



Investigating German Language Students' Perception towards Online Learning in German Classroom

Muhammad Isya Rubyansyah, Pepen Permana*, Irma Permatawati

German Language Education Study Program, FPBS, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

**Corresponding author. Email: pepen@upi.edu*

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed how learning and teaching delivered in every educational setting. Students are forced to do remote learning online at home. However, online learning is still seen as problematic. On the one hand, the learning must go on, but some students are still negatively impacted by lack of digital technology and accessibility. Therefore, it is important to understand students' experiences and opinions when implementing online learning. This study aims to determine the experiences and perspectives of the German language education study program Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia who engaged in online learning during the pandemic. Using a descriptive case study method, this study utilizes an online survey delivered 78 students to explore their perceptions during online learning. The results of the study indicate that students have diverse experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of online learning, both positive and negative, which will be described in more detail in this article. The results of this research are expected to help academics in identifying the weaknesses and strengths of online learning and in finding areas of improvement in the implementation of learning in the future.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Online learning, Students' perception.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is currently facing an emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regulations were created to limit the movement of people to prevent a more massive spread of the virus. As a result, activities have changed in almost all sectors of life. Several studies have found a phenomenon that the COVID-19 pandemic has also a major impact toward the education sector (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020). Students must study online at home due to school and university activities restrictions, and an estimated 1.58 billion learners are forced out of schools, colleges, and universities, which represent 91.3% of total enrolled learners in the world (WHO, 2020).

The implementation of online learning is still problematic; with the existence of a new learning system like this, it will certainly bring up various kinds of obstacles that will be faced by both teachers and students in the implementation of online learning (Prayudha, 2021). Learning must continue, but online learning is ineffective and is conducted inappropriately (Irfan & Iman, 2020). In addition, there are still several problems encountered by teachers and students, including poor internet connections, inadequate devices, and an uncomfortable home environment. One study found that

20% of students reported having issues in accessing essential technology for distance learning such as laptops and high-speed internet (Gonzales, Calarco, & Lynch, 2020). Also, it has been found that students who were already suffering academically in face-to-face instruction are more likely to obtain lower grade points in distance learning (Xu & Jaggars, 2014).

Although there have been overwhelming challenges for educators, schools, institutes, and the government regarding online education from a different angle, there are several opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic for the unprepared and the distant plans of implementing e-learning system (Pokrhel & Chhetri, 2021). Online learning can be an alternative solution (Al-Ansi, Garad, & Al-Ansi, 2021) in the future because emergency conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic can never be predicted when it will end, and it is possible that in the future, there will be a pandemic with different virus variants. Given these possibilities, online learning methods need to be developed and reviewed; Is the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic running effectively? Moreover, does online learning still cause many problems?

The development of online learning can be started by analyzing students' perceptions about implementing online learning so that empirical data will be obtained about how students respond to or perceive online learning. Akhmad (2020), in his research, found that although online learning provides benefits in the form of convenience learning, it turns out that online learning is still said to be ineffective. Most students do not want online learning to be carried out continuously because of the many factors that hinder students from learning, such as the poor quality of the internet network, the limited number of electronic devices, and internet quotas.

A similar study was also conducted by Ningsih (2020), which found that most students, 93.5%, preferred offline learning in class to online learning. However, unlike other relevant research, this study will focus on determining students' perceptions of implementing German online learning at the German Language Education Study Program, FPBS, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. This research is necessary because it can be used to evaluate the implementation of German online learning, hoping that the implementation of German online learning can run better in the future.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Perceptions

Sugihartono (2007) explains that perception is the brain's ability to translate stimuli or processes to translate incoming stimuli into the human senses. The same thing was also described by Kinicki and Kreitner (2003), who stated that perception is a cognitive process that enables us to interpret and understand our surroundings. Another definition of perception is also expressed by Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn (2005) defining perception as the process by which people select, organize, interpret, retrieve, and respond to information from the world around them. Meanwhile, in more detail, Rakhmat (2000) defines perception as the experience of objects, events, and relationships obtained by continuing information and interpreting messages. It gives meaning to the stimulus in continuing information and predicting statements involving attention, hope, motivation, and memory.

Krech and Crutchfield (as cited in Arifin, Fuady, & Kuswarno, 2017) describe that two factors influence perception: functional and structural factors. Functional factors are factors that come from needs, past experiences, and other things that are included in personal factors. Meanwhile, structural factors come from the nature of physical stimuli and the neural effects they cause on the individual's nervous system.

In general, perception can be defined as the process or way a person understands and interprets information obtained through sensing or experience related to objects or conditions in the surrounding environment. In this study, student perceptions are student responses that can be seen or reflected in thoughts, attitudes, and actions based on their experiences receiving stimuli in the form of information about online learning.

2.2. Online Learning

Singh and Thurman (as cited in Dhawan, 2020) define online learning as learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere (independent) to learn and interact with instructors and other students. Cojacariu (as cited in Dhawan, 2020) also defines the same thing that most online learnings have in common: the ability to use a computer connected to a network, which offers the possibility to learn from anywhere anytime, in any rhythm, with any means.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that online learning is a teaching and learning activity carried out using technology assistance such as mobile phones, computers or laptops connected to the internet network, both synchronously and asynchronously. That way, the learning activities carried out by students and educators can be done anywhere and anytime without any limitations of space and time.

2.2.1. Online Learning Method

There are two online learning methods: synchronous and asynchronous. Littlefield (as cited in Dhawan, 2020) explains that the synchronous learning environment is structured in the sense that students attend live lectures, there are real-time interactions between educators and learners, and there is a possibility of instant feedback. Some of the media commonly used in this method are Zoom Meeting, Google Meet, etc.

Meanwhile, the asynchronous learning method is the opposite of the synchronous, which means "not at the same time". In such a learning environment, learning content is not available in the form of live lectures or classes; it is available at different learning systems and forums. In addition, instant feedback and immediate response are impossible in such an environment. Some of the media commonly used in this method are WhatsApp Group, Learning Management System, Learning Website, etc.

2.3. Important Factors in Learning German

Pabumbun (as cited in Ihsan & Al Ilmul, 2021) states that the problems of learning German consist of internal problems, including mastery of other linguistic aspects, interests, perceptions, physical, and psychological, while external factors include the environment, teachers, teaching materials, facilities, and infrastructure. This means that in learning German, internal problems such as interest, perception, physical and psychological as well as external problems such as the environment, teachers, teaching materials, facilities and infrastructure are essential factors that need to be considered in the German language learning process.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study was carried out at the Study Program of German Language Education FPBS Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) from February 2022 to August 2022 to 78 students from 2nd, 4th, 6th semester. This study used a descriptive case study with a survey technique. The case analysis in this study describes the experiences and perceptions of German language education students regarding the implementation of German online learning in German classroom. The primary data is obtained directly from respondents through a questionnaire with a Likert-Scale. The questionnaire in this study contained 34 items, consisting of 2 dimensions, namely the experience and perception dimensions. The experience dimension consisted of 25 items, and the perception dimension consisted of 9 items. The questionnaire was formulated by the author based on research questions. The calculation scale used is the Likert scale as shown in Table 1.

According to Darmadi (2014), to get an interpretation of the Likert scale score in the form of a percent of each question item, first calculate the distance (interval) with the formula $I = 100/\text{Total Score (Likert)}$. Based on the calculation results obtained, $I = 100/5 = 20$. Thus, the distance (interval) is obtained as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Likert scale score

Likert-Scale Description	Likert-Scale
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral/Uncertain	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Table 2. Likert scale score interpretation

Percentage	Interpretation
0 % - 20 %	Extremely Poor
21 % - 40 %	Very Poor
41 % - 60 %	Moderate
61 % - 80 %	Good
81 % - 100 %	Excellent

The stages of data analysis in this study were collecting data for analysis, editing data, classifying questions on the instrument used to collect data based on the variables being studied, testing data quality in terms of validity and reliability of the research instrument, and making conclusions from the research results. Validity testing in this study uses expert judgment, while reliability testing is calculated using SPSS software. The result, as we can see in Figure 1, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.86, which means that all question items are reliable because the calculation results obtained are more than 0.60.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Experience in German Online Learning

In this study, most respondents came from students taking semesters eight and six. Students from semesters eight and six had experience participating in face-to-face learning in class and had a long experience participating in German online learning. As we can see in Figure 1, that 56.4% of respondents in this study have attended face-to-face learning in class so that respondents have a complete experience and can compare what kind of learning they think is better. Experience is a factor that can influence perception. Like the opinion of Krech and Crutchfield (in Arifin, Fuady, & Kuswarno, 2017) that, perception is influenced by functional factors, namely factors that come from needs, past experiences, and other things that are included in personal factors.

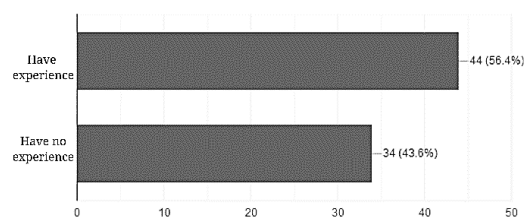


Figure 1 Respondent's experience in face-to-face learning.

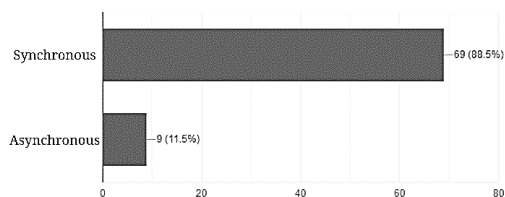


Figure 2 Effective online learning methods according to respondents.

Students most often do synchronous online learning using the Zoom Meeting application. As we can see in Figure 2, several 88.5% of students also say synchronous online learning methods are more effective than asynchronous online learning methods. Synchronous online learning is more effective because there is real-time interaction, and students and lecturers can conduct question-and-answer activities directly. This is in accordance with Littlefield's opinion (as cited in Dhawan, 2020) that the synchronous learning environment is structured in the sense that students attend live lectures, there are real-time interactions between educators and learners, and there is a possibility of instant feedback.

According to students, implementing online learning provides a positive side for students. In this study, as we can see in Figure 3, some 52.6% students agree that online learning was easier because the time and place of learning became more flexible, even 37.2% of other students said they strongly agree. Al-Mawee, Kwayu, and Gharaibeh (2021), in their research, found the same thing that according to students, online learning provides convenience because time and place become more flexible.

There are also negative experiences of online learning. Several students in this study said that they had a learning environment that was not conducive at all, so the learning process of the German online learning is interrupted. As we can see in Figure 4, many 38.5% of respondents agree they related to this, and some 32.1% of other respondents strongly agree. This finding is in line with the conclusions of a study conducted by Rahman

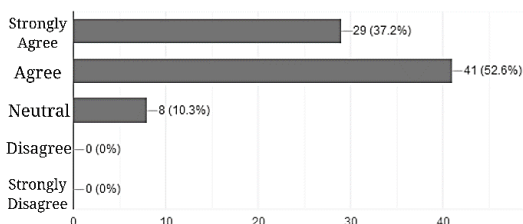


Figure 3 Ease of online learning according to respondents.

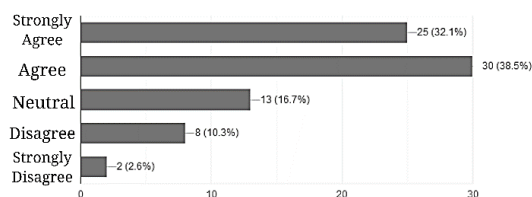


Figure 4 Inconvenient home study environment for online learning.

(2021) that a less conducive home environment is the main problem in implementing online learning.

In this study, it was also found that students had bad experiences, especially in technical terms. Many students still face negative experiences and technical problems, such as poor internet networks, inadequate gadgets, and cost constraints. When carrying out online learning, most respondents said that they often experience internet network problems. Plus, some students say they do not have adequate tools to support German online learning. In addition, some students are constrained by the cost of buying internet data packages. Like the research conducted by Fathoni, Mustadi, and Kurniawati (2021), which found that there are still some obstacles that arise in online learning related to gadgets and network connections, this study also found the same thing, that students admitted that they often experienced network problems when taking German online lessons.

4.2. Perceptions of the Implementation of German Online Learning

Unlike the research conducted by Agarwal and Khara (2021), which found that most respondents said that online learning was not effective at all, in this study, it was found that, according to students, German online learning was still quite effective. Although according to students, German online learning can still be quite effective, this is contrary to subsequent findings, which show that most students agree that their overall German language skills have decreased since the implementation of online learning.

The decline in German language skills experienced by students may occur because they are not adequately trained in the four language skills, especially speaking skills (*sprechfertigkeit*). In addition, the lack of direct social interaction in the classroom between students and lecturers can also be one factor that leads to the ability to speak German. This finding is indeed a problem because, as stated by Depdiknas (2004) that: "one of the goals of

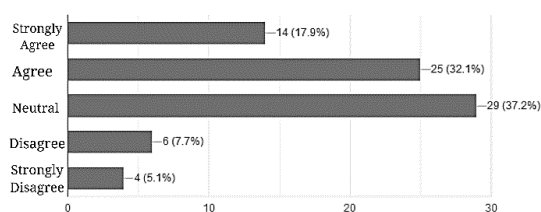


Figure 5 an overall decline in German language skills.

learning German is so that students can develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills well".

The respondents in this study came from the eighth semester, where students in this semester had complete experience in learning German both face-to-face and online. In Figure 6, the results found that around 78.2% of students said they agreed that face-to-face learning in class was better than online learning in German. Then like, another study by Agarwal and Khara (2021) concluded that based on the results of online learning research, it could be said that it is not suitable to be applied in the long term and sustainably. In line with the investigation, this study also found that, as we can see in Figure 7, according to 69.2% students, German online learning has been unsuitable for a long time and most students agree that face-to-face classroom learning should still be implemented.

Based on the research results above, it is known that each student's experience in carrying out German online learning is different. The implementation of German online learning provides not only good experiences but also bad experiences for online learning actors, especially students. A good experience in online learning is that learning can be done anywhere, not limited by space and time, so students have more flexible time. On the other hand, online learning still has many problems, such as the frequent constraints of the internet network, the lack of direct social interaction, and the decline in German language skills. Thus, most perceptions among students tend to be negative, which states that online learning cannot be carried out in the long term, and face-to-face learning in class must still be carried out so that learning can run more effectively.

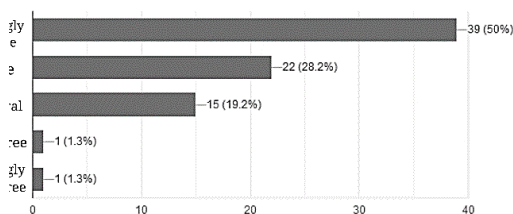


Figure 6 Face-to-face learning in class is better than online learning.

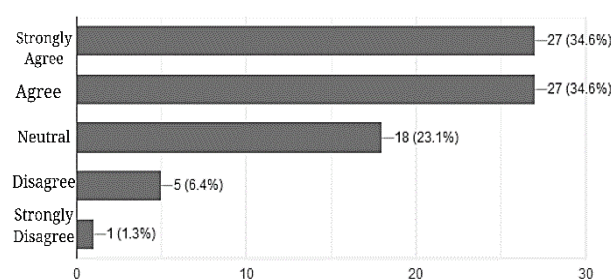


Figure 7 online learning is not suitable to be applied in the long term

5. CONCLUSION

There are two conclusions based on the findings obtained from this study: 1) Students more often participate in synchronous online learning using the Zoom Meeting application because, according to students, synchronous online learning is more effective than asynchronous online learning. Furthermore, according to students, online learning provides convenience because students can attend lectures anywhere and anytime. Even so, there are also bad experiences experienced by students, such as often experiencing internet network problems and an unsupportive home learning environment. 2) The students' overall German language skills decreased, especially in speaking skills (*sprechfertigkeit*). Furthermore, students think online learning of German is not suitable to be applied in the long term because, according to students, face-to-face learning is better than online learning.

Students get positive experiences as well as negative experiences in carrying out German online learning. On the one hand, online learning provides convenience because the time and place of learning become more flexible, but on the other hand, various problems are still encountered, such as poor internet connection and an unsupportive home environment for learning. From the conclusions of this study, it can say that most perceptions of online learning tend to be negative because there are still some problems, and face-to-face learning in the classroom must continue to be done so that learning is more effective.

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