



EFL Students' Experience of Online Writing Class during Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive research discussed students' experiences during an online writing lesson. This research focuses on the questionnaire and reflection writing experience of second-semester students of English Department during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study used two indicators namely interaction and environment during online writing learning. The researcher found the experience of students affected by their environment is the constraints of the internet network and the cost of purchasing quotas. It caused by some student residential areas are still in remote areas. Positively some students feel it is facilitated by online learning because it can be done flexibly. In the interaction indicator, some students find it difficult if they are not taught directly, while others find it easier to understand because they can access wider learning.

Keyword: Covid-19; EFL Students' Experience; Online class; Writing.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning has been a hot topic in recent years Wang, Minku, and Yao (2013). The research on online class has been discussed over the past few years (Hewling, 2005; Russo & Koesten, 2005; Nagel & Kotzé, 2010; Wang, Minku, Ghezzi, Caltabiano, Tino & Yao, 2013; Wang, Minku & Yao, 2013; Yeh, 2016; Simpson, 2017; Zhang, 2018; Lin, 2019). Some researchers are complaining about online class imbalance learning is a new problem that combines the challenges of both online learning and class imbalance learning (Wang, Minku, & Yao, 2013; Wang, Minku & Yao, 2014). It deals with data streams having very skewed class distributions. In addition, online classes are also used to observe the development of students learning outcomes (Nagel & Kotzé, 2010).

Fortunately, today's education field has introduced many platforms that can be used as online classes. In connection with the epidemic that is spreading in Indonesia today, Covid-19 requires students to carry out the lecture process with an online system. Of course, the current system is different from the system that was used before. Previously, the lecture system did an offline or face-to-face system. But because of seeing the current condition, so that it requires for all lectures to use online class as well as experienced by EFL students. However, sometimes the use of the online class is not effective because of the Covid-19 pandemic, all learnings are



dependent on internet access. This online learning has good effects on teachers and students but also, it gives bad side effects for both. In fact, based on initial observation, some students benefit from online learning systems and some feel disadvantaged by learning online systems.

The benefit of online learning is it enhanced the developing students' independent learning, motivation, English language competency, cultural understanding learning, students' engagement with the course content, real-life and realistic experience, and personal relationship (Esteves, 2012; Razak & Saeed, 2015; Simpson, 2017). Lack of learning through the online system in writing class is not easy as it seems since several students have problems in using internet for uploading their assignments, Anggraeni (2017). The above is the same as felt by English students in current online writing research object class. In this study, the researcher examines the aspects of the benefits and weaknesses that felt by Second-semester students of English Department during the Covid-19 pandemic toward their experience in learning writing online. This research shows the impression of students during online writing.

Online classroom continues to create an interesting learning atmosphere that is expected that teachers always use technology to facilitate the varied teaching strategies of teachers. "Demonstrating the ability of teachers to utilize technological media absolutely must be done to transfer knowledge to students in an interesting and effective manner." Martin, Budhrani and Ritzhaupt (2019). Writing is not just preparing a few sentences on a piece of paper but understanding well what will be written and how to develop student ideas on their paper (Hyland, 2019). Writing is expected to be an ability for every student in their skills that must be developed even in limited situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic by making writing daily experience. Students will write down their experiences as their reflections during the online class in the middle of a pandemic.

Covid-19 circumstances that make those who advocate not to gather in a place and do social distancing, make teaching in schools become online class. The importance of education cannot be hindered by Covid-19 for not implementing teaching and learning. The changing circumstances from learning writing in class to learning writing online requires students to know technology. Domalewska (2014) added that technology assist students in the learning process modifying the way learning takes place, so learning is presented in technology-rich context. The introduction of students to different learning conditions will provide a memorable experience. By writing experiences, students will be free to understand their own problems and even find their own feedback. Hill and West (2020) evidenced that this process asserted a positive influence on the student learning experience in a number of inter-related cognitive and affective ways, impacting positively upon learning behavior, supporting student achievement and raising student satisfaction with feedback.

The research in this case is to find out students' learning experiences during online learning in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, where this experience leads to two elements that influence it, namely internal and external. On the internal, there are indicators of student interaction in the online learning experience. While on the external side, there are indicators of student's environment on the online learning experience.



RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher uses qualitative descriptive methods. Qualitative research is useful for the researcher to find and explain second language phenomena in their natural context Sandelowski (2000). Qualitative research is used as an approach by the researcher to relate to the discovery or depiction of second language proficiency in a natural context where there are no assumptions about the activities or roles in the proficiency of the second language. Colorafi and Evans (2016) explained that qualitative research aims to explain phenomena in depth through data collection. Researchers can find out in depth student experiences while learning online writing in the middle of Covid-19 and know the problems and improvement of students through their experience stories.

This research carried out for the Second Semester of the English Department academic year 2019 / 2020 there were 36 students, 8 boys, and 28 girls. This research was conducted since it is based on the current phenomenon in which all learning is done online system is due to Covid-19 pandemic. This class was an active online class which attracts researcher to choose the class because of their decent writing ability even though it is still a beginner EFL. The average of them has good writing skills as beginners.

To support this research, the researcher collected data using questionnaire and journal reflection. A questionnaire that was adapted from Jamaluddin, Ratnasih, Gunawan, and Paujiah (2020) which was distributed to students regarding their experiences during online writing in Covid-19 pandemic. Then, the researcher shared questioner and reflection for every student's email through a google form to find out the students' impressions during the Covid-19 pandemics online writing. Students answered nineteen questions from questionnaires and six questions from reflection. Students were able to write the reflection using Bahasa or so that it supposes that they can convey their experience properly. This was justified by Tajik and Pakzad (2016) that when writing reflections, teachers should not overload students with the target language because they will struggle to convey what they really want to convey.

Assessment of variable X answers (interaction and environment) using a Likert scale on the google form, the answers to each item of instruments that use a Likert scale have gradations from very positive to very negative, which can include words such as: 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree. Afterward, the reflection that is adapted from Syafutra (2020). The researcher classified the data from both questionnaires and reflection because both are done in the first and second week then the classification must also be distinguished (Adu, 2019). In the reflection data was analyzed through word compaction in coding firstly then be classified, this formed making it easier for the researcher to categorize the data. Coding was done to focus the discovery of information on students' explanations in their reflection. Coding was used with colored highlights for easier classification. Students' answers were classified from negative and positive things based on experience in the interaction of students and lecturers during online learning and about the students' environment to gain the easier calculation (Mustari & Rahman, 2012). By using of Google forms, analysis on a percent scale is automatically appeared to bring up the results of the questionnaire answers. From the results of the scale that was generated automatically by Google Form, the researcher packaged



the results of the scale in the form of a graph so that the explanation of the results of the questionnaire was easier to understand.

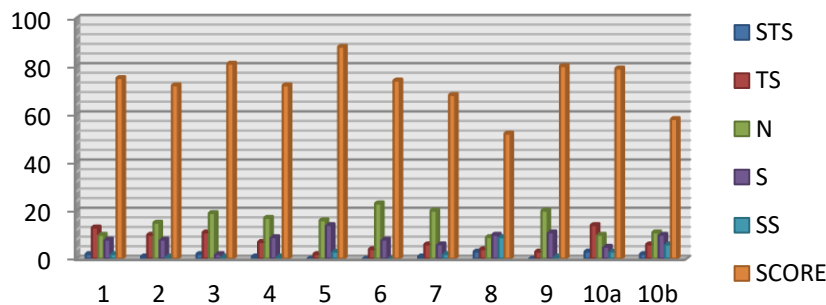
FINDING

Based on data accessed by researchers an interpretation of data collecting. The finding of the current study is showed students' statements in questionnaires and students' experience answer in reflection the result of EFL students' experience analysis in online writing class during COVID – 19.

Finding of Questionnaires

The results in the questionnaire this time were generated automatically from the google form after students filled out the questionnaire link that had been sent via the Whatsapp group. In this case, out of 36 students in the class, only 35 students filled out the questionnaire. Based on the results of the questionnaire with negative and positive statements, the highest score for interaction indicators as positive statement was number 6 "By using the online class system, I understand easily the material explained by the lecturer" there were seventeen students stated neutral, twelve students disagreed, four students agreed and two students strongly disagreed. It means almost the students were agreed that online class makes them easier to understand the lesson. While the environmental indicator as positive statement was in statement number 5 "The atmosphere of online learning made me always do my assignments on time during Covid-19" there were sixteen students answered neutral, fourteen students agreed, three students strongly agreed and two students disagreed. It means most of students stated they become accustomed to the highly flexible online assignment collection scheduling.

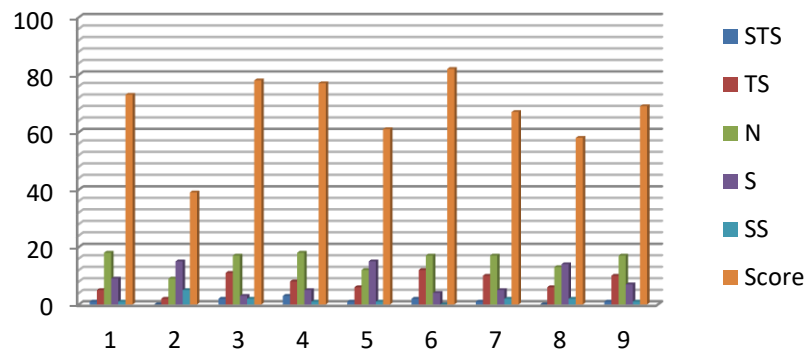
Chart 4.1.1.1. Questionnaires in Environment Indicator Score



Based on the chart above, in the positive statements in Interaction Indicator there were three "strongly disagree" statements (STS), 25 "disagree" statements (TS), 52 "neutral" statements (N), 21 "agree" statements (S) and four "strongly agree" (SS) for the positive

statement. Whereas in the negative statements there are eight "strongly disagree" statements (STS), 45 "disagree" statements (TS), 86 "neutral" statements (N), 56 "agree" statements (S), and 11 "strongly agree" statements (SS).

Chart 4.1.1.2. Questionnaires in Interaction Indicator Score



Turning to the questionnaire Environment Indicator, positive statements contained one "strongly disagree" statement (STS), 16 "disagree" statements (TS), 76 "neutral" statements (N), 42 "agree" statements (S) and five statements "strongly agree" (SS). Whereas in the negative statements there are 14 "strongly disagree" statements (STS), 64 "disagree" statements (TS), 94 "neutral" statements (N), 49 "agree" statements (S), and 24 "strongly agree" statements (SS).

Overall, the results of the questionnaire with negative and positive statements, the highest score for interaction indicators as positive statement was number 6 "By using the online class system, I understand easily the material explained by the lecturer" there were seventeen students stated neutral, twelve students disagreed, four students agreed and two students strongly disagreed. It means almost the students were agreed that online class makes them easier to understand the lesson. While the environmental indicator as positive statement was in statement number 5 "The atmosphere of online learning made me always do my assignments on time during Covid-19" there were sixteen students answered neutral, fourteen students agreed, three students strongly agreed and two students disagreed. It means most of students stated they become accustomed to the highly flexible online assignment collection scheduling. Meanwhile, the lowest score was in statement number 2 of the interaction indicator "I prefer writing learning in class than online class learning", there were fifteen students agreed, nine students stated neutrality, nine students strongly agreed and two students strongly disagreed. It means, most of students agree to apply Writing classroom through online. For environment, it was number 8 "I find it is difficult at the online class, it's because the network doesn't support" there were ten students agreed, nine students stated neutrality, nine students strongly agreed, four students



disagreed and three students strongly disagreed. It means the bad network was the problem that the most students faced.

Finding of Reflection

In reflection form, only 33 students who filled out reflection form from 36 students in the class. Learning Writing II online does give the impression of pros and cons for students. This proves in question number 4 "Is the online learning system considered effective?" and number 5 "Was online learning effective during Covid-19?" there were 21 students who answered effectively on number 4 such as student 9 said "Online learning system is considered effective because we have more time to study each individual subject" and student 17 "Yes, effective on the teaching part. Due to online learning, lecturers also try to provide brief but easy-to-understand the explanations and no time limit is given for collecting final assignments so that students can submit assignments on time and not in a hurry. I think this method is quite effective during online learning". While twelve students were not effective such as student 18 argued "It is not effective because the learning process is not smooth and lacks focus and some students do not have access to a supporting network and are also usually hindered by the absence of internet quota." also in number 5, there were 25 students who answered ineffective "The part that is not effective is myself I don't understand if I was given a task without an explanation of the material first" and eight students were effective without any problem "Nothing, because everything is very good if the network can access quickly".

On the other hand, some students also felt memorable during online learning such as in question number 6 "What was the most interesting experience that you had during the Covid-19 period during Writing II Class?". There was student 1 who thinks that the togetherness that is still maintained is a memorable thing. The others, 14 students considered when giving assignments such as student 16 said "the most interesting experience was when the teacher gave us assignments with very sufficient tolerance during a pandemic like this, so that in this semester my writing scores were quite good compared to last semester. I think this is a good experience". There were five students considered during exams or quizzes such as student 13 said "The most interesting experience I had during the pandemic in writing class was when I had to answer some questions from the lecturer but was constrained by the network". There were two students considered it when searching for Networks, such as student 24 said "My experience is when I have to go around looking for networks in corners of the house to upload assignments". There were three students considered waiting and get revision, such as student 7 said "The most interesting experience that I felt during the Covid 19 period was when I was waiting for the revision of the assignment from the lecturer, at that time I was quite nervous because I was worried about the assignment I made". One student felt that his score had increased and one student felt everything was interesting. Even so, there were still 3 students who felt ordinary and one student felt that there was nothing interesting.

What students find interesting is that online Writing II learning makes it very easy for them to access learning anywhere and anytime. Some of the students found it very easy for them



to do their activities, of course for students who live in well-networked areas. Meanwhile, students who are less fortunate are definitely constrained by the network where they have to find areas that are connected to the network. This admission is found in question number 3 "Did you have difficulty learning Writing II during the Covid-19 pandemic?" 13 students admitted that they were disturbed by the weakness of the network in their area, 12 students admitted that it was difficult to understand the lesson because it was easier if it was face-to-face and 8 students admitted that there was no problem with online learning.

So far, students keep trying to face new things in their learning. In order to continue to develop, some students do other activities outside of class hours to practice their abilities. About 17 students admitted to always practicing their writing skills by looking for reading references and writing things in their books. There are 4 students who also learn through videos, Youtube, and open internet pages. Unfortunately, there was still a student who admitted that he did not improve during online learning because he was increasingly confused in capturing lessons and less supportive facilities.

DISCUSSION

The presence of an online learning system in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic has indeed devastated teachers and students in maintaining a smooth learning process and this is an alternative way. In line with Wargadinata, Maimunah, Dewi and Rofiq (2020) stated that by utilizing the internet network, it was a solution to break Covid-19 pandemic chain. However, it takes careful preparation to deal with this which will make this system effective or vice versa.

What has occurred to students themselves that learning Writing II online is indeed easy for them because can happen anywhere and anytime flexibly, but this does not apply to students who live in rural areas where they are very disturbed by network connections. Struggling, students keep trying to get connections to take online classes. Those who have access to the internet also complain of high cost of data bundle to fully access to their learning in the home. This has made learning in the house during this pandemic very challenging to them. Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson and Hanson (2020) said that learning is effectively achieved when the right instructional materials are used for the right purpose during the process. It was known that the reason for one of the students not being able to fill out the questionnaire form and reflection because internet access in the student area is not supportive, plus the living costs that must be met by the family of students who are also struggling to survive amid the pandemic.

Another problem is that some students find it was easier to learn face to face, students become confused in understanding the material. This can distort and make students more stressed. This caused by the concept, students were not familiar with and may need explanation from the teacher to enhance their understanding, (Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson & Hanson, 2020). In addition, Usher, Golding, Han, Griffiths, McGavran, Brown, and Sheehan (2020) said that it could make students less sure about their future educational plans. So if this continues to happen it will have a severe impact on students, then direct meetings are needed in this case.

This provides students with long-term, holistic online learning. Unusual circumstances for some students made online learning the most memorable both positively and negatively. Online



learning has two influences through external and internal. These two things influence the student experience. External influences include student environmental indicators where some students experience problems during online learning in networks and data quotas and some find it easier. Whereas internally, it includes indicators of student interaction, which affect student experience of their interest in online learning, student awareness, and understanding.

Overall, the pandemic will likely widen achievement gaps along these dimensions given schools' and parents' differing engagement with online resources to compensate for lost school-based learning time. However, teachers are limited in coordinating students remotely, parents are the ones who take a role in this. In fact, regions of the country with higher incomes, better internet access, and fewer rural schools experienced a much greater increase in search intensity. Bacher, Goodman, and Mulhern (2020) stated that taking these differences into account and promoting fairer access to online learning could increase the effectiveness of education policy responses to the pandemic. In the future, advanced technology is needed for advanced education as well.

CONCLUSION

After all, the situation that is being hit by Covid-19 pandemic does require the education system in the classroom to be online. Remote areas in Indonesia are subject to ineffective online learning systems due to network disruptions. On the other hand, the online system makes it easier for people in urban areas. People have to get used to the current situation in order to carry out activities. Even so, there are still some things that are done face to face in learning. Besides, online learning during this pandemic has made us all familiar with the presence of electronics and the use of online systems which have flourished in the modern era. Teachers and students need to be familiar with technological developments for an increasingly advanced education system.

So far, students have tried to keep on taking the Writing II lessons online even though some of them need to catch up with the internet. In addition, there are some students who cannot understand the lesson if they do not come face to face with the teacher. It makes it difficult for students to improve in the subject. Even so, there are still several ways to do this. Learning Writing II online builds students' awareness of the importance of taking part in learning. This is evidenced by the seriousness of students to be able to attend lectures even though the network in their area is not supportive. Not only awareness in their willingness to learn, but also awareness in evaluating their own writing.

Additionally, when students feel they do not understand through online learning class, students tried to find effective ways to understand Writing II material by watching Youtube video or browsing the internet. In order to improve students' skill in writing, they also continue to hone their abilities by doing a lot of writing and reading so that they can self-assess the improvement of their writing. Students activities in online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic did not interfere with other students' activities. Students can do learning anywhere and can access it anywhere. Hence, it is easier for students to complete assignment on time. Still, this happened when the internet was always affordable.



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