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## **An Analysis of University Students' Perception on Learning Speaking During Online Class: A Narrative Inquiry**

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### **Abstract**

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, students' communication with friends and the surrounding environment has become limited. Learning activities were also conducted online so that speaking skills were not optimal. The emergence of these problems made students have perceptions related to online speaking learning courses. Knowing students' perceptions is important because teachers can conclude whether learning activities are running effectively or not. This study analyzed the perception of university students regarding online speaking learning class, the challenges that occur in that class, and the solutions to overcome challenges. The research used a qualitative method, specifically narrative inquiry, to explore students' perceptions, the challenges, and solution to overcome the challenges of online speaking learning, which can clearly feel the difference when classes were held offline or online. The participants were four students who had taken the Public Speaking class in the fourth semester. The data collection used in this study was from an interview and analyzed using thematic analysis. In this study, the participants had good perception of online speaking learning. The positive impacts are such as being time and cost-efficient, and being as effective as offline speaking learning made participants had good perception of this learning system. The challenges faced by students while participating in online speaking learning are such as they were not fluent when speaking English and their voice during public speaking was unclear. The solution for the challenges is the participants more often practiced speaking. The students can try take part in other online speaking classes outside the university to improve their speaking skills..

Keywords: student perception; speaking; online learning.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Learning English is very important because English is a language spoken almost all over the world. The purpose of students learning English is so that they can communicate fluently using English. Speaking is the most important part because this skill is used when interacting and communicating with other people, so the speaker must not make mistakes in pronunciation, grammar, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension so that there is no misinterpretation. On the other hand, speaking is also a quick way for students to learn English. This is because learning speaking skills requires the practice of communicating with other people so that the more practice, students will more quickly master their speaking skills. For English students, learning speaking is quite difficult and challenging. Many factors cause them difficulty in mastering speaking skills. The lack of practice in communicating with other people is also one of the causes of students' speaking skills not developing. Moreover, since the Covid-19 pandemic, students' communication with friends and the surrounding environment has become limited, learning activities are also carried out online so that learning speaking skills is not optimal.

News about Covid-19 or Coronavirus Disease-2019 is still a discussion that we often encounter since 2019 until now, especially in Indonesia. The very fast spread of the coronavirus is making people even more worried. Due to the increasing number of cases of coronavirus victims in Indonesia, the government issued policies that must be implemented during the coronavirus pandemic in order to reduce the number of victims who contract the disease. The government has also implemented a Work from Home (WFH) policy in which people are asked to complete their work at home. With work from home, all work activities can be done online, including education in Indonesia.

The system of learning and teaching activities in Indonesia which was initially carried out face-to-face has now been implemented online during the coronavirus pandemic. The implementation of online learning is not as easy as expected. There are many obstacles that are felt by students during the online learning system. Students feel the need to adapt to new learning models in a short period of time. Since the coronavirus pandemic, communication activities have become limited. It also causes speaking learning to be not optimal.

With the emergence of some of these problems, it makes students have perceptions related to learning speaking during online classes. Knowing students' perception is very important because students' perception can be used as a reference so that speaking learning activities in class become better so that students' speaking skills can improve. From the results of previous studies, it was shown that the results of students' perspectives were different, it shows some mixed results. It can be concluded that according to students' perceptions, online learning has a positive impact and some have a negative impact. The difference in the results from previous studies makes researcher want to explore further how are students' perceptions of learning speaking during online class.

Based on the background of this study, the aims of this study are: 1) To investigate students' perception of learning speaking during online class; 2) To identify the challenges that occur in learning speaking during online class; 3) And to find the solution to overcome challenges that occur in learning speaking during online class.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Perception**

Perception is the process of human's conscious mind by which a person selects, organizes, and interprets sensory data from human's senses to understand the surrounding environment. According to Otter et al. (2013) perception is the process of actions which are conducted to gather information. According to Robin (1995) perception is a process carried out by a person to interpret the perception of the senses to provide benefits to the environment. Perception allows a person to get information and make it more meaningful. There are three aspects in perception according to Walgito (2003). The three aspects are: cognitive aspects are aspects related to recognition of objects and events where the relation can be obtained due to the receipt of a stimulus; affective aspects is an aspect that relates to feelings, a person's emotional state towards a certain object, and everything that involves evaluating good or bad based on one's emotional factors; and conation aspects is the aspect related to desire. On other side, Dowwel and Newel (1996) are only divided into two, namely cognitive aspects relate to the way of thinking; and affective aspects relates to feelings. From the explanation of the aspects of perception from several experts above, the researcher summarizes, classifies each important point, and concludes the indicators of perception into nine points. That is knowledge, views, way of thinking, experience, feelings, emotion, evaluation, attitude, and behaviors.

Students' perception is the view or response of students by inferring information and interpreting messages based on experiences about certain objects or events that are preceded by the sensing process in solving a problem or social situation. Nursafitri (2021) stated that the results of student's perceptions are influenced by the constraints they experience during the learning process. If a student has good perception of an object, then it will affect student's attitudes which students will like the object. Likewise with students' perceptions of learning in a class that can also influence the attitudes of students in the class. Although in the process of planning and implementing teaching that can support student learning is considered the responsibility of the teacher, we also should not forget that students also have an important role in the success of education in the whole (Warfinge, 2021).

### **Speaking**

Speaking is one of the important skills in learning English besides listening, reading, and writing. Speaking is the process of communicating between speakers and listeners to share information with each other. According to Chaney (1998) speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. In speaking, there are several indicators or components that must be considered by speakers. Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are important indicators in speaking skills (David, 1986). Learning speaking is a teaching and learning process that leads to learning objectives, namely students can communicate ideas, ideas, feelings, and opinions to others. Speaking English is not easy for students, they must study hard in order to master speaking skills properly.

Both lecturer and students need to meet intensively to make progress in learning speaking (Khairunas, 2020).

Implementation of online learning is not as easy as it looks and thinks. According to Rahmawati (2021), E-learning is a very efficient method, but on the other hand this learning has drawbacks and unfavorable effects for students, especially in the aspect of students' speaking ability. One of the problems faced by students is linguistic problems which include difficulties in learning a language related to the aspects of language such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Wibowo, 2020). Holida (2021) added that the obstacles that must be faced by students such as having to adapt to changes in the learning system that influences their understanding of learning theory and practice.

### **Online Learning**

Online class is a teaching and learning process that utilizes the internet or digital media to deliver material to students. Stem (2019) clarifies that online learning is education that is carried out using the internet. Lestanto (2018) said online learning can be carried out easily because it only utilizes and uses applications that are connected to the internet network. Cakrawati (2021) added online applications promote independent and inquiry-based learning because online applications facilitate interaction between students and teachers even though they are in different places or not in the same room.

Online learning is the best solution for learning activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the implementation of this learning system shows that there are good and bad perspective. Fitriani (2020) states that for teachers and staff, online learning is effective for activities related to assignments and material, but not effective in making students understand learning material. Moorberg (2021) explain that the majority of students think that they feel more comfortable with online classes and use software for virtual meetings. On other side, Efriana (2021) explain during online learning, students experience various problems in the form of inactivity in participating in learning, limited supporting facilities, and internet network access.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method used in this study was a qualitative method. Qualitative methods were methods that focused on in-depth observations. Specifically, this qualitative research was carried out using a narrative inquiry approach. According to Schreiber & Asner (2011), narrative inquiry is the study of the lives of individuals as told through the stories of their experiences, including discussions about the meaning of those experiences for individuals. The participants in this study were four students who had taken the Public Speaking class in the fourth semester of 2021, at which time the online class was held online because of the covid-19 pandemic. Participants were selected based on their experience who had undergone online speaking lessons, specifically in a Public Speaking course, with the same lecturer.

The data collection used by the researcher in this study was an interview. The researcher interviewed the participants directly and through google meet, and the interviews recording used as documentation. Interviews were used to determine students'

perceptions of online speaking learning, challenges experienced by students during online speaking learning, and solutions made by students to solve challenges faced in online speaking learning. And data analysis in this study using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was one way to analyze data to identify patterns and find themes through the researcher's collected data. The process of thematic analysis is divided into several activities, namely repeatedly reading the data; coding and categorizing the data extracts; and recognizing the thematic headings (Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik, 2014).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, there are three findings that have been found related to the aims of this study. The findings included the students' perceptions about online speaking learning, the challenges that occurred during online class, and the solutions to overcome the challenges. The description is explained below:

### 1. Students' Perceptions on Online Speaking Learning

The first question in this study is about the students' perceptions. This question aimed to reveal students' perceptions of online speaking learning after they attended the class for one semester. The results of interviews with participants showed that the participants had more positive perceptions than students who had negative perceptions, even though the difference between the two results was very slight.

For the result of the indicator view, Participants said they had heard or seen online speaking lessons from other people. When they were in the fourth semester, they heard from their friends who had experienced online speaking classes first-hand and told the participants about their experiences when they took the class. According to them, online speaking learning was very complicated because it required a lot of media and applications that must be used and implemented during class. Many new media and applications had to be used which they did not know before and were unfamiliar for them to use in the classroom.

*"This learning activity required a lot of technology because it was implemented online, and was more time consuming and also required more attention." (P4)*

Understanding online speaking learning was part of the way of thinking that could form a perception. After they saw, heard, and experienced online speaking learning directly, the participants had their personal perceptions of the learning. The participants described that online speaking learning was a teaching and learning activity and providing material related to speaking skills orally and using English, in which activities were carried out indirectly or carried out online through a media intermediary or communication tool and also using a helper app. These learning activities provided opportunities for students to practice their speaking skills in English and practice their Public Speaking skills, the lecturer also supervises and given feedback.

*"In class, students were given the opportunity to practiced speaking in English where the lecturer supervises and given feedback." (P1)*

Experience is another indicator that can create perception. Experiences that happen could create a strong perception of an object for that person. Based on the experienced of those who had taken online speaking classes, participants said that they had received

asynchronous activities from their lecturer. They said the lecturer once gave assignments to students to make two videos explaining a topic they had chosen. In relation to the student's speaking skills, the participants said that the lecturers had given training related to the five speaking skills such as paying attention and choosing the correct vocabulary to use, and paying attention to grammar. The participant explained that the lecturer would also provide additional feedback to each student according to their shortcomings in speaking skills. For example, some students were given feedback regarding fluency and some were given feedback because of the use of their vocabulary.

*"The lecturer provided feedback to students in the form of an assessment of students' speaking skills." (P2)*

Participants also experienced emotion about online speaking learning. The first emotion felt by the participants was when the lecturer gave training to students related to speaking skills in class. Almost all participants said that they were happy when the lecturer taught speaking skills in class. Participants felt happy because the lecturer delivered material related to speaking skills and provided varied exercises to students with explanations that were relatively easy to understand so that participants did not feel confused or didn't understand, the participant could learn many new things in each class meeting, and the participants also felt that there was progress and improvement in their public speaking skills.

*"...I felt there was progress because it was helped by online learning." (P3)*

An evaluation was the core process of creating a perception. The suitability of the learning system also influenced the participants. The participants had different opinions about its compatibility with online or offline speaking learning. Participants who were matched with online speaking learning explained the reasons why they were suitable for the learning because they got many advantages from the learning.

*"...online speaking learning was easier for me and gave me many advantages." (P1)*

Contrary to the previous opinion, some participants stated that they were more suited to offline speaking learning. They had more suited to offline speaking learning because they could interact directly with the audience, such as looking directly at the other person's eyes.

*"Offline speaking learning was more suitable for me because I could made direct interactions with my interlocutor..." (P4)*

Attitudes also occur because of the influence of perception. Attitude reflects being satisfied, happy, dissatisfied, displeased, or neutral towards a person or an object. Some participants felt that online speaking classes were fun for them, and the manifestation of this perception was that participants always felt concerned about the existence of online speaking classes. Because learning public speaking was very important for the future, they tried their best not to be left behind in class. They become impatient with the class and excited to join the class immediately. This learning really helps them in improving their speaking and public speaking skills, so that it could help participants prepare themselves to become good public speakers.

*"Because it was effective in improving speaking skills, I'm excited to take classes..." (P1)*

This finding about students' perceptions related online speaking learning was in accordance with the previous study conducted by Anggraini (2021), whose results showed that participants in this study had a positive perception of learning speaking online because the learning provided many benefits for their participants and also because they could adapt or adjust easily to the environment online speaking class. Lei's research (2021) also explained that students benefit significantly from online speaking classes. Because there were many benefits and advantages, both participants in this study and participants from previous studies felt happy to take online speaking classes.

## 2. The Challenges That Occur in Online Speaking Learning

The participants said that there were challenges or obstacles that arose while taking online speaking classes. These challenges were quite disturbing and even hindered them in learning speaking skills. These challenges were categorized into two types, namely challenges related to speaking skills and challenges related to non-speaking skills. There were four challenges that arose related to speaking skills, first is non-fluency in speaking. When they practiced delivering speeches in front of friends during online classes, participants felt nervous and afraid that they make mistakes in conveying the topic. As a result of this nervousness, the participants' words unknowingly became less fluent when explaining the topic.

*"When I felt nervous, I would be less fluent when delivering material." (P1)*

Second is unclear voice. Another effect that participants felt as a result of feeling nervous when delivering a topic in front of an audience was that the participant's voice became unclear. When feeling anxious, participants' voices could be low and sometimes sound like they were out of breath.

*"...my voice wasn't very clear when I'm nervous..." (P1)*

Third is mispronunciation of words and sentences. The nervousness felt by participants could also affect them in pronouncing words or sentences. Feelings of nervousness could have an effect on participants' pronunciation, so they become unconsciously wrong in pronouncing words or sentences when explaining topics in front of the audience.

*"...nervousness affected my pronunciation which made me wrong in pronouncing words or sentences..." (P1)*

And next is difficulty in learning grammar. Difficulty learning grammar was a challenge for the participants. According to her explanation, participants could not learn grammar well when learning was carried out online. When the participant was not in class, she found it difficult to understand the lecturer's explanation of grammar.

*"...I could not study grammar well when I'm not in class..." (P4)*

As for the challenges that arise related to non-speaking skills, there were five challenges consisting of a poor internet network, media and applications errors, limitation in hand gestures and expression, lecturers' unclear voices, and power outage. The main challenge faced by all participants was a poor and unstable internet connection. As a result of this internet problem, participants had to repeatedly exit the application and re-enter the online class. There were times when participants experienced internet network

problems while practicing speaking, and at that time, the participants became unable to concentrate and forgot everything that had been memorized.

*"...my signal was having trouble when I'm practicing speaking, when that happens my concentration will break..." (P3)*

The next challenge felt by other participants was that the applications and media used to take online classes experienced errors. Participants said that the electronic media used, such as laptops and phones, often experienced errors when they were taking online speaking classes. These made them have to leave the application and not attend the class for a few minutes before returning to join the class.

*"Non-speaking challenge that I faced was the application that was used often experienced errors ..." (P4)*

The difficulty in making hand gestures when practicing and making public speaking assignments through recordings became a challenge for one of the participants. The participant explained that she found it difficult to use hand gestures and show them on a phone or laptop screen. The small screen size made the participant's hand gestures not fully visible, and only the wrist was visible and recorded on camera.

*"...I'm also often confused about how to express my hand gesture and myself when speaking online..." (P1)*

When taking an online speaking class, and participants often realized that the voice of the lecturer who was explaining sounds was low and didn't sound clear. This disturbed the participants because they could not hear what the lecturer was saying. Participants also did not understand what was being explained by the lecturer.

*"...the voice from the lecturer was not clear and not loud when explained the material." (P4)*

And last, the occurrence of a power outage when the online speaking learning activity took place made the participants feel annoyed and felt very disadvantaged. This was because when a power outage occurred, participants automatically exited the application and could not rejoin the class.

*"...The electricity in my house often power outage. It made the internet network also interrupted, so I could not took online speaking classes." (P2)*

This finding was the same as the previous research conducted by Wibowo and Khairunas (2020), where their participants experienced difficulties in grammar and pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, lack of speaking, and lack of language competence. Research conducted by Holida (2021) also found obstacles experienced by the participants in the form of a lack of vocabulary, lack of fluency, lack of pronunciation, and some grammatical errors. The results of research conducted by Nursafitri (2021), who wrote that the main challenges experienced by the research participants were the poor internet network and the media used did not support learning.

### **3. The Solutions to Overcome the Challenges**

To overcome these challenges, the participants had solutions that could help them. And each participant had a different solution to overcome the problem. From the results of interviews with the participants, the way they overcame challenges was divided into two, namely solutions to overcome challenges related to speaking skills and solutions to



overcome challenges related to non-speaking skills. The solutions that could be done by participants to overcome challenges related to speaking skills were increasing speaking practice, practicing managing voice, practicing public speaking, and learning from other sources.

To overcome the challenges of students who felt less fluent in speaking, was to practice speaking a lot. Participants said they often practice speaking in front of a mirror to be more fluent when speaking in public.

*"...I often practiced speaking in front of a mirror so that I'm more fluent when speaking in public..." (P1)*

To overcome the lost voice due to the nervousness experienced by the participants, the solution they did was to often practice regulating the voice. Participants practiced managing their voices by recording videos while they practiced public speaking. By recording the exercise, participants could re-watch the recording and assess where or when their voice sounds unclear or low.

*"...record videos when I practiced to see where my voice changes..." (P1)*

The solution to overcome frequent mistakes in pronounced words or sentences was to practice a lot of public speaking. By repeatedly rereading the text or public speaking script, participants became familiar with the sentences they said. Participants should try to practice speaking a lot and practicing reading the text repeatedly so that they feel familiar with unfamiliar and complicated words or sentences.

*"... I had to keep practicing until I get used to it." (P2)*

To overcome the problem of participants who difficult to learn grammatically, the solution was to learn from other sources, such as watching videos on Youtube or reading books discussing grammar. There were lots of videos on Youtube that explained material about grammar so that participants could learn it freely.

*"...Watch Youtube about grammar which I am very weak at, or read grammar books that I had..." (P4)*

Meanwhile, solutions to overcome challenges related to non-speaking skills include providing backup internet quota, restarting or reinstalling the application, learning hand gestures and expressions, providing speaker assistant media, and going to a better area. To solve the problem of unstable network connection, participants mentioned the right solution for this problem was to set up another backup internet quota. According to participants, she could not just rely on one network, so she had internet quota from other networks just in case the main internet network was experiencing interference.

*"...all I could do was provided a backup internet quota..." (P3)*

The solution that the participants did to overcome the application that had errors and could not run smoothly was to reinstall the application or reactivate the phones or laptop. By doing this, the application could return to work normally even though it takes time to reinstall or reactivate.

*"The solution was to reinstall the application or reactivate it..." (P3)*

To overcome the hand gesture problem, the participant said she learned how to display hand gestures in a minimal way but could attract the audience's attention and

keep her hands squeezing. She learned hand gestures from e-book files that were given by lecturers and also from videos on Youtube.

*"...I learned to display hand gestures in a simple way but could be recorded." (P1)*

The solution that participants did when the lecturer's voice was not heard clearly was to use the help of an audio speaker as a media. When the class was in progress, participants connected their laptops or phones with Bluetooth speakers so that the two devices were connected and the sound from the laptop or phone that was joining the online class could be heard clearly through the speakers.

*"...I would use the speaker so I could hear it more clearly..." (P4)*

The solution that participants could do to overcome the challenge of a power outage that arose when they were taking an online speaking class was to go to another place or another area that was not experiencing a blackout. When the electricity went out, the internet network also disappeared, so the participants could not be connected to online classes. Participants must go to a place that did not experience a power outage in order to reconnect with the internet network.

*"...power outage problem I could not do anything and could only wait until the electricity came back on or go to another place that didn't experience a power outage." (P2)*

The solutions made by participants to solve challenges related to speaking skills same as previous study. Holida (2021) wrote that the solution found was that participants practiced a lot outside class hours or outside class which could help improve their speaking skills. Participants in this study agreed that by learning a lot and often practicing about the obstacles they faced gave them a lot of progress and improvement. the results of research conducted by Efriana (2021), whose research showed that students who had problems with the internet network could ask their family for help by tethering the internet or preparing their own backup internet quota where the network was smooth. Internet network constraints were the main obstacles faced by all participants in this study.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion previously explained, it could be concluded that in this study, the participants had a good and positive perception of online speaking learning. The students agreed that online speaking classes provided many benefits for them, could improve speaking skills effectively, could be implemented flexibly, and were very cost-effective and efficient. Because there were many benefits and advantages, participants felt happy to take online speaking classes. The challenges or obstacles that arose while taking online speaking classes were categorized into two types, namely challenges related to speaking skills consisting of non-fluency in speaking, unclear voice, mispronunciation of words and sentences, and difficulty in learning grammar; and challenges related to non-speaking skills consisting of poor internet network, media and applications errors, limitation in hand gestures and expression, lecturers' unclear voices, and power outage. And the solution to overcome challenges related to speaking skills were increasing speaking practice, practicing managing voice, practicing public speaking, and learning from other sources. Meanwhile, solutions to overcome challenges related to

non-speaking skills include providing backup internet quota, restarting or reinstalling the application, learning hand gestures and expressions, providing speaker assistant media, and going to a better area.

Therefore, the results of this study can be applied not only during a pandemic but also during normal circumstances because it can provide many advantages. This research is open to future researchers and is expected to help them. Other researchers who conduct research on the same theme may be able to use the findings as a reference for their research or can use to compare these findings with their own. Because this research focuses on speaking, the suggestion for other researchers is to find out students' perceptions regarding reading, writing, or other contexts so that they can clearly feel the difference when classes are held offline or online.

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