An Analysis of Platforms in Blended Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic to Improve Speaking Skill in ELT Classroom

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this research as descriptive research was to find out the platforms which students used in blended learning during Covid-19 pandemic, particularly the platform in improving speaking skill. The samples of this research were 7 students from XI Science and Social class, and also 4 English teachers of SMAN 5 Tebo, Jambi. The researcher used purposive sampling technique in determining the sample. Research data was collected through interview which was conducted with related students and teachers. The interview was conducted to induce the information supported beliefs, perceptions, experiences, and views toward the development. The findings obtained found various advantages of using the platform in the ELT class. The platform in this case succeeded in creating student interest in learning so that in the process it contributed to improving the technological and pedagogical aspects, especially in ELT. Further, increasing platform, particularly zoom which is equipped with a forum for discussion of its users, including teleconferencing facilities fulfilled the requests of blended learning. Thus, zoom could be a suggested platform for conducting on-line learning particularly throughout the pandemic. This study suggests that students should hone their speaking skills more often so that their understanding of the material will be better.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Speaking, Platform, Pandemic, Descriptive

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, blended learning techniques have become very important in the learning process [1]. Blended Learning is defined as a method in learning where online and also offline meetings for teachers and students are combined in such a way. Furthermore, Blended Learning is described by [2] where according to them, by using blended learning, it can be combined the traditional direct learning with online learning, including the asynchronous and synchronous online learning technologies. In addition, in the Covid-19 pandemic, blended learning became a learning technique used by teachers and students in the learning and teaching process. This is because if learning is carried out completely directly, it will pose a danger to teachers and students.

Then, from all activities during the Covid-19 pandemic, the government has ordered the entire community to do more activities from home.Moreover, during learning activities at school, teachers must create various fields of experience that allow students to develop speaking skills. [3] said that in establishing and maintaining social relation, the main purpose of speaking is interactional. [4] argued in his opinion that many interactions can be put on a continuum, that is relatively predictable even unpredictable.

Based on Richard & Schmidt (2002) [5], skill in language teaching is the way the language is used. There are four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The four abilities are categorized into two categories, especially speaking and composing are referred to as energetic or useful talents, while reading and listening are called detached or responsive capabilities. However, in developing speaking skill on blended learning during Covid-10 pandemic, this turned out to have various difficulties, where students and teachers spend more time learning from home. This is where students experience several obstacles, ranging from a large number of tasks, tight time, and limited internet.

In addition, at the village level, there are still many villages that do not have good internet access.

Meanwhile, many students live in villages with slow or non-existent internet networks. Based on the researchers' small interview at SMAN 5 Tebo, blended learning has become quite difficult for teachers and students, especially in teaching speaking skills. We know that speaking learning tends to be practice, and it is carried out face to face. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has hampered practice for speaking skills that would normally be done in person in class. Therefore, the use of technology is felt to help overcome these obstacles even though they feel that its application is still quite difficult.

Relating to the difficulties, those were necessary to apply learning platforms by students in their speaking skills during Covid-19 pandemic. By knowing the platforms that can be utilized for speaking skills on this method, these facilitated learners to learn more successfully in the process of learning and helped the students in reaching the target and solving their problems in the learning process of speaking skills. Therefore, based on the phenomenon, the researcher interested in investigating the learning platforms in senior high school students living in one of the villages used in speaking skills on blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
2.1 Blended Learning
2.1.1 An Overview of Blended Learning

[6], [7] have the same understanding, namely combining two ways of learning. However, Bonk and Graham (2006) defined blended learning more as classroom- based learning and one more, namely computer-based learning, while Chew, Norah, and Turner (2008) focus on blended learning as a way of learning that focuses on education and educational technology. From the two definitions, there are differences, namely in Bonk and Graham (2006), they immediately explained that blended learning was focused on classroom-based learning which means direct, and combines computer-based learning which means indirect. On the other hand, Chew, Norah, and Turner (2008) only explained that blended learning combine education and educational technology, but does not explain the education in question is how the process and educational technology are intended to be used for learning.

In short, direct learning can be blended with online learning (through the use of internet facilities/media) using this technique. This technique aims to achieve learning objectives by combining classroom learning with distance learning. The learning system is oriented to the formulation of new goals and is always oriented to the needs and changes of society. Efforts to develop learning will not have an end at any time, because the problem of education will always exist as long as civilization and human life itself still exists.

2.1.2 Blended Learning in English Class

Blended learning may be used to support the learning process and results of language learners. The learning technic that uses in developing of internet technology is the blended learning. The aspects combined in blended learning are the best aspects of online learning, activities that required face-to-face and real-life practices. The mixed learning approach uses each of its strengths to overcome the weaknesses of others. In learning using Blended learning techniques, the instructions that are usually used in traditional classrooms and all their variations are combined with technology-mediated instructions. In other words, blended learning is a combination of traditional classroom learning with technology-based learning (modern).

Hence, based on [8] and [9], the researchers can say that blended learning is said to have a good impact in supporting English language learning in terms of supporting student progress to keep up with the times that use technology in the form of various media and platforms for speaking skills. Hence, blended learning is more turning into a chance for higher education students.

2.2 Platform

The digital platform may be a program that will support the success of online learning. There are many platforms that will be employed in the implementation of online learning as well as Google classroom, Edmodo, Learning House, Teacher room, Your school, smart class, Zenius, Google Suite for Education, Microsoft workplace 365 for Education [10]. Additionally, to those platforms, there are other digital platforms that will be used throughout learning, as well as Whatsapp group (WAG), Google Classroom (GC), Edmodo, and Zoom [11]. Moodle is one of many platforms in use today. [12] defined Moodle is an open-source learning application or platform that is intended to provide facilities for learning so that a learning environment is created that suits the needs.

Moreover, one form of software that can be used is the Whatsapp application. One of the software that is widely used today and becomes a liaison for many users is the Whatsapp application. The form of communication offered by the WhatsApp application is audio-visual communication in addition to the chat feature with a relatively smooth speed compared to FB Messenger or Yahoo Messenger. LMS (Learning Management System) on the other hand is an online learning platform that is intended for use by students. The management of this application is carried out by internal institutions or services from the developer. The purpose of this application is to facilitate the student learning process which is carried out directly by the teacher at the school or campus. Online learning platforms work by providing learning materials to students as if they were doing private lessons, but digitally/virtually.

The overall learning management system and platform (LMS) have the same purpose as well as represent the infrastructure used by e-learning, namely delivering and sharing teaching materials. Moreover,

there are several online learning platforms, namely, Google Classroom, Edmodo, WhatsApp, Zoom, etc. and LMS such as moodle, which can be used in blended learning.

2.3 Speaking Skill
2.3.1 An Overview of Speaking Skill

[13] stated that speaking skills are productive skills that can be directly and empirically observed. Assessment of speaking skills is done by observing the accuracy and effectiveness of students when speaking. Talking will basically involve all participants in the class, namely teachers and students, depending on how class activities are organized. Meanwhile, the opinion of Brown (2004) is contrary to the opinion of [14]. On the other hand, the opinion of Brown (2004) supports the opinion of Ur (1996).

The similarity of opinion was found between the opinions expressed by the three researchers, [15], Nunan (2003) and Brown (2004) who concluded that speaking skill is the ability to convey something from one person to another to make the other person understand it. This is because speaking skill is closely related to the language used. Therefore, we can find out that speaking skill is the ability to interact and transact by using target language verbally. Speaking means others will be of them to talk within the foreign language so as to share understanding with others needs attention to express details of the language. A speaker must realize the foremost acceptable words conjointly the} correct grammar to convey which means accurately and exactly and also must organize the discourse so a listener can perceive. Hence, peaking may be a crucial half in language learning. Moreover, it involves the speaker's victimization speech to express meanings to others.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this research, descriptive qualitative research used by the researcher [16]. The researcher used a qualitative research because this research aimed to investigate students' learning platforms in blended learning during Covid-19 pandemic to improve speaking skill in ELT classroom by interviewing them to get information in a detail understanding and report the information in description. This study took place in SMAN 5 Tebo, Jambi and used cluster sampling. The participants involved 8 students from Science and Social class, and also 4 English teachers. Interview is the way for collecting the data, and in analyzing the data, the researcher used several steps [see 16].

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION
4.1 Findings

Table 1. Platforms and Responses

Platforms	Responses
Platforms build students' learning interests	The use of platforms improve students' interest during the learning process
Zoom affects the technological and pedagogical aspects to be improved	The use of comprehensive learning materials is incredibly helpful in conducting online learning throughout Covid-19 pandemic.
Zoom shows students' autonomous learning	It can increase the students learning experience
Zoom platform as the blended learning trends	The features of Zoom bridges the need of blended learning

4.2 Discussion
4.2.1 Platforms build students' learning interests

The 2013 curriculum related to language learning focuses on thinking skills and problem solving, and both are considered important to be trained on students. For this reason, efforts to achieve learning objectives need to make the best use of available media and learning strategies. Related to this, platforms can be used as a strategy to build and increase student interest in learning. According to opinion [17] it is stated that an environment that supports learning can be obtained from advanced technology in the platform. Furthermore, the management and utilization of learning resources such as websites with interactive materials and interesting multimedia have their own interactions that are considered to be able to attract students' interest in learning.

Interviews conducted with several students and teachers as resource persons revealed that the use of the platform has several advantages such as its ability to please students while studying while increasing their interest in learning. "Using the platform has given me its own pleasure where I became interested because the learning methods offered are fun especially for speaking. The application of this technique gives users broad access to flexibly explore learning resources about speaking materials." (Ahmad) "In my opinion, the platform is one of the interesting supported things in speaking because the platform is able to meet our needs regarding a system intended for learning from home in a pandemic situation. In addition, the options provided are also easy, which I can join their class anywhere. This convenience provides several options for us to submit assignments and do some exercises online." (Alin).

In addition, students' opinions were strengthened by the opinions of teachers, because they also responded positively to efforts to use this platform. One of the reasons for the positive response is because the platform provides fun learning where students will get trendy options in it. Usually they access platform for distance learning because this platform does not use face-to-face meetings as usual. "In my opinion, using the platform increases student interest in learning because it makes it

easier for students to access training materials in improving speaking skill. In addition, the platform is an advanced analysis option that allows students to get immediate feedback" (Yani). "The platform can be accessed in an easy and simple way and is not limited by space and time so that students do not need to meet face to face." (Anton)

For this reason, the use of the platform increases students' interest in learning through educational methods. Fashionable choices and easy interface facilitate students to encourage fun in expanding their data through easy ways to work on learning activities and assignments using the interactive options offered.

4.2.2 Zoom affects the technological and pedagogical aspects to be improved

Technology-enabled learning are two things that need to be put to good use to experience great online learning. It is known from the statements of students interviewed that Zoom makes learning in accordance with the times and a fun means to support their learning. "Zoom complements students' virtual learning experience through a variety of fun with our gadgets or laptops. I am very interested in this platform. In my opinion, this is a new kind of learning that we will be engaging in between classes with our devices." (Ray) "I think the study material with the Zoom pattern attracts attention. I can study together with friends remotely, not alone in the usual form but also able to use various very trendy features. I think the delivery of material from the teacher through videos and learning animations via zoom is good enough where I get a lot of experience from them." (Alif)

Furthermore, the responses of teachers regarding the use of this technology platform are very useful in making online learning activities more meaningful so that a positive learning environment can be easily achieved. "I feel that zoom is very helpful for improving every aspect of technology and education. Zoom is a learning platform that helps me to develop and improve their technical skills to help them support their technical aspects. What's more, the use of this platform also encourages us teachers to be more improve the ability to design interesting learning material exploitation technology platforms." (Bunga) "Zoom helps us in improving our technological and pedagogical aspects in helping students in speaking skill." (Yani)

The responses above form the basis for the conclusions in this study, namely that every aspect of technology and education both play an important role in supporting online learning activities. Fun learning options can now be found on the Zoom platform which supports educational methods. Supportive learning materials and well-used learning media will be very helpful in supporting virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, in terms of benefits for teachers, the Zoom application encourages them to develop every aspect of technology and education that exists today. Zoom provides many learning styles. Looking for learning styles is one important aspect that

must be thought by teachers. Not without reason, learning styles play an important role in providing broad access to students for successful learning. [18] outlined several instructional designs to assist students in retaining their knowledge and data. The units of learning style variations that are often found today are visual, auditory, and proprioceptive learning styles.

Interviews conducted with various sources revealed the findings that Zoom was successful in helping students know the material through various learning styles. The resource person explained that the use of Zoom resulted in many learning designs with fashionable and easy choices. "I think the elective feature will be very helpful in improving the quality of education because it will encourage learning. I like learning that is not monotonous so they like it." (Ahmad) "The use of multimedia, visual and audiovisual learning can help me to develop a good understanding in speaking skill." (Ceny)

By responding to students' feedback, teachers provide additional insight into how to use zoom across learning methods. Students are given broad access to get learning resources on the internet. They get a lot of exposure about learning and know they are the simplest way to learn. "Of course with Zoom, students must access learning materials in the form of videos, audio, learning modules, and various online sources. Thus, leading scholars to encourage different types of exposure and learning styles. They will do their best." (Yani) "Zoom guides students directly as they explore learning materials in various ways. To expand knowledge through the conversion of digital, visual, audiovisual, and multimedia data, learning resources using the internet can be applied. Explore a large number of learning resources." (Bunga)

In addition, based on explanation above, Zoom is useful for providing different learning styles. With simple and experienced choices, students can broaden their learning styles. In addition, Zoom is equipped with features suitable for advanced learning for students. Another aspect is to provide efficient and fun learning to learn by giving students access to various learning resources.

4.2.3 Zoom shows students' autonomous learning

Zoom is very helpful in meeting the needs of students where critical thinking and problem solving skills are emphasized in speaking skill, even during a pandemic. [19] stated that critical thinking and resolution are important skills that must be achieved by students in daily problems. Current training is treated in a student self-study manner. Previous studies have shown that almost all students lack this skill. Since then, they have faced problems related to how to start learning, how to get learning resources, and how to get answers.

Zoom allows interested students to learn through various learning media that can be displayed via zoom. Based on the results of the interview process, Zoom

provides students with free learning tools, flexible access, and independent learning. "Overall, I enjoyed the learning process by Zoom. That's why it's a very interesting issue. This helps us to learn freely. We access various sources, not only from books provided by the teacher during learning to provoke learning resources and prefer to do assignments to support our skill in speaking." (Najwa)

Furthermore, based on interviews, Zoom allows students to broaden their online learning experience, and unlock new insights. "Learning is exciting because students can study from any device that enables a digital learning experience. This makes students in opening their minds and ask for alternative insights for speaking. They can learn from all sources. Next, encourage students to seek their appreciation for solving problems." (Anton) "In my view, it has several advantages for students as it increases students' awareness of speaking, and provides an important source of thought for solving problems in speaking skill." (Yani)

In response to the discussion above, it shows that Zoom provides diverse learning freedom and access, and helps students develop independent learning by improving their speaking skills. In addition, Zoom improves students' online study skills and makes it easier to open their minds to improve their problem solving skills.

4.2.4 Zoom platform as the blended learning trends

Complex technologies have been developed to make the studying process more practical and efficient. It is intended for blended learning aiming to join integration with online learning environments. [18] asserted that blended learning requires a combination of face-to-face education and technology in facilitating learning activities.

Zoom provides several ways to maximize online learning from a student's perspective. This needs to be practiced first, but at the same time teachers need to develop their abilities and adjust their choices. "For me, using zoom during the Covid19 pandemic is very important to me. Zoom is a convenient call as it provides complete learning opportunities to us as a student. It gives us access to face-to-face learning in a virtual environment. It improves students' learning abilities and makes it easier for students to understand the material. The problem is, teachers rarely take advantage of these opportunities." (Ahmad). "I love using Zoom. It provides face-to-face meetings with a portal that gives students easy access to online learning. We don't have to be forced to access multiple links. Teachers seem to be very interesting if they maximize the potential for group discussion. We want a lot of encouragement to follow up on this, and teachers also need to develop the ability to use this feature. I think studying is fun." (Azura)

Therefore, we can conclude that maximizing the Zoom option can be attributed to mixed learning needs.

There are advanced learning options and easy-to-use features that give students easy access to material. In addition, the feature gives students easy access to the material. Video calling and conferencing such as Zoom can be used to enhance the learning experience for students. By maximizing these options, students can enjoy learning and meet their needs through blended learning [20].

5. CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on all aspects of life, including education. The government's policy in order to reduce the spread of Covid-19 through efforts to limit interactions and crowds has greatly impacted the learning process. Education is a child's right and in a pandemic condition, it must still be carried out in accordance with the recommendations for the health protocol to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This condition enables teachers and students to adopt online learning patterns. In this pattern, learning takes place in virtual space (teachers and students do not meet) using features that facilitate remote control. Online learning opportunities are used by using several digital platforms that are widely available with different features depending on the interaction goals achieved. The most commonly used digital platform for online learning at SMAN 5 Tebo is Zoom.

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