

Students' Perspective: Virtual-Based Learning amid the Covid-19 Pandemic by Pre-Service Teachers in Rural Area, Thailand

Ema Eliyana

Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, East Java, Indonesia

ema_170403@umg.ac.id

Tri Yuli Ardiyansah

Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, East Java, Indonesia

ardi13@umg.ac.id

Abstract

By the end of 2019, Covid-19 outbreak has hit the whole world, and its impact has changed the learning process from face-to-face learning to virtual-based learning. This phenomenon also affected the learning process conducted by pre-service teachers in the internship program held by the University of Muhammadiyah Gresik in rural areas of Loei, Thailand. Due to the pandemic, the process was turned online. The online learning was a challenge for pre-service teachers because teaching online has never been done before, and the pre-service teachers didn't have much experience in it. The pre-service teachers felt that problems occurred were mostly due to limited signals and language differences that made it difficult for the pre-service teachers to communicate with the students. Therefore, to see a different view from the students, the researchers were interested to know the students' perspective towards virtual-based learning implemented by the pre-service teachers in a rural area of Bankhoksrijaroen School. The researchers distributed a survey to 37 students to find out their perspective about virtual-based learning. The result showed that the students had several problems such as differences in language, internet connection, limited learning media, and less effective learning process. However, there was a difference between virtual-based learning and conventional learning, but it was not considered a problem regardless of the unknown ending of the pandemic. The virtual-based learning was deemed able to replace face-to-face learning process, and the students also stated that face-to-face learning was not necessary to be implemented during the pandemic.

Keywords: *Students' Perspective, Virtual-Based Learning, Pre-Service Teachers.*

Introduction

The coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak has hit practically all nations in the world, including Indonesia and Thailand. This phenomenon has introduced difficulties to instructive establishments like schools and universities to establish a learning process that should follow social distancing measures (Toquero, 2020). No one knows when this pandemic will vanish completely. COVID-19 has a severe impact on students, instructors, and educational organizations around the world (Mailizar et al., 2020). In response to the COVID-19, the government has also closed access for both enter and exit the country and declared obligation to stay at home. Instructive organizations over the world chose to utilize the effectively accessible specialized assets to make virtual-based learning material for students of every scholarly field (Kaur, 2020). As per the orders given by Nadiem Makarim (Minister of Education and Culture) issued directives to education institutions to start preparing for distance learning (DL) modes. So the conventional learning model, for example, Jigsaw cooperative learning (Sulfemi et al., 2020), disclosure learning (Setiawan & Suhandi, 2020), actual games (Sunaryo et al., 2020), and others, were not utilized during the pandemic. This also led the students joining the international internship program to carry out the program through virtual based learning. Virtual-Based learning is a new challenge for International Internship Students. It provides rapid growth and has been proven to be the best in all sectors, especially in education during lockdown (Adnan, M & Anwar, K. 2020). If educational activities are suspended, students will miss social interaction based activities that are necessary for growth and learning. Moving from an environment of conventional education to distance and virtual learning could not happen overnight. This rapid transformation is linked to various obstacles and challenges at this point (Crawford, 2020).



On the other hand, Thailand has implemented face-to-face learning because there were zero cases of Covid-19. However, this is not comparable to Indonesia, where cases continually increase especially in the international internship program. One of the international internship programs was held by University of Muhammadiyah Gresik as a collaboration program between IRO UMG and LPSAO 2 (Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office) located in Loei, Thailand. The program focuses on giving experiences to English education department students to deepen their teaching skills by teaching English subject to elementary students. This program usually runs for four months. Besides, this program also serves to introduce students to the international culture in Thailand, establish a good relationship between countries, and implement their knowledge. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the learning process was carried out online, and most of the pre-service teachers applied the online learning by using Zoom Cloud Meeting platform and sometimes through Line video call. Virtual-based learning utilized by using Zoom Cloud Meetings could give adaptability in the learning cycle and increment the students' inspiration (Malczyk 2019; Tesar 2020). Due to the learning regulation of Indonesia government, pre-service teachers enrolled in the international internship programs experienced difficulties in the online learning process, especially in the internet connection and technical issues.

The use of the internet and multimedia technology can change the way of conveying knowledge and can be an alternative to learning carried out in traditional classrooms (Zhang et al., 2004). Unfortunately, the international internship program was held in some rural areas. Virtual-based learning may be difficult due to the limited signals or lack of sufficient infrastructure for students. The use of notebook or smartphone and the internet form a significant component of this learning methodology. Virtual-based learning can be done using some electronic media that are connected to the internet, such as tablets, notebook, and smartphone. (Setiawan et al., 2017). Lack of internet connections and learning media sometimes hindered the process of virtual-based learning for pre-service teachers in this international internship program.

Nonetheless, a portion of all grade school students in rural areas are outfitted with a device and decent internet connection as per the information from Budianto, only 48.3% of country zones have been associated with the web, and the other is as yet experiencing issues getting to the internet (Budiyanto, Jamil, and Rahayu 2019; Madiawati 2019). This disturbed the learning cycle carried out by the pre-service teachers enrolled in the international internship program in Thailand. Moreover, some of the students couldn't access the internet because they didn't have a smartphone. In this case, the school decided to gather all the students in a classroom and provided them with a notebook and an LCD screen to conduct the online learning process with the pre-service teachers. In addition, this was the first experience of the international internship students of UMG in conducting virtual-based teaching and learning process in a rural area, Thailand. Students' perspective about virtual-based learning is essential as research and evaluation to make virtual-based learning better in the future. The research conducted by Mailizar et al., (2020), suggested that students' voices are significant on this issue, therefore, accordingly, future research should investigate students' opinions about virtual-based learning to examine the challenges faced by students. Covid-19 has given the impact on the cancellation departure of international internship students from Indonesia to Thailand. However, pre-service teachers were required to be ready in all situations and conditions of teaching and learning activities. Therefore, this research focused on discovering the students' perspective on virtual-based learning that has been conducted with pre-service teachers.

Objectives

1. To find out the students' perspective using virtual-based learning by pre-service teachers in a rural area of Bankhoksrijaroen School, Thailand
2. To find out the students' interests and attitudes towards virtual-based learning implemented by the pre-service teachers in a rural area of Bankhoksrijaroen School, Thailand

Virtual-Based Learning

Virtual-based learning provides fast growth and has proven to be the best in all sectors, especially in education during the lockdown (Adnan, M & Anwar, K. 2020). Changing the learning system from face-to-face learning to virtual-based learning in a short time has become a new hope for educational sectors so that students can continue to carry out knowledge during a pandemic. Virtual-based learning can be done using several electronic media that are connected to the internet such as tablets, notebook and smartphone. (Setiawan et al., 2017). However, for some schools located in rural areas, are outfitted with a device and decent internet connection as per the information from Budianto, only 48.3% of country zones have been associated with the web, and the other is as yet experiencing issues getting to the internet (Budiyanto, Jamil,



and Rahayu 2019; Madiawati 2019). The lack of internet connection and learning media sometimes hinders the virtual-based learning process for teachers and students, but this cannot necessarily be said if the learning process has failed, or even the opposite.

Pre-Service Teacher

Pre-service teacher is commonly known as a role for students enrolled in teacher training and education program. In this context, the pre-service teachers are international internship students from University of Muhammadiyah Gresik as a collaboration program between IRO UMG and LPSAO 2 (Loei Primary Educational Service Area Office) located in Loei, Thailand. (Fafunwa, 2001) states that the teacher education program should help pre-service teachers to develop, create, and equip them with the fundamental aptitudes and expert capacities to become successful teachers. Teaching practises program for pre-service teachers is ideally arranged to cultivate such a move in intuition. It is found solidly between teachers' past encounters as students in classrooms and their future encounters as teachers in classrooms. From their meetings, teachers build up thoughts that will control their future practices. If these ideas are adjusted, teachers will fortify the learning process, establishing them even more firmly into their understandings of teaching, and decreasing the probability that these thoughts may change (Kennedy, 2017).

Students' Perspective

In this context, the students' perspective on virtual-based learning is essential as research and evaluation to make virtual-based learning better in the future. Students' perspectives and attitudes are broadly defined as students' points of view, opinions, and / or assessments of something (Dyson, 2006). Research conducted by Mailizar et al. (2020), suggests that student voices are significant in this issue. Issues regarding virtual based learning conducted with pre-service teachers at Bankhoksrijaroen School, Loei, Thailand. Therefore, further research should investigate students' opinions about virtual-based learning to examine the challenges students face.

Methodology

The researchers applied a survey questionnaire. The key purpose of this research was to find the students' perspective towards virtual-based learning. The sample included 37 students; 22 female and 15 male participants. The participants included P4 class (N = 16 / 43%), P5 class (N = 10 / 27%), and P6 class (N = 11 / 30%). The survey collection was conducted online, and the instructors of each class were asked to assist the students in the survey.

Survey

An online survey was implemented to gather primary data about the perspectives of students towards virtual based learning. A modified version of M. Adnan and K. Anwar (2020) total 8-item questionnaire was used in this survey. The distribution of the questionnaire was conducted from October 20th – 28th, 2020. All indicators and their definitions are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of Indicators

No	Indicators	Definition
1.	Internet Access	Students' perspective towards the main reason for limited internet access
2.	Media Usability	Students' perspective on their ability to use learning media used in schools such as notebook and smartphone
3.	Communication Process	Students' perspectives on their comfort when communicating electronically via notebook or smartphone during class with the pre-service teachers
4.	Online and Face-to-face Learning Similarities	Students' perspective on the absence of differences between virtual-based learning and conventional learning (face-to-face learning)
5.	Motivation	The students' perspective on virtual-based learning is considered to be more motivating for students than conventional learning



6.	Effectiveness	Students' perspective on the effectiveness of English classes conducted with the pre-service teachers through the internet
7.	Convenience	Students' perspective on the students' ease of completing assignments digitally
8.	Face-to-face Contact Needs	Students' perspectives on the necessity of face-to-face learning with pre-service teachers

Data Analysis

The data obtained through an online survey were analyzed by frequency of common students' responses that were stated in percentages and explained more from the data interview. Data were obtained using the *Likert* scale and was reported in the percentage of students' responses.

Results

Based on the result of data analysis, the researchers present 8 (eight) indicators received from the result of the survey in table 2.

Table 2. Survey Result

No	Attitudes	(%)*
1	Internet Access	
	Cost	12 (32.4)
	Signals availability/strength Problems	18 (48.7)
	Don't know how to use it	0 (0)
2	Media Usability	
	Other	7 (18,9)
	Agree	11 (29.7)
	Somewhat Agree	24 (64.9)
3	Disagree	2 (5.4)
	Communication Process	
	Agree	8 (21.6)
4	Somewhat Agree	11 (29.7)
	Disagree	18 (48.7)
	Online and Face-to-face Learning Similarities	
5	Agree	12 (32.4)
	Somewhat Agree	3 (8.1)
	Disagree	22 (59,5)
6	Motivation	
	Agree	10 (27.0)
	Somewhat Agree	13 (35.1)
7	Disagree	14 (37.9)
	Effectiveness	
	Agree	8 (21.6)
8	Somewhat Agree	8 (21.6)
	Disagree	21 (56.8)
	Convenience	
9	Agree	10 (27.0)
	Somewhat Agree	19 (51.4)
	Disagree	8 (21.6)
10	Face-to-face Contact Needs	
	Agree	8 (21.6)
	Somewhat Agree	15 (40.5)
	Disagree	14 (37.9)

*Percentages based on the number of respondents answering the question.



1. *Internet Access*

Internet access is one of the essential factors in the virtual-based learning process. In this research, students were asked questions about the main reasons for limited internet access. Four answer options were given; the problem of cost, availability/signal strength, don't know how to use it, and other reasons. 48.7% of students responded that the availability of a signal was the main reason, this was due to the geographic conditions of schools in rural mountainous areas in Loei, Thailand. 32.4% of students responded that internet costs were quite expensive, this was due to the livelihoods of people in villages are different from those in cities, so that parents' income is also considered to be smaller. Therefore, buying internet bandwidth is considered quite expensive. The next reason was that 18.9% of students didn't have electronic learning media such as a smartphone or notebook, so they took advantage of the learning media provided by the school, one notebook and one cellphone. Despite the disadvantages from the above reasons, students responded that they didn't have problems in operating the learning media provided (smartphone and notebook).

2. *Media Usability*

The second indicator is the students' ability to use a smartphone and notebook. 29.7% of students responded that they could use both learning media well. 64.9% of students answered that they could use one of these learning media quite well, and 5.4 % of students responded that they couldn't use both media. However, this was not a significant influence because the school provided facilities such as a notebook and a mobile phone, mentor teacher also helped students in using learning media properly, so that students could smoothly follow virtual-based learning with the pre-service teachers.

3. *Communication Process*

The third indicator is the comfort of students in communicating electronically. 21.6% of students stated that they were comfortable communicating electronically. 29.7% of students indicated that they were quite pleased, and 48.7% indicated that they were uncomfortable, it cannot be denied that students still need to get used to communicating electronically. This was because previously, they used face-to-face communication. In addition, language differences between students and pre-service teachers made both difficult to understand each other, especially during the discussion process.

4. *Online and Face-to-face Learning Similarities*

The fourth indicator, regarding similarities between virtual-based learning and face-to-face learning, 32.4% of students agreed with this statement. They said that virtual-based learning and conventional learning were almost the same in the learning process, which only distinguished the type of meeting. 8.1% of the students stated that they quite agreed with this statement. The remaining 59.5% of students stated that there was a difference they felt between online learning and face-to-face learning. This was because they could not carry out the learning process directly face-to-face with the pre-service teachers from Indonesia.

5. *Motivation*

The fifth indicator stated that 27.0% of students agreed that virtual-based learning motivated them more than conventional learning. 35.1% responded that they quite agreed with this statement because virtual-based learning did not always encourage them. And 37.9% of students responded that virtual-based learning was not more motivating than conventional learning. Besides, they also responded that although sometimes virtual-based learning was less motivating, it made their learning experience wider.

6. *Effectiveness*

The sixth indicator showed that the English class could be completed effectively via online learning. 21.6% of students agreed with the statement. 21.6% of the students answered that they quite agreed. And 56.8% disagreed with the statement. This was because the pre-service teachers couldn't directly control or assess students' learning practices, coupled with other problems such as an error in the learning platform, videos that suddenly froze due to signals, learning models become more limited, so students considered virtual-based learning less effective. On the other hand, it didn't bother students to be more excited in virtual-based learning.

7. *Convenience*

The seventh indicator is about the easiness to complete the assignment electronically. 27.0% of students agreed with the statement. 51.4% quite agreed with the statement; both answers were supported by



the student's statement that there was no problem in completing the assignment given by the pre-service teachers. However, 21.6% of students said they disagreed with the statement. Most of them responded that they did not understand enough about the material, so they still needed guidance.

8. *Face-to-face Contact Needs*

The eighth indicator is the necessary face-to-face contact with the pre-service teachers. 21.6% of students agreed with this statement. 40.5% of students quite agreed. The two reasons above were supported by students' answers who stated that they wanted to do learning activities and practise English with the pre-service teachers directly. Meanwhile, 37.9% of students disagreed with this statement because they responded that health and obedience to government regulations by eliminating face-to-face meetings were more important.

Discussion

The majority of Bankhoksrijaroen Schools' students said that they were comfortable in the process of online learning, although there were some differences between online and offline learning. Almost half of the students responded that virtual-based learning was more motivating. They also answered that they were more excited with virtual-based learning. It was also strengthened by their responses, stating that their knowledge and learning experience has become more comprehensive. And they felt that the task has become more comfortable in virtual-based learning, even though there were some obstacles such as unstable internet connection, technical issues and inconvenience in communicating electronically due to different languages between students. In addition, some of them responded that virtual based learning was considered less effective; they stated that face-to-face learning was sometimes needed. However, based on the advantages experienced by students, this has proven that virtual-based learning yielded good results for students, regardless of geographical conditions in rural areas where not all the students had decent learning facilities such as notebook and mobiles.

Regarding the problems that often occurred in rural areas, it was similar to the research conducted by Setiawan and Iasha (2020), which stated that 69.98% of elementary teachers in Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia agreed that the biggest problem with virtual-based learning was the internet connection. Another similar point was the delivery of material or assignments. Even though teachers in Bojonegoro only used WhatsApp as a platform, the pre-service teachers in this program used more various platforms such as Zoom Cloud Meetings and Line Video Calls.

In addition, the result of this research is inversely proportional to the research conducted by Supena et al. (2020) stating that online learning in North Sulawesi during the pandemic was based on living conditions and the status of the Covid-19 distribution zone. For students in rural areas, the teachers visited students from house to house while still implementing health protocols. This was the teachers' strategy in building relationships with students. During the learning process, the teachers also distributed groceries and medical equipment to students. Students' impressions were very excited about the method. Besides, for students in urban areas with a good internet connection, the teacher implemented virtual-based learning with light material that didn't burden students yet still varied. This certainly kept students motivated to have an enthusiasm for learning. Moreover, through virtual interaction, it added knowledge and insight for teachers and students regarding the development of technology and internet-based communication.

Conclusion

Based on the above results, the researchers explain the following conclusions;

Students' perspective towards virtual-based learning

Based on the results, it can be concluded from the students' perspective that they had several problems such as differences in language, internet connection, limited learning media, and less effective learning process. However, there was a difference between virtual-based learning and conventional learning, but it was not considered a problem. The students responded that the issues with assignments were reduced. Students found it easier to do assignments. They also responded that their knowledge increased during virtual-based learning. Considering that the pandemic has not yet been entirely over, and virtual-based learning was supposed to be able to replace face-to-face learning, the students stated that face-to-face learning was not necessary to be implemented.

Students' interest and attitudes towards virtual-based learning



Some students responded that they felt uncomfortable communicating electronically. They responded that sometimes their motivation to learn was uncertain. However, compared to these shortcomings, most of the students stated that they felt comfortable enough and more excited during the process of virtual-based learning.

Suggestion

This research has limitations in the limited participants, so it does not provide a general picture for all elementary schools in a rural area in Thailand. Therefore, it is necessary to do further research related to students' perspectives about virtual-based learning in a rural area, Loei, Thailand, during Covid-19 pandemic.

References

- Adnan, M & Anwar, K. (2020). Virtual based learning Amid the Covid-19 Pandemic: Students' Perspective. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology*. 2(1), 45-51.
- Budiyanto, S., M. Jamil, and F. Rahayu. (, 2019). "Feasibility Analysis of the Application of Project Loon as an Equitable Effort for Communication Infrastructure Development in Indonesia." *InComTech* 9(2):61–76.
- Crawford, J., Butler-Henderson, K., Rudolph, J., & Glowatz, M. (2020). COVID-19: 20 countries' higher education intra-period digital pedagogy responses. *Journal of Applied Teaching and Learning (JALT)*, 3(1).
- Dyson, B. (2006). Students' perspectives of physical education. In Kirk, D., Macdonald, D., & 538 O'Sullivan, M. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Physical Education* (pp. 326-346). London: 539 Sage
- Fafunwa, B. A. (2001). Conscious Planning of Educational System. *Journal of Educational Research*. 5 (2) 32-36.
- Kaur, G. (2020). Digital Life: Boon or bane in the teaching sector on COVID-19. *CLIO an Annual Interdisciplinary Journal of History*, 6(6), 416-427.
- Kennedy, M. (2017). The Role of Pre-service Teacher Education. *Handbook of Teaching and Policy*. 54-86.
- Madiawati, Hanny. (, 2019). "Broadband Access Using Ethernet over PDH Based Microwave Radio Link for Rural Area." Pp. 1–5 in 2019 IEEE 5th International Conference on Wireless and Telematics (ICWT). IEEE.
- Mailizar, Almanthari, A., Maulina, S., & Bruce, S. (2020). Secondary school mathematics teachers' views on e-learning implementation barriers during the Covid-19 pandemic: The case of Indonesia. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 16(7), em1860.
- Malczyk, Benjamin R. (2019). "Introducing Social Work to HyFlex Blended Learning: A Student-Centered Approach." *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* 39(4–5):414–28.
- Setiawan, B and Iasha, V. (2020). Covid-19 pandemic: the influence of full-online learning for an elementary school in rural areas. *JPSD* 6(2):114-123.12
- Setiawan, Sigit, and Andi Suhandi. (, 2020). "The Usage Of Kit-For-Kids In Discovery Learning Model To Improve The Understanding Of Science Teaching Materials On Elementary School Students." *JPsD (Jurnal Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar)* 6(1):43–54.
- Sulfemi, Wahyu Bagja, and Yasinta Kamalia. (2020). "JIGSAW Cooperative Learning Model Using Audiovisual Media To Improve Learning Outcomes." *JPsD (Jurnal Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar)* 6(1):30– 42.
- Sunaryo, Ayo, Tati Narawati, Juju Masunah, and Trianti Nugraheni. (2020). "Concept of Children's Dance Composition Based Traditional Games in Elementary School." *JPsD (Jurnal Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar)* 6(1):100–113.
- Supena et al. (2020). Learning Strategies in Elementary Schools during COVID-19 Pandemic in North Sulawesi. *Proceeding on Teaching and Science Education (ICTASE)* 1(1):12-19.
- Tesar, Marek. (, 2020). "Towards a PostCovid-19 'New Normality?' Physical and Social Distancing, the Move to Online and Higher Education."
- Toquero, C. M. (2020). Challenges and opportunities for higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic: The Philippine context. *Pedagogical Research*, 5(4).
- Zhang et al. (2004). "Can E-learning Replace Classroom Learning?". *Communication of the ACM*, 4(5):75-79.

