VIRTUAL LEARNING "SPEAKING FOR GENERAL COMMUNICATION" DURING COVID-19: EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDE

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ABSTRACT

Virtual teaching has become trend in education due to the corona virus outbreak in 2019, including the teaching of EFL speaking skill. This paper aims at portraying the students' response to the online teaching of Speaking for General Communication. Seventy three students voluntarily filled in the questionnaire given. They are the students of the first semester of one higher education institutions majoring EFL teaching. The questionnaire are categorized into value, positivity, participation, distraction and evaluation. Qualitative design is used to analyze the data. The results show a fair score of each category. However, the score of distraction also shows high level. It can be concluded that students give positive attitude towards the learning instruction. It is suggested that the lecturer find way to monitor the students' activity during the learning process since the level of distraction in fairly high.

Keywords: virtual learning, speaking skill, covid-19

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 accelerates online learning throughout the world, including in Indonesia. Since its occurring, the learning process has nationally conducted through technology assistance since the virus is easily spread out among people. Such a serious condition that Minister of Education eradicated the 2020 National Examination due to the pandemic. Besides, schools and institutions are mandated to do the activities online. UNICEF (2020) in their press release stated, "Because of COVID-19, nearly 1.6 billion learners – more than 90% of the world's total enrolled student population – have been affected by school closures. The COVID-19 crisis has also affected over 63 million teachers, highlighted persistent weaknesses in many education systems and exacerbated inequalities, with devastating consequences for the most marginalized."

Virtual learning as one of the strategies to minimalize the spread of the virus has made schools, colleges, universities adopted online sources to

continue their education process. Virtual learning as commonly so-called online learning or e-learning hits the trend during the pandemic. Many use Learning Management System (LMS) as a tool to ease their work. LMS is a software system to organize online courses such as providing learning materials, and connecting teacher and students' communication. LMS is claimed to have several benefits, among others:

a. Offer new and enjoyable atmosphere in learning speaking;
b. Give the students access to examples of good conversation through link by the teacher (Benmeddah, 2017);
c. Motivate the students and increase global awareness (Shin & Son, 2007)
d. Improve students time allocation to learn leading to their language improvement (Diamond & Irwin, 2013);
e. Give the students opportunity for learning independence (Wu, Xu, & Ge, 2012);
f. High achiever students can learn and submit the assignment faster than low achievers (Nedeva, 2015)

Despite of the benefits above, LMS may also be challenging for some reasons, especially in Indonesia. A research by Agung, Surtikanti, & Quinones (2020) concluded that availability and sustainability of internet connection, accessibility of teaching media, and compatibility of tools to access the media become main challenges of the online learning. This is in line with research conducted in other developing countries, such as Palestine, Romania and Pakistan. Technological infrastructure needs a huge improvement beside training program for both students and teachers (Alhumaid, Ali, Waheed, Zahid, & Habes, 2020; Coman, Tiru, Mesesan-Schmitz, Stanciu, & Bularca, 2020; Farrah & Al-Bakry, 2020)

Online learning may also cause students stress and anxiety. It also reduces the students learning time and motivation (Di Pietro, Biagi, Costa, Karpiński, & Mazza, 2020)

Meanwhile, the teaching of English speaking skill as one of the indicators of language fluency may get a huge impact of online learning. Speaking is defined as building and sharing ideas through verbal and non-verbal symbols in order to achieve the purpose of communication (Chaney in Wahyuni, Said, & Waris, 2015). Students are considered to have a good speaking skills when they can generate words that can be understood by listeners (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014). In other words, speaking does not only require ability to understand vocabulary but also non-verbal cues such as gestures, facial expression and so on. Speaking skills must be taught for several reasons, among others people often evaluate the success of language learning based on their speaking proficiency and that oral skills have hardly been neglected in EFL courses (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014).

Research proved that students' difficulties in speaking English as foreign language among others are lack of vocabulary, students' anxiety for making

mistakes, and ungrammatical utterances (Afisa, 2015; Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014; Bailey, 2007). Those difficulties may be minimalized by face-to-face encounter between students and teacher in the classroom. The use of media in communication in the teaching and learning of speaking English as foreign language may reduce the non-verbal prompts which may affect the students' competencies. Besides, students need to be able to access the technological items used in the language learning as well as the teacher to take their time and effort in designing language learning instruction (Kamal, Shaipullah, Truna, Sabri, & Junaini, 2020)

On the other hand, there has been no other way to continue the learning process during the pandemic but the virtual learning. This paper eliminates the students' perspective towards the online teaching of Speaking for General Communication in order to anticipate the future learning of verbal communication.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims at exploring the virtual learning of Speaking for General Communication in English Education Study Program from the students' perspective. A total amount of seventy three students of the first semester voluntarily agreed to participate. Qualitative design was implemented to collect the data. Questionnaire was given to the participants at the end of the program. The questionnaire adapted the 'Students Responses to Instructions' by DeMonbrun et al. (2017). It consists of seventeen items which divided into five categories: value, positivity, participation, distraction, and evaluation. Beside the close-ended questionnaire, an open-ended questionnaire also given to gain their opinions on the learning process.

RESULTS

The result of the study are displayed and discussed in each categories of the students' response based on the work of DeMonbrun et al. (2017). A scale of 1 to 5 is used where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Factor 1: Value

Below is the result of value category.

Table 1 – Students' Value to the Instruction

No	Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
1	I felt the time used for the activity was beneficial.	0	1.4	24.7	39.7	34.2
2	I saw the value in the activity.	0	5.5	26	35.6	32.9
3	I felt the effort it	1.4	8.2	38.4	37	15.1

	took to do the activity was worthwhile.

Value is defined as "a measure of some elements of cognitive engagement that are affected by students' thought, beliefs, and expectations" (DeMonbrun et al., 2017). The results shows a fair percentage of the score. It implies that the students understand and accept the rationale of the activity. They agree that the activity is beneficial for them and their effort is worthwhile. During the learning, the students had their expectations and those expectations can be concluded to be met by the course given by the lecturer. It is stated that this value may become their intrinsic motivation to learn. Intrinsic motivation is founded upon innate needs for competence and self-determination (Lucas, Pulido, Miraflores, Ignacio, & Tacay, 2010). This motivation should be maintained by the students and also the instructors by implementing various interesting teaching method.

Factor 2: Positivity

Below is the result of positivity category.

Table 2 – Students' Positivity to the Instruction

No	Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
4	I felt positively towards the instructor.	0	2.7	30.1	27.4	39.7
5	I felt the instructor had my best interest in mind.	4.1	12.3	34.2	26	23.3
6	I enjoyed the activity.	4.1	15.1	27.4	28.8	24.7

Positivity measures the students' reaction to the instructor and the course. The results displayed a fair positive reactions to both instructor and the course. It means that the instructor and the course could draw the students' positive feeling. This positivity is in accordance with the results of value category. The students enjoyed the activity presented by the lecturer. An enjoyable atmosphere in teaching and learning activity has been emphasized due to its impact to the learning objective achievement (Afisa, 2015;

Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014; Bhuana, 2016; Rizqiya, Pamungkas & Inayah, 2017, Cahyati, Parmawati, & Atmawidjaja, 2019)

Factor 3: Participation

Below is the result of participation category.

Table 3 – Students' Positivity to the Instruction

No	Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
7	I participated actively (or attempted to).	1.4	5.5	28.8	35.6	28.8
8	I tried my hardest to do a good job.	0	1.4	13.7	38.4	46.6
9	I pretended but did not actually participated (R^a)	39.7	42.5	12.3	4.1	1.4
10	I rushed through the activity, giving minimal effort (R^a)	20.5	20.5	41.1	16.4	1.4

Participation measures the students' positive behavior during the activity. Most of them put their best effort to participate in the activity. They show positive behavioral engagement. The R^a items also show low score which indicates that the participants understood the questionnaire well. Students' participation in the online learning more or less are crucial to the teacher's feedback in the activity.

Factor 4: Distraction

Below is the result of distraction category.

Table 4 – Students' Distraction to the Instruction

No	Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
11	I distracted my peers during the activity.	15.1	5.5	5.5	13.7	60.3
12	I talked with classmates about other	8.2	11	42.5	21.9	16.4

	topics besides the activity.					
13	I surfed the internet, checked social media, or did something else instead of doing the activity.	6.8	12.3	31.5	35.6	13.7
14	I pretended but did not actually participate.	41.1	41.1	12.3	4.1	1.4
15	I rushed through the activity, giving minimal effort.	20.5	27.4	39.7	9.6	2.7

Distraction measures the students' negative behavior during the activity. The results of this category draws researchers' attention. Although in the previous category the students show positive behavior, they also admitted negative behavior. They admitted that they distracted their peers during the activity (60.3%). This high level of distraction may be caused by the low level of the control by the lecturer. This is comprehensible since lecturer could not supervise the students at their own place. This becomes one of the disadvantages of the virtual learning (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014; Kamal et al., 2020)

Factor 5: Evaluation

Below is the result of evaluation category.

Table 5 – Students' Evaluation to the Instruction

No	Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
16	Overall, this was an excellent course.	1.4	6.8	17.8	31.5	42.5
17	Overall, the instructor was an excellent teacher.	4.1	5.5	23.3	30.1	37

Evaluation measures the students rating to overall course and instructor. This evaluation is important in order to examine their approval to the activity. The result

show a fair average of their evaluation both to the course and the instructor. It implies the learning activity has been considered successful.

Besides filling the form, the students were also asked to give their feedback on the instruction. Some of them stated that they frequently experienced technical issues such as the signal and data credit. This has been the main issue for developing countries such as Indonesia, Romania, Palestine, and Pakistan (Agung et al., 2020; Alhumaid et al., 2020; Coman et al., 2020; Farrah & Al-Bakry, 2020). During this pandemic the government are expected to improve the country's technological infrastructure. The participants were also stated that although the learning is fairly interesting, the instructor are expected to present the various learning materials. The main source of the learning materials has been mostly excerpted from youtube. The students expected to have other sources of the leaning materials.

CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 has become an influential factor in accelerating virtual learning. However, the implementation of virtual learning especially in the teaching of oral communication may counter several issues. Despite the problems faced both by the students and lecturer, the result of this study show positive attitude towards the learning activity of the course "Speaking for General Communication." However, lecturer need to find a way to supervise the students due to the high level of distraction the students made. Furthermore, various teaching materials are expected to work on to enrich the students learning experience. Further research is suggested to develop a more comprehensible result on developing online teaching materials.

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