challenge of providing alike face-to-face learning process during the pandemic. It can be said that when the student's engagement and motivation in learning circumstances were well-managed with interactive learning, flexible time, direct explanations and discussion, independent learning, and experiencing updated technology, the student's learning output would be much more potentially achieved (Wiraningsih & Santosa, 2020).

What barriers did the undergraduates deal with?

As with other virtual learning applications, using Google Meet still had several barriers, particularly in high-cost demand and occasionally hindered by internet connections. This matter is prevalent in almost every level of education, mostly for students in remote areas (Abubakar & Tsuraya, 2021; Mannong, 2020). The unstable connections left some respondents in a difficult situation to understand the lesson thoroughly and comprehensively. Respondent 24 was the most affected by the unstable connections, with 30 points of the gap. The situation put the respondent in an uncomfortable situation and demotivated to learn. However, the respondent realized that the situation had to be handled responsibly and with a solution. The respondent tried to move to the respondent's relatives' or friends' homes to encounter a better and more stable connection. This student learned how to catch up with the learning process derived from the high responsibility of independent learning (Fajar & Agustina, 2019).

Other respondents who had decreased on 26 and 21 points of the gap between the first cycle and the second Cycle were Respondents 2 and 25. Both respondents declared that using Google Meet provided easy access and friendly features. Nonetheless, respondents 2 and 25 preferred using other virtual applications, such as WhatsApp Group and Zoom Meeting, as those applications offered more manageable and stable connections. The preferences appeared since both respondents experienced poor connections, ultimately making them unable to join the virtual classroom. The respondents could not interactively participate in the virtual classroom, and they missed the comprehensive knowledge from the classroom discussion. In this case, lecturers had to provide and apply different online applications to construct students'

digital literacy and various experiences where both lecturers and students learned to cope with new changes along with the pandemic (Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2020). For those with an unstable internet connection, the lecturer provided the materials and the discussion through the WhatsApp Group. The lecturer should utilize at least two devices with two different applications in conducting the virtual classroom, which demands a high effort from the lecturer (Code et al., 2020).

Interestingly, one respondent with 17 points of declining achievement expressed different perspectives on applying online learning during the pandemic. Respondent 17 declared that besides several positive experiences in using online learning media, such as flexible time to learn so that the respondent could complete other work, upgrading digital literacy, and understanding lessons more easily with Google Meet, several adverse effects also came along to online learning. Not to mention the lack of understanding of incomplete or unfinished lessons due to unstable internet connections, online learning also brought some health problems, such as eye fatigue and mental health reduction (KAYA, 2020; Maulana, 2021). The respondent affirmed that his eye had experienced an eye health reduction in a couple of months and had to change his eyeglasses to minus glasses. The respondent also revealed that he got depressed with an unstable internet connection. Therefore, the respondent decided to join the virtual classroom for about an hour for every lecture, during which he communicated this issue to each lecturer to explain the first hour of the learning process. In this way, the respondent could manage appropriate time to study and manage health.

How did the undergraduates solve the obstacles?

Based on the unpleasant experiences of some respondents, learning the basic structure for undergraduates in the English education program was combined with several online applications in parallel. The learning process applied WhatsApp Group to deliver course materials in every meeting; Google Form to track the students' engagement, particularly for the student's assignments and attendance; and Google Meet or Zoom Meeting for a virtual classroom to ease the course direct discussion and interaction (Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2020; Setyawan et al., 2020). By combining all the online applications, the learning process of Basic Structure for undergraduates could be worked out, and the student's goals could be more likely accomplished.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND LIMITATION

Conclusion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, learning through Google Applications was the first option to enable students, teachers, and lecturers to conduct virtual classrooms and discuss lessons more easily. Among the Google applications, Google Classroom has become the most frequent application applied in virtual learning. Some research on this specific application has proved the escalation of digital technology transformation in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly for its easy access and operation. Google Classroom also provides simple features with clear directions to make it easy for the students to follow the lesson, instructions, and assignments from the lecturers. Besides the students' benefits, Google Classroom also delivers several advantages for teachers, such as easy access, accessible communication with the students, and ease of analyzing the students' data due to the teachers' assignments.

However, along with the period of the pandemic with rapid new changes and circumstances, teachers and lecturers have been urged to look for and employ suitable applications for the students' best achievements. The applications were expected to fulfil the learning requirements based on the student's needs and objectives. In learning a language, particularly EFL, finding the most acceptable applications that enable and enhance the students' engagement and output to reach the achievement indicators and satisfaction is crucial. In this way, this research highlighted Google Meet as the answer to this matter of its face-to-face circumstances through video communication in which many participants could participate. It is essential to create an atmosphere that resembles offline learning where students can express their ideas and understanding of the subject directly while the teachers or lecturers can explain and elaborate on their knowledge and experiences.

Implication

Several interesting facts have been revealed based on the results and the discussion of the research. Some facts showed positive achievements while others performed oppositely. The positive achievements carried out students' perspectives on positive experiences in the online learning process, including interactive learning, flexible time, direct explanations and

discussion, independent learning, and updated technology. Online learning, particularly WhatsApp Group, Google Form, Google Meet, or Zoom Meeting, could bring interactive learning in similar environments to a face-to-face learning process needed to construct students' engagement and enthusiasm. It is proved that the emphasis of the Google Meet application had provided the challenge of providing alike face-to-face learning process during the pandemic. It can be said that when the student's engagement and motivation in learning circumstances were well-managed with interactive learning, flexible time, direct explanations and discussion, independent learning, and experiencing updated technology, the student's learning output would be much more potentially achieved. By combining all the online applications, the learning process of Basic Structure for undergraduates could be worked out, and the student's goals could be more likely accomplished. In some ways, combining different applications with different devices would require much effort from lecturers and teachers. However, to the integrity of the lecturers and teachers as educators, great efforts can be made if the students achieve their best. In the future, online learning applications will be in great demand, but they also need to be more determined for students' and lecturers' health issues. In the end, both students and lecturers, like it or not, must be ready for any other new learning circumstances with new online applications.

Limitation

The research was conducted right after COVID-19 crashed the world, where emergency education should be administered. With the situation, engaging a large sample in this study with sufficient time allocation and an in-depth evaluation was nearly impossible. Therefore, further research with a larger sample, appropriate time allotment, and a more comprehensive design is needed to picture a more general result.

BIO-PROFILE:

Dr. Supeno, M.Hum. is the Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI. He graduated with his doctoral degree in Linguistics from Universitas Negeri Jakarta. He has been lecturing on several subjects related to English grammar, reading, and writing. He has been researching the same field published in national journals and international proceedings.

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