THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ERA ON THE STUDENTS' ENGLISH COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This research was aimed at finding out the impact of the COVID-19 era on English students' communication skills at the University of Muhammadiyah Bone. This research was a descriptive qualitative design. The source data was from the students of the English education department. This research used a purposive sampling technique. The students were 20 and were taken from the English education department. The instruments of this research were interviews and questionnaires. The data from the students' interviews were transcribed and analyzed to answer the research question about the impact of the COVID-19 era on the English students' communication skills at the University of Muhammadiyah Bone. The results from the questionnaire showed that students mostly had a negative response to learning to speak during the COVID-19 period. The interview showed that the students' answers also gave negative responses toward the impact of the COVID-19 era on their English communication skills. It means that they want to learn to speak offline. They want to learn to speak with maximum support so that they do not feel bored easily or nervous about communicating. According to the data from both instruments, most students were not having fun, feeling confident, enjoying themselves, or being motivated to learn through online speaking. Furthermore, most want to learn to speak in a physical classroom rather than a virtual one.

Keywords: English, The Covid-19, Communication

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus (Covid-19) is known to have first appeared in the animal and seafood markets in Wuhan, China, at the end of December 2019. After that, COVID-19 spread quickly among humans and spread to many countries. , including Indonesia, in just a few months. Its rapid spread has made several countries implement policies to impose lockdowns to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

One of the sectors affected by COVID-19 is the education sector. Students only carry out online learning to avoid spreading the COVID-19 virus. Teaching English in the COVID-19 era also significantly impacts students' ability to learn English skills, especially in communication.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has disrupted students' lives in different ways, depending not only on their level and course of study but also on the point they have reached in their program (Daniel, 2020).

According to Atlam et al., 2022, the pandemic has changed many systems of life; people lost their jobs and just stayed home and studied from home. Furthermore, one of the negative impacts of the pandemic is the lockdown in several countries and the many deaths. Most families do not have access to the internet, nor do they even have computers, tablets, or cell phones with which to communicate.

The importance of learning English can be taught from kindergarten to the university level, especially in Indonesia. Even though Indonesian students have studied English for many years, they still have difficulty using the language, especially in communicating in spoken English. One of the main challenges for educators during social distancing is to keep students motivated and participate effectively during once-online classes, (Arduini et al., 2021).

Based on language skills, namely; speaking, listening, reading, and writing, communication skills are closely related to speaking skills. Now, during the COVID-19 Pandemic., according to Irawan et al., 2020), in their journal, explained that "The Indonesian government has officially enforced the rules for studying, worshipping, and working from home starting March 16, 2020." Minimizing and limiting gatherings that involve physical contact is an effort to suppress the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This condition has implications for the effectiveness of the learning process in higher education. This is a big problem in the student learning process in improving their communication skills.

We communicate to share knowledge and experience. Communication is carried out, among others, through oral, written, visual, body language, media, and multimedia. According to Ahmadi, 2011, speaking is a superior skill for the effectiveness of communication. Gunawan and Rahman (2022) state that speaking skills mastered by students are essential because, through speaking skills, students can express and convey the thoughts or ideas of others. By speaking English, the students can communicate with people from other countries.

Speaking skills are an essential part of communication. It is considered effective communication when we use sentences to perform different acts, for example, expressing feelings or commands, asking for and giving information, and identifying people and things , (Rosali, 2020).

Speaking is a medium to express opinions, meanings, and ideas when the language is just being expressed, understood, and learned. Speaking is part of how we communicate with people to give a meaningful message to the other person. Communicating well will give positive results regarding the meaning, which is the purpose of speaking. Meanwhile, based on Wibowo & Khairunas, 2019, stated that speaking is the way people communicate with others.

In communicating, there are several difficulties for students, namely, a lack of vocabulary mastery in conveying a sentence, a lack of confidence in expression, and not being able to actively communicate in front of many people or with the other person. And a lack of knowledge of communication.

A study conducted by Fajar. R, Hamsia. W, 2021, about online learning during COVID 19, where he wanted to know about the ability of students to speak during the COVID 19 period, showed from the results of the research that the implementation of online learning had a positive impact on students. Even students can learn English independently anytime and anywhere. And can improve their speaking skills in public.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Impact of the COVID-19 Era on Students' English Communication could provide detailed information about student English communication in the era of COVID-19. In this study, the respondents came from students of English education at the University of Muhammadiyah Bone. The method used in this research is to use a qualitative description. According to Creswell, 2015), a qualitative approach is a questioner giving a knowledge-based statement with a constructivist perception. Interviews and questionnaires are the means for collecting the data for the current research. It is hoped that the suggestions made in the study were highlighted and might serve as valuable topics for discussion

regarding the impact of English communication in the era of COVID-19 at the University of Muhammadiyah Bone. The questionnaire is used as an essential instrument in the collection of data for this research. If it is well built, a questionnaire can deliver data economically, for it accounts for the scale of the study. Success in this research can be achieved by using the following instruments;

1) Questionnaire

Furthermore, the questionnaire is built-in light of points taken from general EFL literature. Likert scales are developed at this stage and attached to appropriate questions.

2. Interview: The purpose of the interview is to obtain the students' viewpoints about their

Opinion and argument dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on English students' communication. To determine students' perceptions, each student is also requested to respond to the questions raised through the questionnaire.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Questioner result

The Students' Response toward the Impact of Covid-19 Era on the Students' English Communication

This section deals with interpreting questionnaire results from 20 students at the University of Muhammadiyah Bone.

The data description was collected through a questionnaire, as explained in the previous section. The result showed that students mostly had a negative response.

The research results show that most students have a negative response to learning to speak during the COVID-19 period.

The result of the questionnaire calculation showed that the student's average was about 30. As stated on the Likert scale, this result is in the *negative* classification. It means that students had negative responses to the impact of the COVID-19 era on their English communication skills.

Based on the students' questionnaires, online learning does not give maximum results because learning tends to be centred on the lecturer. Even student motivation in online learning does not show a positive. Most students think that learning in the COVID-19 era does not show high enthusiasm. Regarding students' confidence, they feel less confident in learning to speak online. The point is that students want offline learning based on student responses that they tend to learn face-to-face when learning to speak.

Interview result

The interview results below are based on the questionnaire to know the students' responses given by the researcher. The data below are interview results with six students from the English education department of the University of Muhammadiyah Bone. The researcher found that:

> The researcher asked, *"What is your opinion about the online study?" **Student(1)** said, "My opinion about online learning: in my opinion, online learning is not very effective in learning because sometimes it is only the lecturer who is more active." Many students turn off their cameras, and if they use the WhatsApp application, students do not pay attention. When face-to-face learning in class, we directly interact with the lecturer to capture learning. However, when studying online, sometimes students sleep and are overlooked directly by the lecturer.*

Based on the first question, it can be inferred that online learning is ineffective because several obstacles make learning not optimal, so student understanding of the material is very lacking. Online learning has a destructive impact on the learning process, such as internet access, which is not good. Not all villages can have good internet coverage, so students do not understand the material given by the lecturer. Students are not satisfied with online learning due to a lack of attention from lecturers. Students are only present in Zoom, Whatsapp, and Google Meet applications. Sometimes students do not understand the content of the material being studied.

> The second question was, *"What is your opinion about online speaking learning?" Is it exciting or not? Describe it to me about it. "* **student (2)** said, *"For me, In my opinion, online speaking learning is not optimal and too influential because sometimes online learning allows us to see the text while speaking, but when offline learning, we can speak directly without seeing*

the text. Online learning has advantages and disadvantages, but I feel that online speaking learning is not effective and maximal. I prefer offline learning to online because the lecturers only give assignments. Sometimes, they do not take students seriously.

Based on the second question, it appears that her opinion about learning online is that online learning does not have a positive impact on learning English. Online learning has many shortcomings in receiving the material presented by the lecturer; namely, when the lecturer is not optimal in delivering the material, and students sometimes do not display videos when online learning takes place. One difference in learning speaking offline is that the lecturer can see firsthand the students' ability to practice communicating compared to online.

Learning to speak online has advantages and disadvantages. However, based on the results of the interviews, the students are more of the opinion that learning to speak online is inadequate, so the students' ability to communicate well does not show good improvement. Effective learning in terms of speaking face-to-face in class will maximize the desired results, especially the ability of students to speak well. Although, in general, students use applications such as Tiktok, Instagram, and YouTube applications, they do not influence students' speaking abilities.

The third question was, "*Do you think studying online can improve your speaking skills?". The* **student (3)** *said, "Online learning did not improve my speaking skills, only a little, because actually, my grasping power is better to talk and interact directly with lecturers in class than online learning."*

Based on her statement above, it can be inferred that learning to speak online does not improve students' speaking ability. When students learn to speak online, they do not understand what the lecturer says. The problem that often arises is the intermittent network factor. The atmosphere is sometimes noisy, and the lecture's material is not very pleasant, even dull, so students do not understand the material. Most students think that online learning is not effective and motivates them. Most students think online speaking learning is ineffective and does not motivate them to learn. Students prefer not to pay attention to the learning process seriously. They turn off the camera often, especially if the lecturer does not require them to turn on

the video camera when learning takes place. Students tend to do other activities because they feel unnoticed by their lecturers.

> The fifth question was, "*What are things that can support the improvement of speaking learning in the COVID-19 era?"* **Then students (5)** said*, "In my opinion, in learning to speak, lecturers must be more creative in teaching, for example, using a more practical application, like the Whatsapp application." Learning speaking should be more face-to-face in class; if it is still in the COVID-19 era, we have to keep the health protocol. "*

Based on the fifth question, it is evident that learning to speak online must be a concern for every lecturer because teaching speaking without suitable methods and techniques will harm students' speaking. Online speaking learning may be carried out, but pay attention to health protocols. The point is that students will feel they understand the material if education is carried out offline.

Online learning leaves many impressions on students, especially in improving students' communication skills. When the first online learning or meeting was carried out during a pandemic using the Zoom application, it still felt fun because students could greet each other. However, when education was continuously carried out online, students would start to feel bored and ineffective at learning. Speaking by relying on online learning, where students can only communicate via Zoom, WhatsUp, or other applications, can make students' communication skills less effective.

When viewed from the aspect of education and teaching, there are many distortions in teaching materials because the students are only understood textually, which should be built contextually. Under normal conditions, the material can be taught contextually. However, because it is online, the absorption of teaching material is more textual, so there can be a decrease in language teaching or a decrease in linguistic ability.

> The sixth question was, "*Do you think lecturers teach creatively during the COVID-19 era?". Then students (6)* said**,** *"In my opinion, lectures do not teach creatively, but most of the lecturers teach carelessly; they are less creative and are ignorant without paying serious attention to their students, so many students do not understand the material."*

According to the sixth question, most lecturers cannot create creative and innovative teaching during the COVID-19 period. So that students feel bored with the delivery of material by the lecturer. Many lecturers use the WhatsApp application, especially for teaching speaking, which only uses the WhatsApp application; of course, it does not give maximum results.

The lack of lecturer mastery of science and technology will affect the smoothness of online teaching and learning activities. Class management skills are needed in the implementation of online learning. Previously, lecturers could manage the class freely and express themselves in the classroom directly.

Online learning will certainly require teachers to be more communicative with their students. Teachers need to use their communication competence in providing direction and learning assistance.

Not all subjects can effectively use distance learning. There are problems with online learning when the learning is done remotely. One of the less effective subjects is done by distance learning, namely, learning to speak. The problem with learning to speak online for students is that they do not understand the material given by the lecturer. In online learning, the lecturer will give information using different media. However, if they use the wrong medium, it will be harder for students to understand what they are learning.

The interview data showed that students' answers also gave negative responses about the impact of the COVID-19 era on their English communication skills. It means that they want to learn to speak offline. They want to learn to speak with maximum support so that they do not feel bored quickly or nervous about communicating.

Almost all students do not like to study English communication online. They need creative teaching media to build up their confidence in communication, such as speaking in pairs, using games, and pictures, making greeting cards, etc.

The problems of students learning online are low student English proficiency, low student motivation, and low communication in daily life using English. It could be seen as if the lecture spoke with them; they did not understand or were silent because they were still constructing their sentences in their minds. When the

lecturer explained the material online, some students talked with their friends, or they just looked like a muse, confused and not focused on the material. The implementation of online learning seems uneven and tends to be teacher-centred.

Most students did not speak English in a short conversation or express words. They felt afraid of making a mistake and shy about talking. In this situation, the lecturer should pay attention to the aim of teaching speaking skills. The lecturers taught them by giving them suitable methods. The lecturer also accommodated the class to the fundamentals of communication and comfortable situations to build their communicative competence.

Online learning that is done at this time has had many obstacles and problems that need to be faced by the lecturer and his students. The problems that often occur are;

1). Unreachable signal, 2). The media applied by lecturers are often videos, and voice messages, which make students feel bored while participating in learning, 3). The learning itself is not so dominantly interactive, 4). In addition to online learning, assignments are also done online, so it is not uncommon for students to have difficulty understanding and ultimately choose not to work. and 5). That internet quota is the primary scourge that plays an essential role in implementing learning.

Another problem expressed by the students was that regarding the media itself. According to them, using media during online learning was unusual and uncomfortable. The other students admitted that online learning was less enjoyable or ineffective.

Those who initially always experienced an increase in learning English revealed that they had decreased in terms of the value they got. The students themselves immediately expressed their expressions. According to them, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the highest score they ever got was an A, while during the pandemic, they experienced a decrease in grades, such as B and C.

CONCLUSION

Students face a variety of impacts and obstacles when they confidently engage in the learning process of speaking. Students' perspectives of the perceived impact include the availability of inadequate facilities and infrastructure, the difference in the environment while studying directly in class versus online learning, and the motivation that affects students. Online learning strategies are also visual and written. Students feel the burden of internet quotas, especially in locations where the signal is disrupted, and lecturers feel they are not as accessible as in class. The result showed that students mostly had a negative response to learning to speak during the COVID-19 period.

The findings of this study suggest several things in terms of learning to speak. First, learning to speak is more prioritized through face-to-face meetings. Learning must be conducted offline for students' speaking abilities to produce the most effective results. Second, teachers must be creative and innovative in using learning media. Third, communication technology skills must be mastered a lot.

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