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INVESTIGATING EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION
ON ONLINE LEARNING AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract
COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the shifting of teaching-learning process from the combination of F2F and online learning to full-online one. This study aims to investigate students' perspective on the implementation of full-online learning mode in English classroom with a low-tech environment. Employing convenience sampling, 104 university students participated in this study. Survey method was utilized. The findings showed that (1) the respondents have had various level of familiarity using search engine, social media, e-resources and learning apps that enable them to comprehend the learning content; (2) the use of social media, e-resources and learning apps results a different impact on respondents' perception on learning effectiveness; (3) the respondents are more digitally-literate in using learning application or other online-based platforms and enable to autonomously learn the course materials as well as improve their language skills; (4) support system needs to be increased to engage students in teaching and learning activities; (5) there is a requirement of feedback and consistency in determining course schedule and timeline for task and exam submission. It can be concluded that university students have positive and negative perspective on full-online learning mode. Suggestions are presented in the closure.

Keywords: COVID-19; EFL students' perception; Low-tech environment; Online learning mode

Introduction
As the COVID-19 pandemic is still growing, the Indonesian government issued the Presidential Decree No.7 of 13 March 2020 (which was amended by another Presidential Decree No.9 of 20 March 2020), the Government Regulation No. 21 of 31 March 2020, the Decree No.9 of 3 April 2020, and the Presidential Decree No. 12 of 13 April 2020. Considering the increasing number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) wants to guarantee student safety and ascertain the

continuation of teaching-learning process by issuing a learning guideline in which two methods are utilized namely offline and online learning for primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020b). In addition, at the level of higher education, Director General of Higher Education issued Circular Letter No.262/E.E2/KM/2020 about Learning Activity during Emergency Period of COVID-19 Pandemic which was to bolster the issued regulation mainly on Social Distancing on a Large Scale (PSBB) so the learning activities can be carried out from home in online or offline mode. However, following the condition of COVID-19 spread, Indonesian MOEC supported the online learning to be held mainly in the areas affected by COVID-19 because it promotes physical distancing and reduces virus spread (Chaterine, 2020; Wajdi et al., 2020). Yet, in the implementation of online learning, the point of "adjust[ing] distance learning practices according to the conditions of specific regions" should be taken seriously into consideration (Azzahra, 2020).

There are a number of various terms for online learning i.e. "tele-learning", "virtual learning", "computer-assisted learning", "web-based learning", "e-learning", "networked learning", "internet learning" and "distance education" (Ally, 2004; Anderson, 2011; Benson, 2002; El Mansour & Mupinga, 2007; Sun & Chen, 2016). Further, online learning refers to the learning condition that enables learners to utilize cyberspace to retrieve the content and increase their educational chances (Benson, 2002). On the other hand, Ananthanarayanan (2014) stated that online learning does not have specific definition since it depends on "delivery mechanisms, communication modalities, content types, and access structures". Further, it is stated that online learning allows students to get wider access to information gathering or sharing and enable them to flexibly carry out their education which is not restricted to particular spot or time (El-Seoud, Taj-Eddin, Seddiek, El-Khouly, & Nosseir, 2014; Worthen & Sanders, 1987). Based on the aforementioned literature, online learning is the learning environment that allows learners to undertake their education flexibly and enable them to be more self-regulated in learning process.

In relation to online learning implementation in English classroom context, many projects have been reported. As Whitworth and Berson (2003) reviewed a number of articles, they revealed that the use of computer technology i.e. website has increased and played a significant role in social studies education. Particularly, the significance of technology was also found in K-12 classroom, Thieman (2008) reported that most of pre-service teachers implemented their technology skills for supporting instructional practices in K-12 classroom. However, in their studies of technology integration through online teaching, Arkorful and Abaidoo (2014) and Chawinga (2017) discovered a number of benefits and drawbacks. Further, Pilli (2015) reported the use of social media as the powerful tool in educational aspects. Similarly, Bal and Bicen (2018) revealed that the university students perceived that social media was effective in promoting the information acquisition and increasing their motivation by getting involved in supporting group and environment. Beemt, Thurlings, & Willems (2020) reviewed articles and found that the research on social media use for educational setting has been widely conducted but the studies of interrelatedness among the

aspects such as students, teachers, and school in the implementation of social media still needs further research. In addition, Lewis and Abdul-Hamid (2006) focused on feedback in online teaching and considered it as the significant one for students as they could recognize their learning progress through the given feedback. By the same token, Leibold and Schwarz (2015) reported that feedback enabled the instructor to inform the learners about their academic progress which is highly required for learning effectiveness. Shi (2016) reported that using e-learning platform was also beneficial since students were more motivated to finish and submit the homework before the deadline. The new way of conducting online teaching and learning activities has also been studied in which webinar is considered as an alternative tool (Cornelius & Gordon, 2013; Gegenfurtner & Ebner, 2019; Gegenfurtner, Schwab, & Ebner, 2018; Kear, Chetwynd, Williams, & Donelan, 2012; Wang & Hsu, 2008; White, 2019). Nevertheless, online teaching and learning activities still have several drawbacks which resulted in students' preferences of F2F learning mode over online learning mode (Wakil, Abdulfaraj, Sadula, Tofiq, & Nawzad, 2019).

In Indonesian EFL setting, a number of studies have been conducted related to online learning. To mention some, Tigowati, Efendi and Budiyanto (2017), Cakrawati (2017), Bali and Liu (2018), Mudra (2018), Basri and Paramma (2019), Rachman, Sunarti and Arbain (2019), and Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) may represent the trend. Focusing on the implementation of e-learning platform in English teaching context, Tigowati, Efendi and Budiyanto (2017) found that students' cognitive performance were higher after they were taught by using Schoology. By the same token, Rachman, Sunarti and Arbain's (2019) study revealed that Schoology also contributed to the improvement of students' English learning outcomes at Nursing Program. Then, some researchers emphasized on the students' perception. Cakrawati's (2017) study is on students' perception towards the use of Edmodo or Quipper. Mudra (2018) investigated students' perception in terms of perception and attitudes of Blended Learning, negative impression of Blended Learning and the concept of Blended Learning whereas Basri and Paramma (2019) conducted a research on students' perception by utilizing the modified Acceptance Model. In addition, Bali and Liu (2018) explored students' perception towards face-to-face (F2F) and online learning by taking three factors i.e. social presence, social interaction, and satisfaction into consideration. Then, the current study of online learning implementation was undertaken by focusing on EFL teachers' reflection towards the online teaching they have done in COVID-19 pandemic (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020).

Previous studies have shown the positive and negative perception on the implementation of online learning. However, a study about students' perception towards online learning mode is still required mainly in a low-tech context or environment (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Accordingly, this study aims to investigate EFL students' perception towards their online learning mode in a low-tech environment before and amidst COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesian tertiary education.

Method

The respondents were 104 undergraduate students enrolled in four-year English literature major program offered by a public university in East Borneo, Indonesia. There were 50 (48.1%) male students and 54 (51.9%) female students. They were registered in dissimilar semesters e.g. second semester (23 respondents/22.1%), fourth semester (44 respondents/42.3%), and sixth semester (37 respondents/35.6%). The respondents were about 18 to 22 years old. Related to respondents' origin, they came from North Borneo (NB), South Sulawesi (SS), South East Sulawesi (SES), North Maluku (NM), North Sulawesi (NS), East Borneo (EB), and Malaysia (MY). For confidentiality issue, all respondents are reported in the forms of their pseudonym. The summary of demographic information is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Respondents (N=104)

VAR	Age		Sex			
			Male		Female	
	M	SD	Freq	%	Freq	%
	19.875	.98	50	48.1	54	51.9

VAR	Origin							Semester		
	NB	SS	SES	NM	NS	EB	MY	2nd	4th	6th
Freq	5	3	1	1	1	92	1	23	44	37
%	4.81	2.89	0.96	0.96	0.96	88.46	0.96	22.1	42.3	35.6

This study utilized quantitative approach and the main data collection tool was questionnaire in which there were three main sections: (1) demographic information; (2) students' perception on their learning environment before Covid-19 pandemic; (3) students' perception on their learning environment amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

The first section was constructed in order to get the information about the respondents' background including their gender, age, origin, and academic standing (Dörnyei, 2007). In the second section, the researchers provided 14 items which contained Likert scale items, closed and open-ended items. The aim of these items was to investigate respondents' perception mainly on their virtual learning environment and support system before COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, there are several aspects to focus on such as: (1) familiarity on accessing information using search engines; (2) virtual learning activities via LMS, learning accounts on social media, learning channels on YouTube and Websites; (3) motivation to do and submit their tasks; (4) tasks types given by the lecturers; (5) access to course material; and (6) information flow from lecturers to students. The third section consisted of 20 items which contained similar item types used in the previous section. The aspects being emphasized on were still alike to the second one. Yet, there were a number of items that asked the participants to state their reasons for conducting particular things related to their online learning process.

The questionnaire was written in Indonesian in order to minimize language interference and confusion in giving response for each item. Afterwards, the researchers converted the questionnaire into the web-based format (Google Form) so it enables respondents to easily submit their response online. To optimize

gaining the information from the respondents, the researchers provided due date of response submission and set the questions to required mode. After all data were collected, the researchers employed coding using Creswell's approach (Creswell, 2014) for qualitative data taken from open-ended items and use descriptive statistics for quantitative data in order to organize and summarize them.

Findings and Discussion
Findings
At this stage, the findings which were gathered from 104 respondents of this research are presented. The respondents were of 48.1% male students and 51.9% female students enrolling in diverse semesters in academic year 2019/2020. The distribution was as follows: second semester (22.1%), forth semester (42.3%), and sixth semester (35.6%). As they were given 34 questions in the form of open and close-ended questions, followings are their responses.

Learning before COVID-19 Pandemic
In order to simplify the display of the data, the findings of close-ended questions are summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of responses for learning before COVID-19 pandemic

No.	Questions	Frequency of Responses					Pct.	Mean	Std.
		5	4	3	2	1			
Q1	Familiarity of using search engine	63.5%	32.7%	3.8%	0%	0%	100%	4.596	0.566
Q2	Frequency of social media use to learn	15.4%	41.3%	34.6%	6.7%	1.9%	100%	3.615	0.895
Q4	Accessing website or another sources	14.4%	38.5%	42.3%	4.8%	0%	100%	3.625	0.790
Q5	Accomplishing assignments punctually	38.5%	44.2%	15.4%	1%	1%	100%	4.182	0.797
Q6	Students' habits to employ social media, LMS, and others	26.9%	39.4%	26.9%	4.8%	1.9%	100%	3.846	0.942
Q10	Frequency of giving assignments and ask to submit it through platform before COVID-19	5.8%	24%	55.8%	11.5%	2.9%	100%	3.182	0.821
Q11	Blended learning	22.1%	31.7%	37.5%	5.8%	2.9%	100%	3.644	0.984
Q12	Improving language skill by using learning application	16.3%	40.4%	33.7%	6.7%	2.9%	100%	3.605	0.939
Q13	Lecturers share information about syllabus and learning module	26%	54.8%	17.3%	1.9%	0%	100%	4.048	0.715
Q14	Lecturers teach language skills	9.6%	47.1%	39.4%	1.9%	1.9%	100%	3.605	0.768

	supported by learning website

Meanwhile, the summary of response for open-ended questions, after coding, is depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of responses for learning before COVID-19 pandemic

	Questions			
	Q3	**Q7**	**Q8**	**Q9**
Responses	Friends (45.2%) Lecturers (50%) Self-browsing (69.2%) Social media (46.2%)	Personal mobile phone (92.3%) Personal laptop (70.2%) Friend's mobile phone (1%) Friend's laptop (8.7%) Rental PC (1.9%) Parents' mobile phone (0.96%) Sibling's laptop (0.96%)	Campus Wi-Fi (3.8%) House Wi-Fi (56.7%) Boarding House Wi-Fi (10.6%) Personal internet network/tethering hotspot (70.2%) Friends' tethering hotspot (0.96%) Rental (0.96%) Wi-Fi voucher (1.92%) Neighbours' Wi-Fi (0.96%)	Paper (51.9%) File (Video, Word, Audio) (91.3%) PPT, journal, article (16.7%)

Learning amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

In order to simplify the display of the data, the findings of close-ended questions are summarized in the Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of responses for learning during COVID-19 pandemic

No.	Questions	Frequency of Responses					Pct.	Mean	Std.
		5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**			
Q15	Directions or Instructions of Online Application Use	8.7%	43.3%	36.5%	7.7%	3.8%	100%	3.451	0.901
Q16	Frequency of using social media, LMS, and others to interact, deliver materials, and give assignments	40.4%	42.3%	15.4%	0%	1.9%	100%	4.192	0.836
Q17	Frequency of lecturers share link websites or learning sources	21.2%	47.1%	26.9%	3.8%	1%	100%	3.836	0.837
Q18	Frequency of students learn the latest information about topics learned through website	11.5%	51.0%	31.7%	3.8%	1%	100%	3.692	0.764
Q20	Frequency of following free webinars	9.8%	26.2%	37.7%	8.2%	18%	100%	3.016	1.217
Q22	Students' comfort on	6.7%	21.2%	45.2%	17.3%	9.6%	100%	2.980	1.023

	using applications							
Q23	Students' Digital Literacy	18.3%	27.9%	35.6%	10.6%	7.7%	100%	3.384	1.134
Q31	Frequency of finishing homework	39.4%	45.2%	15.4%	0%	0%	100%	4.240	0.703
Q32	Students' difficulties to employ social media, LMS and other supporting applications to learning process needs	19.2%	38.5%	28.8%	9.6%	3.8%	100%	3.596	1.028
Q33	Lecturers' feedbacks	8.7%	34.6%	50%	6.7%	0%	100%	3.451	0.748
Q34	Social media and online learning platform use in teaching and learning	6.7%	38.5%	38.5%	8.7%	7.7%	100%	3.278	0.989
	Social media and online learning platform easiness	9.6%	27.9%	48.1%	8.7%	5.8%	100%	3.269	0.957
	The effectiveness of social media and learning platform use	5.8%	28.8%	44.2%	14.4%	6.7%	100%	3.125	0.962
	The fun of social media and learning platform use	6.7%	26.9%	54.8%	6.7%	4.8%	100%	3.240	0.864

Meanwhile, the summary of response for open-ended questions, after identification and categorization, is depicted in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of responses for learning during COVID-19 pandemic

No.	Questions	Responses
Q19	Students' acknowledgement about webinar	Yes (49%), No (51%)
Q21	The information givers related to education webinar	Friend (28.3%), Lecturer (43.3%), Social Media (21.7%), Self-browsing (6.7%)
Q24	The frequent online learning platform used by students during COVID-19 pandemic	Zoom (92.3%), Google Classroom (93%), E-mail (7.14%), WhatsApp (26.19%), Jitsi Meet (19.05%), Live Instagram (2.38%), LMS (40.48%), Google Form (2.38%)
Q25	Obstacles experienced by students during online learning	Technical problem (70.67%), learning management (11.33%), personal problem (18.00%)
Q26	Significant difference between online and F2F learning	Strength of online learning (14.17%), weaknesses of online learning (85.83%)
Q27	New things you've learnt from online learning during COVID-19 pandemic	Literacy issue (61.11%), personal issue (31.94%), learning management issue (4.17%), mobile data issue (2.78%)
Q28	What tools do you use to browse your course learning content?	Personal mobile phone (94.2%), personal laptop (71.2%), friend's mobile phone (1%), friend's laptop (6.7%), parents' mobile phone (16.7%)
Q29	What internet access do you utilize?	House Wi-Fi (57.7%), boarding house Wi-Fi (7.7%), personal internet network/tethering hotspot (72.1%), friends' tethering hotspot (12.5%), rental (0.96%), Wi-Fi voucher (25%), neighbours' Wi-Fi (12.5%)
Q30	The given assignment is in	Multiple choice (45.2%), essay (92.3%), monologue

the form of	(37.5%), scientific article (43.3%), project work (60.6%), audio, video, PPT (14.3%)

Discussion

The research findings revealed that university students are well-acquainted with the use of search engine, social media, LMS, and educational websites to support their learning activities. The familiarity of students with digital technology and how they perceive their learning activities through social media, LMS, and educational websites which can be beneficial for academic purposes mainly learning motivation, a change of attitude towards social media use, interaction between peers and lecturers, course materials or information acquisition and skills improvement have been reported (Bal & Bicen, 2018; Beemt et al., 2020; Chawinga, 2017; Pilli, 2015). The interesting point is amidst COVID-19 pandemic period, the use of social media, LMS, and others increases slightly can reasonably be related to the government instruction to all students and stakeholders in education to bolster the application of home learning program which has a purpose of suppressing the COVID-19 spread rate and ensures students' healthy, safety or security, and support are well-monitored and maintained (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020a).

However, the finding also highlighted several drawbacks of online learning such as cheating, copy and paste, low network, the high demand of internet bundles, and other simultaneous obstacles during the implementation of online course. It is in line with Arkorful and Abaidoo's report (2014) and Chawinga (2017). Further, the emphasis of online learning which has more drawbacks than F2F learning leads to the ineffectiveness of teaching-learning process. The findings echo the previous research results by Bali and Liu (2018) and Wakil *et al.* (2019) about the effectiveness of F2F learning mode than online learning. In brief, F2F learning mode has strength point mainly in term of social presence, interaction, and direct feedback which may delay in asynchronous communication. Related to lecturers' awareness of web usage, the finding showed that they have already utilized it in teaching-learning process as teaching resources. This finding supported previous findings claiming that internet usage enable its users to access information (Thieman, 2008; Whitworth S., and Berson, 2003).

However, students' acknowledgement about webinar is still low. Hence, this factor contributes to students' low participation on joining webinar conducted frequently during COVID-19 pandemic. To note, the lecturers play an important role to share more information about webinar and utilize it in order to familiarize students with digital learning environment. Moreover, webinar can be an alternative teaching tool to optimize the pedagogy (Cornelius & Gordon, 2013; Gegenfurtner & Ebner, 2019; Gegenfurtner et al., 2018; Kear et al., 2012; Wang & Hsu, 2008; White, 2019) mainly amidst and post-COVID-19 pandemic.

Next, amidst COVID-19 pandemic, the students improve their self-discipline in submitting their assignment as they learn from home. It can be related to several reasons such as the deadline and pre-requisite of passing the course. This finding supported Shi's (2016) that students were enthusiastic to submit their

assignment through online platform since the students should accomplish their current assignment before continuing to the next topic. Besides, they are given deadline that encourages them unconsciously to resolve their assignment. However, the deadline of assignment which changes unpredictably makes them stressful. Therefore, the assignment submission timeline has to be well-informed. Later, the lecturers also should give a feedback immediately since it is significant to develop "the instructor-learner relationship, improve academic performance, and enhance learning" (Leibold & Schwarz, 2015) and allow students to acknowledge the points they need to improve before they keep on learning new topic (Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006).

Conclusion

The current research findings showed that the university students have positive and negative perception towards the implementation of online learning in a low-tech environment amidst COVID-19 pandemic. There are positive and negative perceptions towards the transformation of learning mode (from the combination of F2F and online learning into full online learning mode). The positive perception is (1) the university students are already familiar with the use of search engine, social media platform, e-learning resources and educational websites in order to support achieving the learning goals; (2) the university students get empowered by the development of their digital literacy in using learning application or other online-based platforms; and (3) the university students can expand their knowledge about particular learning applications that enable them to autonomously learn the course materials and improve their language skills.

In contrast, the negative perception which is echoed by the university students e.g. (1) the difficulty to be optimally participating in online learning mode because of the high demand of internet bundles, low network coverage, frequent local power outage; (2) the need of lecturers' feedback is required to improve students-lecturers interaction for the recognition of achieving the indicators and improving language skills; (3) inconsistency of schedule in conducting online class and assignment submission timeline can influence students' learning motivation in learning process.

Considering the aforementioned positive and negative perceptions, there is an expectation of accelerating the learning mode mainly online learning mode because the on-going spread rate of COVID-19 pandemic is still happening. The lecturers should be adaptive and creative in providing course materials and assessing the students' progress during teaching-learning process by taking into account several aspects coming from the technical, learning management, and students' personal issues while the students should be ready to participate actively and optimally in order to achieve the learning goals for the sake of their own competence and skills.

Given the importance of online learning environment in post-pandemic period for EFL students in tertiary education, future research in this area is needed to investigate students' needs mainly latest topics and issues in English language and literature so the lecturers can create an appropriate, meaningful, and contextual

full-online course design to facilitate students' learning. Further studies can also be emphasized on exploring lecturers' voice of their difficulties in conducting online learning mode and examining educators and teacher educators' challenges in assessing language skills using online learning mode and the strategies they apply to overcome teaching obstacles in the field.

The followings are several suggestions that can be conducted in promoting online learning mode amidst COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 pandemic. First, there is an expectation of accelerating the learning mode mainly online learning mode because the ongoing spread rate of COVID-19 pandemic is still happening. Thus, eclective method is recommended to engage students in the teaching and learning activities. The learning plan and kinds of activities which utilize online learning mode should get careful attention and suitable with the topics, availability of learning resource, students' accessibility towards learning resource, assignment submission timeline based on types of assignments, students' learning facilities, and the students' condition viewed from their domicile and financial conditions related to network coverage and internet bundles demand. It is significant to take into account since not all of students have the sufficient facilities or accessibility to join or enjoy their transformation of learning mode during this current environment. To note, the role of lecturers as the facilitator or navigator should be enhanced so they do not only provide course materials but also prepare themselves to get ready for and get students familiar with the learning mode transformation (Setyaningsih, 2020). In short, lecturers should be professional and adaptive to current ways of teaching. Second, lecturers need to develop their digital literacy particularly in using learning apps, social media, and e-learning resources as part of their professionalism in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, they should introduce and explain about webinar and how it benefits the students to have more various experiences, perspectives, and knowledge viewed from the different contexts shared by the experts or peers from different regions and/or countries around the globe. Third, since direct response is difficult to give in asynchronous mode, lecturers need to inform the students about the time on which they will get the feedback of the assignments which have been submitted previously. It is to ensure the students that they do the assignments purposefully and have significant values not only for themselves as part of course prerequisite fulfilment but also get clear suggestion or feedback for further learning focus and skills improvement. In short, lecturers have to invest their time, energy, and patience (Suherdi, 2017) to provide extra time for giving feedback. Besides, lecturers are also expected to develop their professionalism by joining more online training in order to keep themselves up-to-date in utilizing online applications or e-learning platforms and considering the essential indicators of competence and skills for designing appropriate course syllabus during this pandemic and post-pandemic period. Fourth, amidst COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 pandemic, the university students need to develop their language skills by utilizing more applications, social media platforms, websites and e-learning resources. Particularly, it does not only familiarize them with the use of digital learning resources but also indirectly help them to promote 21st century skills.

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