

A Study on the Application of Online Speaking Class in Remote Areas: Is the Implementation of the Principle of Education for All Achieved?

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Abstract—Studies on blended and online learning have mostly focused on information and communication technology accessibility. This study investigated aspects other than ICT when students joined the Speaking Class blended and online from remote areas during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This study employed a mixed-method case study. The purposive sampling technique was used to choose two groups of students who enrolled in Speaking Classes at the English Department in the 2020/2021 academic year as the study's sample. The first group (Group A), which included eighteen (18) students, attended fourteen online speaking lectures, whereas the second group (Group B), which included twenty-two (22) students, attended blended learning lectures. The student's achievements in speaking abilities were described. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews were used to obtain information about students' problems, and the data were analysed using content analysis. The data analysis revealed that Group B students performed better than Group A students in terms of learning outcomes. The findings of the data analysis from the interviews and focus groups reveal that some problems were encountered, including; 1) interference from family members; 2) absence of a study room; 3) financial difficulty; 4) absence of peers; 5) difficulty to get local transportation; and 6) problem to concentrate. These findings suggest that the applied online learning system has not been able to meet the principles of education for all during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Solutions to the application of online learning in remote areas, highlighting the roles of the local government, are forwarded.

Index Terms—application, online speaking class, remote areas, education for all

I. INTRODUCTION

The principle of education for all has been declared by the United Nations through UNESCO as one of the foundations of education implementation. This idea emphasizes that everyone in the community has equal access to education (United Nations, 2005, 2015). Indonesian national education system accommodates equality of access to education and education for all through a law that requires local government and the central government to collaborate in the implementation of education (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003, 2003; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 6 Tahun 2014 Tentang Desa, 2014). The implementation of this principle was challenged when learning had to be held online during the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in early 2020 and imposed significant restrictions on community activities. The challenges were particularly experienced by the learners who reside in remote or rural regions (Sayed & Singh, 2020). Those who reside in remote areas face difficulties to access internet connection and electrical power supply (S̡ad & G̡aktas, 2014), digital instructional material resources (Khoza, 2015), and reliable supporting tools (Hu et al., 2021; Manurung et al., 2020; Olasina, 2018). If indeed the principles of universal education are applied, all learners, including those who live in remote regions, must have equal access to online learning (Khoza, 2015).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has long been used and accepted in the educational system by both students and teachers (Burston, 2013; Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015; Nickerson & Zodhiates, 1988; S̡ad & G̡aktas, 2014; Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Williams, 2008) where their breakthroughs are combined with traditional methods

of teaching to keep teaching and learning interesting (Bates, 2019; Fu, 2013). The acceptability of ICT tools in the teaching and learning process is owing to their contribution to creating a variety of teaching and learning settings for teachers and students (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015; Nickerson & Zodiates, 1988) and their widespread use among the younger generation (Cheon et al., 2012). The use of ICTs in teaching and learning activities has been shown to promote individualization in the learning process (Allen et al., 2002; Anderson, 2008; Rahman, 2014), create a more comfortable environment for learning (Manurung, 2005, 2015; Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Wright, 2017), and facilitate interactive learning through the use of mobile devices and internet networks (Weldon et al., 2021). In addition, It is noted that the use of ICT in online learning improves student cognition, encourages learner reflection and information processing, and improves roles throughout learners (Westberry, 2009), as well as provides learners with the belief that they have a better attitude toward online learning (Ja'ashan, 2020). More importantly, Fu (2013) and Bates (2019) noted that the current state of ICT facilitates the application of learning in the digital literacy era, especially content and skills including the appropriateness of the needs and competence achieved by students, and the adequacy of the substance of skill development in the curricula. The massive use of ICT in the teaching and learning process, therefore, allows for both online and blended learning to take place and allows for learning to take place in any situation (Anderson, 2008; Bates, 2019; Ja'ashan, 2020). These facts have served to reinforce the use of ICTs in education systems around the world, especially in urban regions.

Since the introduction of Computer-Aided Language Instruction (CALI) and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in language teaching and learning (Burston, 2013; Campbell et al., 2008; Higgins, 1983; Saieed, 2018), more studies engage ICTs in foreign language teaching (Alonso & Samy, 2018; Dedja, 2015; Serostanova, 2020; Zakirova et al., 2020), more specifically the use of mobile devices (Park et al., 2012). The use of these mobile devices in the teaching of language skills, such as listening (Ciğerci & Gultekin, 2017; Rashtchi & Mazraehno, 2019; Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007), speaking (Manurung, 2015; Millrood, 2015), reading (Abd Al-Hameed & Al-Shuair, 2019), writing (Cho, 2017; Kessler et al., 2012), and language components (Kang & Lee, 2020) have already been reported effective.

Even though both blended and online learning contributed to the teaching and learning process, it is claimed that learners' motivation during online learning is weak (Savenye, 2005) and the learners' achievement is poor (You & Kang, 2014). This is because the use of ICT in the teaching-learning process needs comprehensive support and efforts (Anderson, 2008; Wilson, 2013). Wilson (2013) argued that although ICT has facilitated online learning, the appropriate use of ICT continues to be a challenge (Wilson, 2013; Wright, 2017). The use of ICT requires a good network (Hackman & Walker, 1990), appropriate tools (Manurung et al., 2020; Olasina, 2018), related infrastructures and funding (Lalima & Lata Dangwal, 2017; Şad & Göktaş, 2014), teachers and learners experiences (Fenwick, 2016; Sayed & Singh, 2020), and individual learner's environment (Weldon et al., 2021). These arguments are true in the present situation, the COVID-19 Pandemic, in the teaching and learning process, where most learners from remote areas encounter problems regarding online learning using ICTs, particularly mobile devices. This is because the contribution of ICT implementation in online and blended learning has primarily been evaluated in terms of its strengths and weaknesses before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has primarily been reported in research results from urban areas.

As a follow-up to research findings on barriers to the introduction of online and blended learning before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic, very few studies have explored the problems faced by teachers and students living in rural areas while online learning was being held. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a massive number of learning processes at all levels of education, including higher education levels, took place from diverse remote locations. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, students from higher education who normally study in urban areas, as most universities are located in cities, returned to their respective regions and studied online from their homes. Some problems related to the implementation of online learning have been highlighted before the covid-19 pandemic, including the lack of tools (Manurung et al., 2020; Olasina, 2018), insufficient infrastructure and funding difficulties (Hockly, 2013; Şad & Göktaş, 2014), unequal teaching and learning process (Sayed & Singh, 2020), limitation of experiences of learners' as well as teachers' with online learning (Fenwick, 2016; Hu et al., 2021), and individual learner situation and condition (Weldon et al., 2021), however, there has been little research looking into and proposing solutions for online learning from remote areas until lately. As the consequence, when learning activities have to be done online as was experienced during the covid-19 pandemic, particularly for those who reside in remote areas, the reality that the conduct of the learning process was far from the principle of education for all, access availability, have to be admitted.

It has long been proposed that for online learning to be sustainable, burdens such as a lack of resources, contradictory ideas and practices, and learners' social surroundings (Stepanyan et al., 2013), network availability (Hackman & Walker, 1990), and collaborative reflection (Anderson, 2008) must be resolved. This paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the problems faced by learners in remote areas of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, to minimize the negative consequences of the implementation of online and blended learning by first comparing the achievements of students enrolled in blended and online learning, second describing the problems faced by learners during online learning, and finally addressing the challenges faced by learners during online learning. In this investigation, the following hypotheses are proposed: 1) During the covid-19 pandemic and the new normal era, students who participated in blended learning performed better than those who participated in online learning. 2) Learners from remote areas

experienced some problems during online speaking classes. And 3) Education for all principles was not accomplished through online learning from remote locations.

II. THE METHOD OF STUDY

A mixed methods case study design was used in this study, which included both qualitative and quantitative methods. The case-study design enables a more in-depth review of diverse cases of natural events based on the context and needs of the inquiry (Creswell & Cresswell, 2017; Hancock et al., 2009; Seliger & Shohamy, 1990). As a consequence, we started by assessing the student's performance in the Speaking for Professional Context Class at the end of both blended and online learning. Then we explain the problems faced by students who took the class online from remote areas and analyse the results based on the principles of education for all. The purposive sampling technique was used to select two of the twelve existing groups of students registered in the Speaking in Professional Context Classes at the English Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Tadulako University Indonesia in the 2020/2021 academic year. The two groups were divided into group A, which consisted of 18 students, and group B, which consisted of 22 students aged 19 to 21. They lived in the ten Central Sulawesi regions (22 or 55%) and Palu, the capital city, (18 or 45%). The participants had previously completed two compulsory Speaking Classes in the Department, Speaking for Basic Communication Skills and Speaking for Social Intercultural Communication.

The research took place between August and December 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic and the new normal era COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students studied online from their regions, and after the new normal era was declared in mid-October 2021, the university made a policy mandating 50% of courses to be taught face-to-face in all departments. Group B, one of the twelve groups in the Speaking in Professional Classes, was chosen to receive face-to-face instruction. As a consequence, students in Group A were taught online 14 times, whereas students in Group B were taught via blended learning, which included seven online sessions and seven face-to-face. The student's achievement in speaking ability was measured using the study program's criterion (Table 1), and the results were analysed descriptively. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews took place to collect information on students' problems in online learning, and the data were analysed using content analysis. Zoom meetings were used to conduct focus group discussions, while WhatsApp was used to conduct interviews.

TABLE 1
ACHIEVEMENT CRITERIA

Achievement	Qualitative	Description
86-100	A	Excellent
81-85	A-	Very Good
76-80	B+	Good
71-75	B	Good Enough
66-70	B-	
61-65	C	Enough
0-60	D	Poor

The speaking components of fluency, comprehensibility, and accuracy (Heaton, 1989) were utilized to measure the achievement of students in Speaking Classes in the English Department where the current study was done. To differentiate the achievement of students in Group A and Group B, the final achievement was first rated, and then the frequency and percentage of each grade were described in distinct columns. Students pass the course if they get a minimum score of 61 or C.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Blended Learning Versus Online Learning

The first question of this study, whether blended learning is more effective than online learning, is addressed by analysing and comparing the achievements of students in groups A and B. Table 2 and Table 3 show the results of the data analysis on the achievements of the groups.

TABLE 2
THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STUDENTS IN GROUP A

Achievement	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
86-100	Excellent	3	16,67
81-85	Very Good	6	33,33
76-80	Good	3	16,67
71-75	Good Enough	6	33,33
66-70	Enough	0	0
61-65	Poor	0	0
0-60	Very Poor	0	0
Total		18	100

Table 2 provides that the student achievement in Group A is divided into four (4) categories, namely 3 or 16.67% achieving *excellent* level, 6 or 33.33% achieving *very good* level, 3 or 16.67% achieving *good* level, and 6 or 33.33% achieving *good enough* level.

TABLE 3
THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STUDENTS IN GROUP B

Achievement	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
86-100	Excellent	8	36,36
81-85	Very Good	8	36,36
76-80	Good	6	27,27
71-75	Good Enough	0	0,00
66-70	Enough	0	0,00
61-65	Poor	0	0,00
0-60	Very Poor	0	0,00
Total		22	100

Table 3 illustrates that the student achievement in Group B is divided into three (3) categories, namely 8 or 36.36% achieving *excellent* level, 8 or 36.36% achieving *very good* level, and 6 or 22.27% achieving a *good* level.

The results in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that, although both groups of students successfully passed the speaking class, the grade received by the students who were taught through blended learning was higher than those obtained by students who were fully taught online. The students who were taught using blended learning are at the *good* to an *excellent* level, while students who were taught online are at the *good enough* to an *excellent* level, with 6 or 33.33% of students at the *good enough* level. Similarly, at the *excellent* level, there is a big difference in the performance of the students taught through blended learning (8 or 36.36%) and the students taught online learning (3 or 16.67%). These findings suggest that blended learning is more effective than online learning. This finding reinforces previous research evidence that engagement in online learning is weak and as a consequence, the achievement of learners is weaker than anticipated (Savenye, 2005; Wright, 2017; You & Kang, 2014). The better achievement of the learners in blended learning can be understood due to the presence of the teacher during the face-to-face sessions. Interaction between learners and teachers as well as interaction among learners bring about a better understanding of the instructional materials (Kim & Moore, 2005), better interest and engagement with peers (Wright, 2017), and incorporate various learning techniques (Lalima & Lata Dangwal, 2017). On the other hand, students who study online are more individualistic, dependent on social media, and often neglect study time so their achievement level is low (Wong & Phang, 2017). The possibility to build up mutual interaction among learners and the use of various techniques and tools have benefitted learners in the implementation of blended learning. This agrees with Kang and Lee (2020), who claim that blended learning is an effective strategy to enhance language ability.

B. The Problems Faced by the Learners From Remote Areas During Online Class and the Implementation of the Principle of Education for All

The findings of the focus group discussion and interviews reveal that students studying online from remote areas confront problems. The problems that have been confronted are not only related to ICT or mobile devices available, but also family members' interferences due to a lack of a study room, money issues in buying data plans, a lack of peers with whom to discuss and ask questions, difficulty in getting a mode of transportation to reach places where internet access is available, and difficulty to focus attention.

(a). Study Room Factor

One of the keys to the successful implementation of any teaching and learning process to achieve the teaching objectives is the teaching and learning facilities and environment. The absence of a study room during online learning from remote areas is believed as one of the obstacles to underpinning success in the speaking class. The disturbance may come at any time from the family members that break down the learning concentration. Other daily activities cannot be avoided since the family members feel that the learner is at home and therefore, the learner can undertake household activities and not realize that the learning process is being held online, instruction to do something as a family member may be ordered at any time during the online learning. These problems are raised by one of the FGD participants (A) below.

Studying at home is greatly influenced by the atmosphere at home. Family members have their activities so that noise cannot be avoided during the online learning process. During online learning, sometimes my parents call me and ask me for help... things like this affect my learning activities and I often miss the subject matter.

The lack of study room is also claimed by a student that distracts her during online learning at home. The simple house that the family owned is an obstacle in the conduct of online speaking class since all of the family members also conduct their activities in the same room, as revealed by one of the interviewees (interviewee 1) in the following excerpt.

I live in a remote area and my house is very simple. There is no study room in my house. I study in a room where all family members also did their activities, so I often get distracted while studying.

The problems reported by A and Interviewee 1 indicate the absence of access to a comfortable learning situation during the online speaking class, and therefore, do not support the principle of education for all. An enjoyable and comfortable learning environment is needed to implement effective teaching and learning process and to best achieve learning output (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). The teaching and learning process, including online learning, requires a conducive learning atmosphere in any learning system. The use of ICT in the teaching and learning process facilitates the implementation of learning anywhere and anytime (Anderson, 2008). This implies that the teaching and learning process is not only the responsibility of the societies but also the concern of the related institution and government since the principle of education for all, equal access to education, has been declared.

(b). *Funding Factor*

Online learning requires a qualified internet network. The unavailability of the internet network in remote areas affects the online teaching and learning process. Students have difficulty accessing a good internet network because of their parent's financial limitations. The unavailability of the internet network causes additional costs that are difficult for students to meet due to the financial limitations of parents who work as farmers, as stated by the participant of the Focus Group Discussion (B).

My parents work as a farmer. Sometimes my data plan ran out when my parents don't have money, so I can't follow the learning process completely. I often miss the instructional materials during online teaching because it was very slow to catch up and join the internet network.

The limitations of mobile devices also hinder online learning from remote areas where the specifications of mobile devices owned by students affect the speed of access to the network. The financial limitations of students' parents cause students to only use existing cellular phones while the cellular phone capacity is very limited. Students cannot afford to buy cellular phones or laptops that have a larger capacity which hinders the process of downloading learning materials and uploading assignments, including filling out the attendance list online, as stated by interview participants (2) below.

My parents don't have money to buy a better mobile phone or laptop that can quickly access the network. I often face difficulty to download instructional materials and uploading my home assignment. It is also a problem to fill out the online attendance list because the time to fill it out is limited.

This information is also supported by FGD's participant (C) indicating that the lack of funding factor affects the concentration during online learning due to the limitation of available internet data. The limitation of internet data also affects uploading assignments and downloading instructional materials or references suggested to underpin the teaching and learning process, as expressed by interview participant (3) below.

It is difficult to understand the lessons and many tasks to do, many assignments, such as creating and sending photos, and videos, downloading instructional materials and references, as well as uploading tasks. All need internet access, and uploading and downloading videos consume a lot of data packages.

Problems raised by students during FGD (B and C) and interviews (2 and 3) indicate that access to online learning requires a network and capable mobile devices. Online learning can achieve its goals with the support of a good internet network (Hackman & Walker, 1990), appropriate mobile devices (Olasina, 2018), and financial support (Lalima & Lata Dangwal, 2017). This shows that the financial limitations of parents in remote areas also limit the application of education for all. Thus, financial support in implementing education for all greatly affects online learning from remote areas by providing online learning equipment assistance and providing internet quota assistance or scholarships to realize education for all.

(c). *Peer Factor*

When students are alone during online lessons from remote areas, it is one of the inhibiting factors for success in speaking skills. Today's learning is student-centred so it affects the learning methods applied by teachers. Learner-centred learning requires the active involvement of students both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Collaboration between students is carried out when students discuss in groups. During the Covid-19 pandemic, group learning and interaction with other students were not applicable so students felt alone, there is no discussion partner and there is no one to whom to ask questions about learning materials that had not been understood, as revealed by the following FGD participant (D).

There are no classmates or students of the Language Education study program living in the area where I live. I need a friend to discuss what has been taught during online learning or ask something that was not clear during the online learning. I also need group members to do group work. I often can't do group work online because group members have discussions in the afternoon or evening, and I have trouble getting an internet connection at that time.

The problems expressed by the FGD participants (D) are related to collaboration between students during learning which is very much needed in student-centred learning methods. Collaboration between students can activate and motivate students (Anderson, 2008). Collaboration between students can increase the active participation of students in the classroom which can directly affect the achievement of learning objectives. The desired collaboration could not be realized during the Covid-19 pandemic it affected student achievement.

(d). *Local Transportation and Surrounding Environment Factor*

The unavailability of local transportation is an inhibiting factor for students when studying online from remote areas. Students living in remote areas who cannot access the internet network need transportation to reach areas where internet access is available. The unavailability of this means of transportation affects the concentration of students because it takes a long time to walk, as revealed by interview participants 3 below.

No signal in the area where I live. I have to go towards the city to access the internet signal. I find it difficult to get a vehicle to the city because there are almost no motorbikes or cars in the area where I live, so I have to walk quite a distance to get an internet signal.

The problem of concentration in online learning is also influenced by the atmosphere around the learning environment. The existence of the community, especially children playing around online learning, affects concentration. Electricity conditions around remote areas are often disturbed, and blackouts, make it difficult to concentrate while studying, as reported by interview participants (4) below.

I have difficulty concentrating on the teaching and learning process, I am worried that my cell phone will run out of battery or my data package credit plan will run out soon. The electricity is frequently not stable. In the study environment, the noise from the neighbourhood could not be avoided, the children played and made a lot of noise. This situation and condition affected my concentration during the online lesson.

The problems reported by Interview participant 3 and the FGD participant D indicate that absence of infrastructure that underpins the conduct of online learning is still lacking in remote areas. The existence of infrastructures (S ad & Göktaş, 2014) and a comfortable environment (Stepanyan et al., 2013) are needed in online learning to help learners to concentrate during online learning and the existence of adequate infrastructures (Lalima & Lata Dangwal, 2017) motivate learners to achieve the learning objectives. This phenomenon indicates and strengthens the fact that access to education particularly during online learning has not been experienced by the learners who are joining online learning.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

No one can promise that global online learning will cease to take place after COVID-19. Because of this phenomenon of global online learning that occurred during the Covid-19 epidemic, all countries are now moving to consistently prepare and develop further the infrastructure needed for online learning. Particular attention must be paid to the communities that live in remote areas. The declaration of the principle of education for all by the United Nations opens opportunities for the entire world's communities to participate in educational programs. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia also stipulates that all citizens have the same right to education through a law that all citizens have the right to education. The implementation of education is also regulated in the law that the government and local governments are obliged to provide services and facilities, as well as guarantee the implementation of quality education for every citizen without discrimination. By referring to this law, the problem of evenly implementing education during online learning will be able to be resolved through collaboration between agencies. By referring to the problem, data experienced by students in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of learning is no longer only the responsibility of the education and teaching institution but is a shared responsibility between the education and culture institution and local government. This collaboration can be realized through needs analysis, namely the needs of students when implementing online learning. The problems faced by students can be overcome by empowering the village hall. The local government through the village head and village officials together with parents has to program the provision of facilities and infrastructure such as shared study rooms, electricity preparation, and network procurement at the village hall, while the education and culture institution prepares learning tools and teaching staff. Needs analysis can be carried out in collaboration with universities, including planning for online learning support facilities that are suitable for the community environment. The village hall is prepared to be a centre for joint activities with village residents. In this way, the village hall can also become a centre for learning support facilities and infrastructure for all because village halls are generally established in strategic locations. The location of the village hall is strategic because it can be reached by all villagers. Thus, village officials together with the community can jointly program educational improvement activities for rural communities.

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