



PERCEPTION TOWARDS ENGLISH WEBINAR AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN ASSISTING ENGLISH LEARNING DURING PANDEMIC COVID-19

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out colleges' perceptions towards English webinars held during the pandemic to assist their English learning. The population included some colleges from random subjects in a private and stated university who had attended an English webinar and the sample of the population was taken using purposive sampling which focuses on seventh and eighth-semester colleges. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The result demonstrates that English webinars can assist colleges in learning English during the pandemic however, they also face some challenges while learning English through English webinars.

Keywords: Perception, English language webinar, English learning, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

The Covid 19 phenomenon, which started in late 2019 and has continued until now, has impacted a vast number of people all across the world (Pustika, 2020). Many facets of life have changed as a result of this pandemic. Similarly, considerable changes are occurring in the educational system. Many schools have been forced to close temporarily, and face-to-face teaching has been discontinued. Returning to traditional education will be challenging shortly (Dhawan, 2020). Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim issued a circular letter outlining the transition from face-to-face to online learning to combat the spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia. As a result, the internet has become the primary medium for learning (Oktaria & Rahmayadevi, 2021).

Universities are also abiding by government policies by implementing an online learning system. An online learning system, according to Mukhtar et al. (2020) is a web-based program that allows students and teachers to distribute, search, and organize courses over the internet. Even though they are learning online, students still require comprehensive learning elements to assist learning and to attain their learning objectives. This pandemic according to Laili & Nashir (2021) represents new defiance in the education sphere, notably for colleges. Due to this, universities are interested in looking for the most effective

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and efficient way during the pandemic to share course content, engage students, and conduct assessments in online systems (Mukhtar et al., 2020).

This pandemic is also having an impact on technology advancements, as evidenced by the rising popularity of learning applications as well as numerous online learning events. Even if students do not meet in person, the numerous learning applications and learning events available on the internet can aid the college students to gain knowledge as Oktaria & Rahmayadevi (2021) have stated. Technology improvements, which are getting increasingly advanced throughout this pandemic, have an impact on English language learning as well. Because of the many free learning resources available to college students especially, during the pandemic, they have many opportunities to improve their English skills. Students may study anywhere, by anybody, and at any time (Lowerison et al., 2006; Safitri & Khoiriyah, 2017).

One of the resources available that can help colleges to learn English during the pandemic is the webinar. Covid-19 has given a tremendous possibility for a webinar to spread throughout the educational sphere. A webinar is a term that combines the words "web" and "seminar.", and it refers to a seminar delivered via the internet. It has recently gained popularity. The webinars have gained a lot of traction in the business sector, and now they are also making their way into the educational sphere. Students can benefit from webinars to learn or train using video conferencing technology (Srinivas Rao, 2019). Besides, Gupta & Sengupta (2021) explain that Webinars are essentially online seminars. However, in a broader sense, the term "webinar" refers to more than only online seminars. The category now includes meetings, conferences, demonstrations, training or teaching, and events that provide information and learning in a one-way or interactive manner.

Webinars offer a variety of features to help college students to learn even when they are not in the same room as Verma & Singh (2010) stated that webinar has features to discuss and share information, a webinar also has some characteristics such as a sharing application, a chat window, session recording, and questionnaires, all of these are highly useful in the learning process. Colleges will be able to develop their English language skills more readily using the characteristics of the webinars, especially during the pandemic. As we know this pandemic allows us to meet and communicate with people from another

country, Webinars help us to share knowledge, meet and communicate with people from all over the world (Gupta & Sengupta, 2021). An example is an English webinar, which helps college students to learn English and improve their English skills by interacting with a native speaker or a non-native speaker who is fluent in English. As Srinivas Rao (2019) said that English webinars have proven to be useful for students and teachers. Several organizations and people have created English webinars in the ELT and ELL environments to assist teachers in the development of their teaching abilities and to assist students in the improvement of their English skills.

The goal of this study is to find out college student perceptions about English webinars conducted by native or non-native speakers throughout the pandemic in terms of assisting students in learning English during this pandemic. There are some studies related to this research. The first is research entitled "Leveraging Skype-based Webinars as an English Language Learning Platform" by Hidayati et al. (2021). As the frequency of ELT webinars has increased throughout the corona pandemic situation in 2020, so has the use of various online platforms to enable the activities. Skype is one of the platforms utilized to host webinars, as well as one of the applications that spread during the pandemic. A qualitative study of 30 undergraduate students was undertaken by the researcher. The results showed that Skype-based webinars boost students' eagerness to learn, broaden their viewpoints, and provide a stimulating learning environment. Aside from the benefits, there are also drawbacks, such as a lack of subject comprehension, which causes learning anxiety, and technical challenges with signal stability issues.

Furthermore, Budiana & Yutanto (2020) undertook a study entitled "Webinar: A Strategy to Enhance Speaking Skill of Non-native English Speakers". This study looked at the impact of using webinars to teach speaking to non-native English speakers in Surabaya business schools. In this study, three classes were observed. According to the findings, post-test scores improved in two of the three classes studied. As a result, it has been demonstrated that English webinars improve students' speaking ability, and based on the findings English webinars, can assist students in improving their communication skills.

Another comparable study was done by Alifah & Jumrah (2021) entitled "American Corner Webinar and Its Impact on Indonesian English Teachers' Professional Development." The goal of this study was to investigate the elements of webinars, the characteristics of webinar professional development activities, also the attitudes of English professors and lecturers toward webinars and professional development. Five webinar sessions of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta's American Corner were used to collect the data. The findings show that online presentations, live chat, Q&A sessions, and sharing sessions were used to supplement the webinar sessions. The webinar's professional development activities, which included topic concentration, coaching and expert support, group participation, and long duration, benefited English teachers and lecturers, also they were enthusiastic about the webinars and their professional development, according to their perceptions. Furthermore, the findings revealed that participants' reactions to the most influential aspect of the webinar on their teaching abilities were varied.

Webinars have been shown to raise students' enthusiasm in learning English, improve their speaking skills, and assist English teachers to improve their teaching abilities. Based on the studies done previously, the researchers are eager to know about the college student's perception of English webinars that were held during the pandemic in terms of assisting them in learning English. This study intended to find out the answers to the following questions in their opinion, can English webinars assist college students in learning English during the pandemic? What challenges do students face when learning English through webinars?

RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers employed a qualitative descriptive study, which describes a phenomenon to investigate and explain social happenings (Nassaji, 2015). The population of this study consisted of some college students who had attended an English webinar from random subjects in a private and stated university and the sample of the population was taken using purposive sampling which focuses on seventh and eighth-semester students at public and private universities. In this study, 11 people were chosen as the respondents of this study. This research data was gathered through interviews using semi-structured

interviews as the interview guide with open-ended questions, the researchers gave the respondents the freedom to express their opinions. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the interview was conducted via WhatsApp to reduce face-to-face meetings. The interview was conducted in two languages, English and Indonesian, to ensure that all respondents understood the questions and could answer accurately and clearly. The researchers transcribed the data collected from all respondents and analyzed it through thematic analysis. Instead of using statistical procedures, the words are examined by the researchers to be classified into larger meanings such as codes, categories, or themes. (Allo, 2020)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The table below shows the demographics of the 11 respondents who took part in this study. The results of this study were categorized into several themes using thematic analysis after the researchers asked two questions to the respondents based on the study's research questions.

Table 1. Demographics of participants

Respondents ID	Gender	Semester	Affiliation
R1	Female	7	Universitas Advent Indonesia
R2	Female	6	Universitas Advent Indonesia
R3	Female	6	Universitas Advent Indonesia
R4	Male	7	Universitas Advent Indonesia
R5	Female	7	Universitas Tarumanegara
R6	Female	6	Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa
R7	Female	7	Universitas Pelita Harapan
R8	Female	7	Universitas Bunda Mulia
R9	Female		Universitas Bonosowa
R10	Female	7	Universitas Indonesia
R11	Female	7	Universitas Airlangga

1. In your opinion, can English webinars assist you in learning English during the pandemic?

The researchers divide the results into three themes based on the findings that some respondents have the same perception.

1.1 Learn and discover new things

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Through webinars, students can interact with people from all over the world, both native and non-native speakers. This opportunity encourages students to learn new things and gain new knowledge, which can help them to enrich their English knowledge during the pandemic. College students who are not from the English department find this English webinar to be very beneficial because it allows them to broaden their English knowledge, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, according to their statements, they not only learn and discover new things through English webinars, but they also feel motivated, and they find webinars to be a fun way to learn English. As stated by Wang & Hsu (2008) Through the webinar, speakers can motivate participants by making the atmosphere exciting by joking, encouraging participants to express their opinions, and extending the discussion. The following statements substantiate the ideas:

“By attending an English webinar, I can learn new things in English and motivate me to be even more active in learning, especially during the pandemic”. (R3)

“Yes, because learning through webinars is fun and it helps me to learn English more since I’m not from the English department”. (R8)

“Yes, it’s helpful, because the webinar allows me to learn new things about the English language during the pandemic”. (R9)

“Yes, because it is a great opportunity to get new knowledge from a great speaker”. (R11)

1.2 Practice English skills

Based on the data collected, The English webinar allows students to practice their English skills during the pandemic. They can practice their listening skills by listening to the speaker when delivering the material, and they can practice their speaking skills by interacting with the speaker. This statement is in line with Srinivas Rao (2019) who said that webinars provide opportunities to practice their English skills, particularly their teaching, speaking, and listening abilities. As in the following quotation:

“Yes. English requires more than just grammar and vocabulary, it also requires hands-on practice. During the pandemic, I rarely met people who could be invited to speak English, but the availability of webinars, particularly interactive ones, enabled me to practice my English skills”. (R5)

"I think it's quite helpful because listening to the speakers itself will improve our ability to learn English. The reason is that I'm the type who learns foreign languages, especially English by listening". (R6)

"Yes, because with the English language webinar I can practice my English skills during the pandemic". (R10)

1.3 Broaden Vocabulary

According to the data collected, some of the respondents said that participating in English webinars help them to expand their vocabulary during the pandemic. This is also supported by Zhao & Li (2018), who claims that children can increase their vocabulary outside of the classroom by using media technology because it is a creative vocabulary teaching way that helps students expand their vocabulary amid a pandemic.

"I learn new words that I don't hear in everyday conversation, and as an economics student, taking English webinars helps me to expand my vocabulary". (R1)

"By attending an English webinar, I learned new vocabulary that I had not heard before". (R2)

"Through English language webinar, I can get new vocabularies that can make it easier for me to speak in English.". (R4)

2. Are there any difficulties or obstacles that make it tough for you to expand your English knowledge while participating in an English webinar?

The researchers divides the results into three themes based on the findings that some respondents have the same perception.

1.1 Network issues

Signal stability is critical for generating high-quality webinars, therefore when students have a poor signal, it can be a barrier to their online learning. This statement is supported by Hamid et al. (2020) who claimed that poor internet connections inhibit students from learning, particularly in rural areas.

"I hate it when my signal goes out unexpectedly, especially when the material is very interesting". (R1)

"Because we have different areas with different network speeds, I think the signal is the most common issue that I encounter when joining webinar". (R3)

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“There were times where my internet connecting was really bad and it’s quite annoying because I can’t hear the speaker”. (R5)

1.2 Lack of information

Some respondents said that getting information about the English webinars was difficult for them, either because they were from a non-English major or because they were not up to date on English webinar information, which caused them difficulty in finding information about the English webinar and learning from it.

“The issue is I am not very up to date on information about English webinars, and the people around me are not particularly interested in English webinars, so that’s the reason why am I kind of difficult to know the information about English webinars”. (R6)

“Lack of information about the English learning webinars, especially the free ones for students”. (R8)

One respondent stated that she found it difficult to find information about free English webinars because she frequently found paid English webinars, and it made him hesitant to participate in the English webinar.

“I rarely find free English webinars, but I often find paid English webinars, which makes me hesitant to participate in English webinars because I prefer the free one”. (R11)

English webinar is extremely beneficial for students to learn English during the pandemic. Aside from being easily accessible, the webinar also helps students to learn new knowledge from outside or within the country, helps them to practice their English skills, and adds vocabulary that they did not know before. However, webinars have some drawbacks that are difficult to avoid, one of which is a network issue. Networking is an important component for achieving a good quality of online learning, but networks are unpredictable and can suddenly change depending on the circumstances (Rohleder et al., 2008) as well as lack of information about the existence of English webinars. According to the data gathered, some respondents said that they do not receive much information about the existence of English webinars, which is an impediment for them to learning English through webinars. Gunasekaran et al. (2002) supported the statement, Technology, and information assist students in learning, particularly during online learning. It will be able to help students to improve their learning and provide more learning opportunities if adequate

and disseminated information is available. People learn more when they have access to information. This finding supports a study conducted by Hidayati et al. (2021) who discovered that Internet capacity and accessibility have an impact on student learning engagement in online learning.

CONCLUSION

The covid-19 pandemic is still going on, and some universities are continuing to implement online learning. Colleges need online learning that provides both beneficial and engaging ways. Webinars can assist students in learning by providing them with useful and interesting learning. For example, students can broaden their knowledge of English and increase their vocabulary by interacting with native or non-native speakers during the English webinars. They can also practice their skills through webinars. In learning English through webinars, students find several challenges or difficulties, such as network issues and lack of information about English webinars among college students, particularly colleges who are not from the language department. In this case, providers are expected to improve their signal quality (Hidayati et al., 2021), particularly in areas where the signal is frequently poor, to facilitate online learning, especially through English webinars, and lecturers are expected to share availability information more frequently about English webinar with colleges, particularly those with majors other than English, to assist them in learning English through English webinars. However, webinars are still useful for students to help them in learning English during the pandemic.

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