

# The Economics Students' Belief, Perspective, and Challenges in Post Pandemic English Learning

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## Abstract

This study aims to obtain students' beliefs, perspectives, and challenges in learning English through virtual learning after a year of pandemic in the Faculty of Economics and Business. The researchers examined the students' perspectives and challenges of using WhatsApp group, Zoom, and Google Classroom based on their point of view. Also, in this study the students have given a chance to explore their opinion and some suggestions of the English learning process through the media stated. The researchers employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. They have distributed a questionnaire to collect the data. Fifty students were asked to fill a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and answer one open-ended question. The researchers used Google Forms to facilitate the distribution and collection of data process. The findings stated half of the respondents, instead of joining the English class through media stated, they preferred joining the subject in the classroom. The other half surprisingly preferred learning English virtually. Both have their arguments supporting their perspectives.

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## INTRODUCTION

As we know, we have been shocked by the viral event beginning from last 2019 in China. Unknown deadly virus has spread out to other countries all over the world. All normal activities have suddenly stopped, many sectors have been affected; economic, social and cultures, tourism, and also education. The learning process has ever stopped for a while to prevent the spread of the virus. After few months, learning process has started in a very different way. Because the schools were closed, so the authority instructed schools to organize the learning process through virtual learning. No more face-to-face learning. The students must attend their class, no going to their school, just have been at home and using the internet connection to do the process.

Different with e-learning, where many universities have started to implement it since 2018, as a new paradigm and breakthrough in learning process, even though the implementation was not run by all the universities. Virtual learning has been conducted in almost schools in Indonesia, including universities when the corona virus pandemic hit this country. Some teachers or instructors use WhatsApp group, and Telegram; some others use Google Classroom, Zoom link, and other e-learning as the learning media. Of course, there are some strengths of applying this learning system in the social era 5.0 where technological progress has achieved its best point, such as follow.

a) Easily accessible

Simply using a smartphone or other technological device such as a laptop connected to the internet, students can access the material they want to learn. Furthermore, students can carry out learning activities in flexible time and place.

b) Flexible study time

By an online learning, the students can arrange their time to learn. After downloading the topic of some classes, they can open it as they have a spare time.

c) Allowing for interaction between students and lecturers

Different with e-learning, where students can join and complete coursework at their own pace on their own schedule, virtual learning, is more interactive. Students join live lessons with their teachers and have the capability to ask questions. They can even chat with their classmates.

While virtual programs have significant strengths and offer unprecedented accessibility to quality education, there are weaknesses inherent in the use of this medium that can pose potential threats to the success of any online program. These problems fall into some points as follow.

a) Technology

The virtual learning allows the students to attend the process by using some devices such as mobile phone, laptop, and also internet connection. Furthermore, from an administrative point of view, if students cannot afford the technology the institution employs, they will fall to be learners. As far as Internet accessibility is concerned, it is not universal, and in many areas of the Indonesia, Internet access poses a significant cost to the students. If the students' time online is limited by the amount of Internet access they can afford, then instruction and participation in the online program will not be equitable for all students in the learning process.

b) The students

While a virtual method of education can be a highly effective alternative medium of education for the mature, self-disciplined student, it is an inappropriate learning environment for more dependent learners. In this case, the students must be well organized, self-motivated, and possess a high degree of time management skills in order to keep up with the pace of the course.

c) The lecturers

Successful on-ground learning process does not always translate to successful online learning. If lecturers are not properly trained in online delivery and methodologies, the success of the online program will be compromised. A lecturer must be able to communicate well in writing and in the language in which learning is offered. An online learning will be weakened if its lecturers are not adequately prepared to function in the Virtual Classroom.

d) Limited Interaction

Teacher-student interaction is important for many reasons. Teacher student interaction is highly influencing a student's skill to change to university, to do well at university, and to relate to peers (Pianta, 1999). Teachers who had positive and secure relationships with students reported that their students were less likely to stay away from school, appeared more independent, more supportive, and busy in learning (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004).

It is commonly known, a study concerning with English instruction with ESP approach in Indonesia indicated unsuccessful story which was proved that many students have achieved only minimal English proficiency (Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). They further revealed that because they have pragmatic reasons for learning English such as to get greater life opportunity, then to fulfill their need, the teachers should develop their teaching capacity. It needs more attractive strategy and good interaction between the lecturers and the students in achieving the learning goal.

Learning English in Faculty of Economics and Business University of Muhammadiyah Pekajangan Pekalongan has been conducted through virtual learning by using some media; WhatsApp group, Zoom, Google Classroom, and Open learning. This process has been done since corona virus pandemic hit Indonesia in the early 2020. It has been a year and the pandemic is still going on even though it is getting into new normal. Thus, this study will investigate the students believe, perspectives, and challenges in learning English through virtual learning after a year of pandemic.

Thus, it creates three problems here considering some statements and phenomena above; how the students' beliefs, perspectives, and challenges are in learning English through virtual learning after a year of pandemic.

By investigating these matters, it will be a significant endeavor good environment in learning English process especially in Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Muhammadiyah Pekajangan Pekalongan. Besides, it will be then pedagogically implemented through building positive belief and perspective so the learning goal can be achieved.

## **Beliefs, Perspectives, and Challenges**

Richardson (1996) defines beliefs as “psychologically held understandings, premises, or prepositions about the world that felt to be true” (p. 103). Learner beliefs refer to the beliefs of learners about language learning, such as their beliefs about their own language aptitude, about the difficulty of a language they want to learn, and about the best way to learn a language (p. 131). Furthermore, learners' belief relates to their belief of their own language aptitude, about the difficulty of a language they want to learn, and about the best way to learn a language (p. 131). Thus, some factors affected learners' belief in learning process such as using learning strategy and teachers' interaction.

As Aslan and Thompson (2018) stated, beliefs in EFL students proven have contributed in their performance. The positive ones in language learning are significant to decrease anxiety or nervous and trigger the students in the process. Moreover, Wei et al (2018) has implied how the students' perception in applying their independent activities to improve their language skills and succeed their EFL performance. Thus, it is commonly known that beliefs have the most important role in improving the students' performance in learning English.

Meanwhile, according to Kuliah & Global (2017) perspective is defined as the way a person point of views or the way a person behaves toward an event or problem phenomenon. While Suhanadji and Waspada TS (2004) mentioned that perspective is a person's perspective/insight in assessing problems. So perspective is a way of looking that arises due to a person's awareness of a certain issue.

Perspective can encourage one's insight, view, or knowledge to see everything that happens with a broader view.

Furthermore, challenge in this study means a number of obstacles, barriers, or problems faced by students in learning English after a year of pandemic. Of course, they face something different due to this phenomenon; class situation (from a classroom interaction to online one), learning strategy and using learning media. Besides, they have to be ready with a good internet connection to support their learning process.

According to Rasheed et al. (2020), he had categorized and covered other potential challenges during online classes, two more clusters were added, namely learning resource challenges (LRC) and learning environment challenges (LEC) (Buehler, 2004; Recker et al., 2004; Seplaki et al., 2014; Xue et al., 2020). LRC refers to a set of challenges that students face relating to their using of library resources and instructional materials, whereas LEC is a set of challenges that students experience related to the condition of their learning space that shapes their learning experiences, beliefs, and attitudes. Since learning environment at home and learning resources available to students has been reported to significantly impact the quality of learning and their achievement of learning outcomes (Drane et al., 2020; Suryaman et al., 2020), the inclusion of LRC and LEC would allow us to capture other important challenges that students experience after a year of the pandemic, particularly in Indonesia. This comprehensive list would provide us a clearer and detailed picture of students' experiences when engaged in virtual learning in an unusual condition.

## **Virtual Learning**

Using technology in language learning has been developing and growing every year. Starting from using computer as assisted tools in language learning, which is called CALL (Daud & Farrah, 2013). Nowadays, the use of technology has expanded to reach a new term which is called virtual learning. Since Covid Pandemic, technology-mediated learning has a significant impact on the educational process.

Virtual learning can be defined as a learning experience that is enhanced through utilizing computers and/or the internet both outside and inside the facilities of the educational organization. The learning process most commonly takes place in an online environment. The teaching activities are carried out online whereby the teacher and learners are physically separated (in terms of place, time, or both). In Virtual learning, some media could be applied to support the process such as Zoom link, WhatsApp group, Google Classroom, and Open Learning system.

Using these media is relatively new for the students of Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Muhammadiyah Pekajangan Pekalongan especially in the context of learning English. Before a corona virus hit this city, students were used had a learning English in classroom, had a nice interaction with their teachers, and applied some learning strategies in the direct way. They used an internet connection of the campus to explore a number of learning English websites. It suddenly changed when the pandemic come, and they finally have adopted a year in learning English by virtual learning process. It was not easy at the first, considering learners in following English for Specific for Purposes (ESP) have their own characteristics. As stated in Gatehouse (2001), ESP consists of English teaching that is designed to meet specific learners' need, related to the content of learners' disciplines, and contrasted from General English.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to delve into students' experiences within a virtual learning environment. This approach allowed researchers to gather comprehensive data and gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon from the students' perspective. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized. Quantitative data was collected through a Likert scale questionnaire administered to 50 students, while qualitative data was obtained from an open-ended question within the same questionnaire.

Participants in this study were students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Muhammadiyah Pekajangan Pekalongan who had taken English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses virtually for at least two semesters. The students majored in Accounting, Management, and Sharia Economics. A majority of the participants came from low to middle-income backgrounds, which presented challenges in terms of internet access.

The primary research instrument was a 36-item Likert scale questionnaire designed to measure students' beliefs and perspectives towards virtual English learning. Additionally, an open-ended question was included to explore students' challenges and suggestions regarding the virtual learning process. The questionnaire aligned with the research questions, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences in virtual English learning and to inform potential improvements in the learning process.

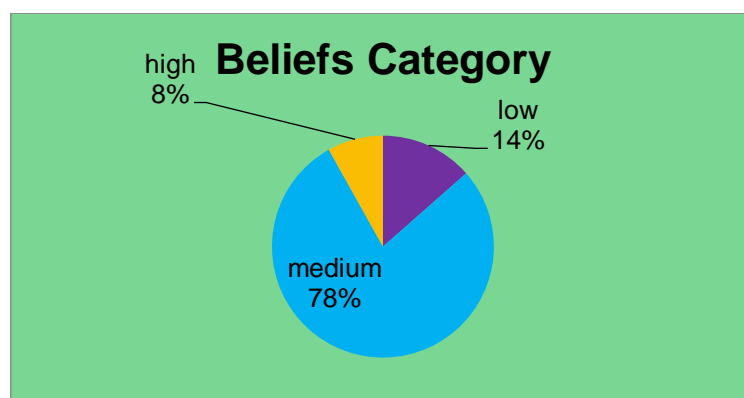
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Students' Beliefs in Learning English through Virtual Learning After a Year of Pandemic

Twenty-two items of questions concerning on the students' beliefs, 75% of participants were categorized medium (moderate), 14% of them were categorized in low, and the remaining 8% were in high belief. It could be seen in Diagram 1.

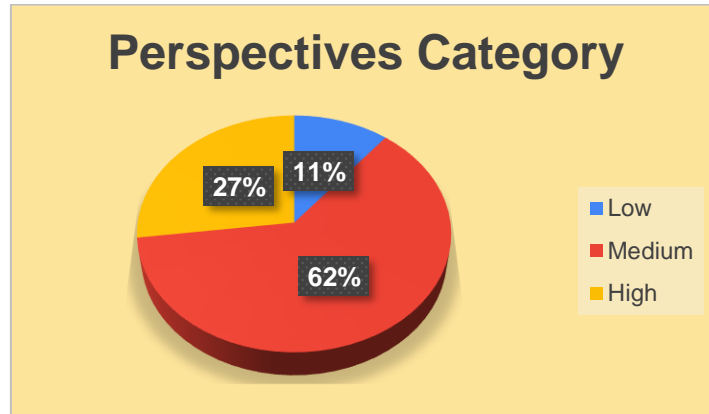
From this diagram, we find out 8% of participants really believe that this such kind of learning process makes it easier for them to find various kinds of materials and references, gives them more time to study, increases their confidence in expressing ideas and opinions, and helps to improve their technology, information and communication literacy and skills. They also have high belief that during and after this learning process, they could attend the class every day well, understand the all given topics, well finish the test and assignments until the end of the semester. Moreover, they are really sure they could adopt the situation, and feel so comfort with the learning process.

Otherwise, 14% of participants merely don't believe for all matters stated above. However, 78% of them in between of high and low belief, that this such kind of learning process makes it easier for them to find various kinds of materials and references, gives them more time to study, increases their confidence in expressing ideas and opinions, and helps to improve their technology, information and communication literacy and skills. They also feel the same that during and after this learning process, they are not sure to be able to attend the class every day well, understand the all given topics, well finish the test and assignments until the end of the semester. Even, they are not really sure they could adopt the situation, and feel so comfort with the learning process.



**Diagram 1.** The Students' Belief in Learning English through Virtual Learning After a Year of Pandemic

## The Students' Perspectives in Learning English through Virtual Learning After a Year of Pandemic



**Diagram 2.** The Students' Perspective in Learning English through Virtual Learning After a Year of Pandemic

Nearly same with the students' belief in learning English through virtual one after the pandemic, the participants who have a low and high perspectives are more than in their beliefs, as shown at Diagram 2.

It clearly seen, 11% of participants stated they are pessimistic and in doubt with their ability to follow the classroom, understand the topics, and finish the class until the last semester. They also feel less happy joining the class, less conscious to join the class based on their own initiative. Moreover, they feel their mates' activities, teachers' compliment, class situation, and teaching strategies greatly affected their perception in learning the class.

In the same cases, 27% of participants stated they are very optimistic in those matters and 62% were in between.

## The Students' Challenges in Learning English through Virtual Learning after A Year of Pandemic

In an open question concerning to explore the students' ideas, thought, and expressions of their challenge in learning English through virtual learning after a year of pandemic, most participants stated they were distracted by Internet connection and signal when they attend the class from home. Besides, they have to increase their self-consciousness to follow the class considering there is no teacher remind and supervise them. Also, time allocation of learning English was no longer than in the classroom. Some challenges explained more clearly as below:

- a) They have often had a problem in signal and internet connection
- b) Spending money for internet connection was relatively costly for most of them.



- c) Limited time to have a adequate discussion and session of answer and questions.
- d) Having lack of concentration to follow the learning process because the learning atmosphere at home was less support.

Surprisingly, most of them stated the learning English process conducted during the pandemic really fun and attractive, so they feel comfort attending the class. Teacher's strategy, opportunity giving for the students to express the idea, and teacher's ice breaking were the common factors they feel good and enjoy the class. For those who has inferior or introvert personality stated they more comfort to express the idea and thought in answer and question session in virtual learning process.

## CONCLUSION

The results and discussions in this study lead us into three categories of students' beliefs and perspectives. More than 50% of them were in a medium level of both contexts. Very few of them are categorized a low in beliefs and perspectives (11% and 14%). It means they have adopted in the situation and condition relatively new. So do in applying the teaching media and strategy. They are in a good atmosphere of learning English process due to some factors stated above even though they often have a problem in signal and internet connections.

Of course, all findings would be underlined in teacher's note for the success of learners' performance in improving their English skills. Also, these would encourage the teacher's commitment to create good atmosphere in the process so the learning goals will be obtained. Considering students' lack of active learning, their lack of ability to express their idea, thought, and their opinion, actions that the educational system did not foster or develop, are now become high concern the high education system in the process of virtual learning.

For the students, this situation should be addressed as the new habit and they have to adopt it well by minimizing the barriers of learning so that they can obtain learning goals and get a bet performance in English skills.

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