

INVESTIGATING STUDENTS DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH ONLINE MODE IN SMA NEGERI 1 SOJOL

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out the difficulties experienced by students in learning English via online mode. The subjects of this research were students of Grade XI SMA Negeri 1 Sojol, Sojol District, Donggala Regency. This research used a survey study with mixed methods. The participants were 132 students of Grade XI at SMA Negeri 1 Sojol. The research instruments were questionnaire and an interview that. Each instrument contained open-ended and close-ended questions. The questionnaires distributed directly for each class and it consisted of 3 parts with the total was 21 items. Besides, there was interview which consisted of 5 questions, the researcher interviewed three students who answered many of the "agree" responses. The researcher found that the learning difficulties students of grade XI via online mode at SMA Negeri 1 Sojol are the network is not good to access internet, the teacher's explanation difficult to understand, and students also constraint to buy internet quota because they don't have money. The teacher should to pay more attention to the problems faced by students in order to be able to provide solutions or policies to reduce the difficulties that faced by them.

Keywords: Investigating; Learning Difficulties; Online Learning.

INTRODUCTION

When the coronavirus (covid-19) spread globally in 2019, Indonesia is one of the countries affected by it in early March 2020. Then, the government appeals to each region to implement the Social Size Limitation System (PSBB) to prevent transmission or break the covid-19 chain. This regulation necessitate places that become the center of people's association must be closed, one of which is schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) issued Circular Letter Number 15 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for Organizing Learning from Home in an Emergency for the Spread of Covid-19. In this circular that it is stated that the purpose of implementing learning from home is to ensure the fulfillment of students' rights to get educational services during the Covid-19 emergency, to prevent the spread of Covid-19 transmission in academic units and to continuously ensure the fulfillment of psychological support for educators, students, and parents.

Online learning is done electronically using computer, cell phone, and other things as a media and requires a network. Online learning is also known as electronic, e-learning, on-line, internet-enabled, virtual, or web-based learning. The ministry of education and culture (Kemendikbud) never implement or carry out an online learning and teaching process before, because many factors do not support it and there are still means to carry out the learning and teaching process directly, especially for schools that are far from city center that only relies on (school) as a place or means of studying.

Previous research conducted elsewhere in Indonesian geographical context have found that the e-learning study at home education system is in accordance with the 2013 curriculum. However, the e-learning application is too difficult, as it is likely that students will not be able to learn English optimally. In addition, internet or network access becomes slow, which will interfere with students' learning activities. Some studies have revealed that there are some challenges encountered by Indonesian students during online learning activities like Firmansyah's (2021) statement, weak internet connection especially in certain areas, the need for a large internet quota, low ability in terms of information and technology (IT) both from teachers and students, online learning models that are not appropriate so that students have difficulty understanding the material. In addition Rozzi (2021), found that internet signal access is the main obstacle in online learning, weak internet signal or network will cause inhibition of interaction between teachers and students.

In the context of Central Sulawesi, especially in Donggala district, Sojol sub-district, the investigation of students' experience on online learning is still important to do since little is known about the difficulties experienced by EFL students when attending the English learning via online class. The researcher's experience, when in in Sojol, affirmed that she found difficulties accessing the internet when she wanted to do the task. To find the good connection, the researcher had to go to another place or a village that has a good network access. This current research attempts to find out more the students' difficulties in learning English through online mode.

METHOD

The type of research is survey study with mixed method that aims to describe the difficulties experienced by students in learning English through online mode. Data are obtained from distributing questionnaires and interviews. Coughlan (2009) stated that a survey study is a non-experimental

research approach used to gather information about the incidence, distribution, and relationship between variables in a pre-determined population. This study is relevant to Coughlan's statement because the researcher wants to find information about online learning difficulties and then describe it.

The research instrument in this study consists of a written instrument in the form of a questionnaire given to class XI students of SMA Negeri 1 Sojol. Sugiyono (2010) state that a questionnaire is the technique of collecting the data by giving some of the questions or statements to the respondent. In this research, the type of questionnaire the researcher uses is a closed or structured questionnaire, namely a questionnaire with alternative answers that have been provided. The alternative answers *strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree*. All the questions were designed in Indonesian to ensure that all the participants understand what each item is about. The questionnaire questions were distributed directly to the students and took two days for each class. The closed questionnaire consists of three indicators: 1. technical difficulties, 2. difficulties in the learning process, and 3. external difficulties.

So, in conducting this research, the researcher analyzed and described the students' difficulties in learning English online.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results of the Questionnaire

The following is a description of the data for each indicator of the difficulty of class XI students in via online English learning.

1). Technical difficulties

Data on determining students' difficulties in technical aspects are shown in table 4.1 below:

Table 1 - Tabulation of technical difficulty score

No	Statements	Number of students who answered			
		SD	D	A	SA
1	I often have signal problems when learning English via online mode.	3 9%	9	85 91%	35
2	I often run out of quota during the online English learning.	61 63%	22	7 37%	42
3	I am not optimal in online learning because I don't have my own cellphone/laptop.	35 87%	80	11 13%	6
4	I am not optimal in the online learning English because I am not proficient in using online learning application.	20 70%	73	31 30%	8
5	I think the online learning application is unsuitable for English learning.	13 54%	58	56 46%	5

Based on table 1 it can be seen that students experience technical difficulties, namely: 1) students experience signal problems when learning English through this online learning system as much as 91% which means that almost all of them have difficulties with a weak internet network. 2) 37%, students often run out of internet quota during the online learning process, indicating that less than half of them often run out of internet quota. 3) 13% of students felt less optimal in online learning because they do not have cellphones/laptops. In addition, some of them do not have communication tools to help them attend the online learning. 4) 30% students felt less optimal in learning English through online learning mode because they were not good at using online learning applications. 5) 46% students agreed that the applications used for online learning were not suitable for learning English.

Based on the questionnaire data, many students experienced network difficulties in accessing the internet. This fact also aligns with the interview results obtained from the informants. Their responses can be seen below:

"I have difficulty accessing the internet because in my area the network is have bad connection." (Informant 1)

"The network is not good, and I have to share my cellphone with my sister, in my area the network is not very good." (Informant 2)

"The network is not good in my area because it is located in the mountains, sometimes I have to find an area or place with a good network when taking part in the online learning, the network sometimes gets worse when the lights go out, and I don't have a cellphone too." (Informant 3)

2). Students' difficulties in learning process

Table 2 - Tabulation of difficulties in learning process

No	Statements	Number of Students who Answer			
		SD	D	A	SA
1	I'm not excited when online-based English learning starts	23 61%	58	38 39%	13
2	I think learning English based online is difficult and boring	27 62%	56	32 38%	17
3	Teacher's explanation in online-based English learning for me is not interesting	69 64%	16	14 36%	33
4	Teacher explanations in online-based English learning are difficult to understand	11 20%	15	60 80%	46
5	I rarely follow online English learning	42 74%	56	32 26%	2
6	Online-based English learning makes me not independent in doing assignments	51 51%	15	27 49%	39

7	Online-based English learning makes me inactive during the learning process	23	58	45	6
		61%		39%	
8	During online-based English learning, I don't really understand the steps of learning activities	53	23	16	40
		58%		42%	
9	I feel burdened by the English assignments that the teacher gives during online learning	30	57	39	6
		66%		34%	
10	The questions that the teacher gives during online-based English learning are difficult to do	14	62	43	13
		57%		43%	
11	Giving English assignments online make me difficult to do the assignments	26	54	44	8
		61%		39%	

Based on table 2. It can be seen that students experience learning difficulties. They are further described as follows. First 39% of students were not enthusiastic when learning English through the online learning, and 38% of students agree that the online learning of English was difficult and boring. Second, 36% of students agreed that teachers' explanation in learning English through the online learning mode was not interesting; in addition, more than half of them (80%) responded agreed that teachers' explanation in online English learning is difficult to understand.

Furthermore, due to the technical issues mentioned before, 26% of students responded that they rarely took part in learning English online, and around 49% of students felt not independent in doing the assigned tasks. Regarding participation, 39% of students were inactive during the online learning process, as much as 39%, meaning that less than half of them are not active in the online learning process, 42% had difficulty understanding the learning steps. In addition, concerning the burden with English assignments that the teacher gave during online learning, 34% of students felt burdened regarding the question given by the teacher, 43% of students responded that the questions were too difficult to do and 39% of students experienced difficulties when doing the assignments given by the teacher.

Based on the aforementioned data, it was found that 80% of teachers' explanations in online-based English learning are difficult to understand. This fact also corroborates with the interview data obtained from the informants. The following are students' statements during the interview.

"The teacher's explanation is sometimes still difficult for me to understand, I also don't know who to ask" (Informant 1)

"Most of my teacher's explanations, I don't understand sis" (Informant 2)

"Sometimes the teacher's explanation can be understood, sometimes it's not" (Informant 3)

3). External Difficulties (Environment, parents, and school)

Table 3 - External Difficulty Score Tabulation

No	Statements	Number of students who answered			
		SD	D	A	SA
1	During online learning, I often can't afford to buy quota because I don't have money	11 14%	7	54 86%	60
2	My parents are not supportive and do not encourage me during online learning at home	55 86%	29	17 14%	31
3	I am difficult to concentrate in learning English online because of the noises at home	23 57%	53	43 43%	13
4	The homeroom teacher does not give us support and enthusiasm in learning English online	51 84%	60	18 16%	3
5	Our English teacher does not give us support and enthusiasm in online learning	58 89%	59	12 11%	3

Based on Table 3, it was found that students experienced external difficulties, as described further. First, during online learning, the students (86% of them) could not buy quotas because they did not have money. Regarding parents' support, 36 % of the students responded that their parents did not support and encourage them. In addition, 43% of students responded that they felt difficult to concentrate because of the noise at home. Regarding teacher support, 16% of the students agreed that the homeroom teacher did not provide support and motivation in online learning English, 11% of the students agreed that the English teacher did not support them in the online learning process.

Based on the data presented above, 86% of students have constraints in buying internet quota because they do not have money. This also aligns with the students' statements gathered during the interview. They can be seen below.

"It is very difficult to buy internet quota because the income of parents is uncertain."
(Informant 1)

"Yes, I often have financial difficulties, sometimes I can't afford to buy a quota." (Informant 2)

"It's difficult to buy internet quota, because I come from a poor family." (Informant 3)

DISCUSSION

The researcher interprets the findings presented above in this discussion. The researcher describes the findings as the answer to research problems. The first and most common difficulty experienced by students in online learning was technical difficulties, where students find it challenging to access the internet because the network is not very good. Research conducted by

Utami (2020) found that technical difficulties in the form of signals in online learning were the most frequent difficulties experienced by students. This research supports the questionnaire's results listed in Table 1 that 91% of students experience difficulties. When they had difficulty with a weak network or didn't have an internet network, they had to go find a place or go to an area that had a slightly better network compared to their area. They even came to their teacher's house to ask what material and assignments the teacher gave; they also asked their friends.

Students also experienced difficulties in the learning process where they had difficulties in online learning because the teacher's explanations were difficult to understand. From the material for face-to-face, many of them don't understand and now should learn only use the media, it makes the students more don't understand. Research conducted by Putri (2021) found that one of the obstacles experienced by class VIII students of SMPN 1 Rawamerta in online learning was the teacher's explanations which were challenging to understand and not audible. This study supports the results of the questionnaire in Table 2, that 80% of students agreed that they had difficulty understanding the teacher's explanation.

Then, students also experienced external difficulties that they couldn't afford to buy quota because they didn't have money. A research conducted by Isnaini (2020), students agreed that they often couldn't afford to buy a quota because they didn't have money during online learning. This supports the questionnaire results in Table 3, where 86% of students are constrained to buy internet quotas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the learning difficulties of class XI students via online mode at SMA Negeri 1 Sojol, Donggala Regency, namely almost all students had difficulties in online learning. The network to access the internet was not good because they were in areas where the network is not supported. Then, it wasn't easy to learn online because they didn't understand the teacher's explanation. Also, they had constraints in buying internet quota because they didn't have money.

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