Best Digital Platforms in ELT during New Norms Era for Remote Areas

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Abstract

The use of E- learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) has been strongly promoted since the pandemics Covid-19 is widely spread. Many researches have been conducted to find the best digital online learning to be used in the classroom. However, little to no research investigates about the most suitable digital online learning for the students living in the remote areas whereas, especially in Indonesia, there are so many remote areas. Thus, this paper assists to describe the best digital platforms to be used in the remote Areas. There were 15 ELT students involved as the participants in this study. The chosen students are the students living in the remote areas proven by having a problem when E-learning is employed in learning activities. The instruments are a closed-ended questionnaire followed by interview. The result showed that Messenger Application, namely WhatsApp is the most preferred digital learning platform by the students living in the remote areas. The LMS represented by google classroom is the second most preferred, and the last is video conference, represented by zoom. The finding of this research can become a consideration for the educators in selecting the digital platform for online learning in the remote areas.

Keywords: E-Learning, New Norms Era, Remote Area

I INTRODUCTION

On March 2020, all schools and universities in Indonesia had been closed due to Covid-19. In the beginning of April 2020, the regulations of working from home and learning from home have been made by the government. As a consequence, all schools and universities in Indonesia, without exception, started applying E-learning making this issue becoming the trending topic for ELT researchers nowadays.

The use of digital online learning in ELT has been conducted in many researches, even before the pandemics era. Hodges et al. (2020) have conducted a study to compare the common online learning and emergency online learning. Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) and Tukan (2020) have investigated the obstacles in applying online learning. Furthermore, Amin & Sundari (2020) have described about students' preference on digital applications utilized in online learning. In addition, they also have classified the applications into three kinds, namely, Video Conference that can be defined as a virtual class using real time video (Flatley, 2007), LMS as a virtual class facilitating in collecting and evaluating students' work (Azhar & Nayab, 2018), and

Messenger Application as application employed for communication and interaction (Amin & Sundari, 2020).

In line with Amin & Sundari (2020), this research tries to describe about students' perception towards the best platform to be employed in teaching and learning activities. This study also involves three types of the best digital platforms from Amin & Sundari (2020), they are Video Conference, LMS, and Messenger Application. Different from Amin & Sundari (2020), this study is focused for the students living in remote area or the area having lack source of technology, like bad internet signal. This study is crucial to be conducted since in Indonesia, there are still many remote areas; therefore, we need to facilitate the best way in using E-Learning for the remote areas. In addition, different from Amin & Sundari (2020) representing video conference by Cisco WebEx, the Video Conference in this research represented by Zoom. Zoom is chosen to represent the video conference since it is the dominant type of video conference utilized by the lecturers in Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji, especially in the English Language Education Study Program.

In brief, each types of platforms are represented by an application based on the applications dominantly used in teaching and learning process in those classes. Video conference in this study is represented by zoom, LMS is represented by google classroom, and Messenger Application is represented by WhatsApp. In addition, the three applications chosen as the representations have been effectively proved in teaching and learning process (Mujačić et al., 2014; Megawati & Astutik, 2018; Oriji & Anikpo, 2019; Prayogo & Widyaningrum, 2019).

II METHOD

This study utilized a descriptive research framework because its purpose was to explore the perception of the students in Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji (UMRAH) about the best digital platforms to be used for online learning in the remote areas. According to Gay & Airasian (2000), descriptive research is used to describe about the fact and the status concerning the subject of the study. The subject of this study is 15 ELT students taking one of researcher's class. This class is chosen because the learning activities in this class involve the three digital platforms of this study. The 15 students in this study have been carefully selected and considered as the ones living in the remote areas proven by their difficulties in attending the meeting due to lack of signal. The instrument used in this research was a closed-ended questionnaire followed by interview. The criteria used in this study are practicality, usability, and the economy. Practicality in this study means the availability of the digital platforms. Then, the usability in this study is the difficulty in using the digital platforms. And then, the economy is the needs in using the digital platforms.

III RESULT

This paper is aimed to describe the perceptions of the students towards the use of zoom, google classroom, and WhatsApp for teaching and learning activities in the remotes areas. The study is focused to investigate the perceptions of the students living in the remote areas about the digital learning platforms. The criteria in this study are limited in practicality, usability, and economy. The result is presented as below:

Table. 1 results on the criteria of each platforms

Criteria	Zoom		Google Classroom		WhatsApp	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Practicality	100%	0	100%	0	100%	0
Usability	100%	0	80%	20%	100%	0
Economy	0	100%	100%	0	100%	0

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that the best digital platform to be used for learning in the remote areas is WhatsApp, followed by Google Classroom and Zoom. WhatsApp get 100% for every criterion, Google classroom get 100% for practicality and economy, but 80% for Usability. It means that there are three students giving "no" answer for the usability of the Google Classroom. For Zoom, everyone agrees for the practicality and usability, but not for the economy. After that, the researcher interviews all the students to investigate deeply about their answer.

Based on the interview, for the practicality, WhatsApp is available and it can be used for all activities demanded in teaching and learning activities. This availability means that every student has this application and for the learning activities facilitating by WhatsApp, it provides real time presentation, sharing materials, video, audio, and it can also be used to collect assignments. For usability, using WhatsApp is easy. And for Economy, using WhatsApp does not require much data and strong internet connection like Zoom.

Different from WhatsApp, Google Classroom can only be employed to collect assignment. However, Collecting the assignments in Google Classroom is more complicated than WhatsApp is. Collecting Assignments in WhatsApp can be done immediately by typing the answer or sending directly the document. In WhatsApp, the status of the assignment can be also checked whether the lecturers have accepted or not. However, collecting the assignments in Google Classroom needs several procedures and the errors also sometimes take place causing the assignments cannot be accepted by the lecturers.

Different from WhatsApp and Google Classroom, we cannot collect the assignments through Zoom. Zoom can merely be utilized to do real time presentation. In addition, the other weakness of Zoom compared to WhatsApp and Google Classroom is that we need much cost, much data and strong and stable internet connection to use it.

IV DISCUSSION

The use of E-Learning has been occurring for a long time. During the time, the use of E-Learning is an optional to be chosen in teaching and learning activities, especially for teaching in the areas supported by the advancement of technology; however, todays the spread of COVID-19 has made the use of E-Learning becomes a must. The areas affected by the use of E-Learning is not only the area having well development in technology, but also the areas having lack of technology. The current study focus on investigating the best digital platforms to be used in the remote areas based on the students' perception.

Among the three platforms involved in this research, surprisingly, WhatsApp created for communication was chosen as the best application to be used for teaching and learning in remote areas surpassing Zoom and Google Classroom created for teaching and learning activities. The WhatsApp has the positive agreement for all criteria given in this study, namely practicality, usability, and economy. This result also supports the previous studies revealing the benefits given by WhatsApp (Allagui, 2014; Hamad, 2017; Manan, 2017; Rahman et al., 2018; Amin & Sundari, 2020; Barhoumi, 2020).

For using Google Classroom, generally the result shows positive agreement for all criteria given although it is not as good as WhatsApp. The problem found in using the Google Classroom is the limitation of its use to collect the assignment. The result of this study also

support the previous studies, concerning about its practicality and positive effects given (Azhar & Nayab, 2018; Al-Maroof & Al-Emran, 2018; Iftakhar, 2016; Amin & Sundari, 2020).

For Zoom or Video conference, this study supports Amin & Sundari (2020) concerning the practicality and usability of Zoom. However, different from Amin & Sundari (2020) not concerning about the economy of Zoom, this study investigates about the economy aspects of Zoom. Based on that, Zoom has the lowest agreement from the Economy compared to WhatsApp and Google Classroom. Therefore, it is not suggested to use Zoom for teaching in the Remote Areas.

V CONCLUSION

This current study is to explore the students' perception on digital learning platforms in the remote areas. The finding reveals that WhatsApp is the best selected application to be used for teaching in the remote areas having the highest agreement for all criteria determined in this study, following Google Classroom, and Zoom. It also shows that WhatsApp is the only application having the most complete facilities for teaching and learning activities compared to Google Classroom and Zoom. Therefore, the findings of this research can be used as a consideration in teaching for other remote areas, especially in Indonesia.

Considering the fact above, a further investigation on students' perceptions about the digital platforms used in teaching in the remote areas is recommended by employing more or other instruments for data collection. Using more or other digital platforms is also advised. Furthermore, it is also suggested to conduct researches in developing a learning strategy using WhatsApp.

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