Google Meet for English Speaking Activities: Students' Views on Its Effectiveness

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Abstract

The current technological development has made online learning an alternative for teachers and students to carry out instruction. One of the learning applications that is often used is Google Meet. This research was conducted to find out the students' perceptions toward the use of Google Meet for speaking activities at a private Islamic Senior High School (*Madrasah Aliyah*) in Palembang, South Sumatera. The study employed a qualitative research design, and the participants were twelve 11th-grade students from the science and social studies departments. Data were collected through interviews, which were recorded and transcribed. The findings of this research revealed that learning speaking through the Google Meet application was perceived negatively by the students, indicating its ineffectiveness in facilitating their speaking activities. Several views were identified: (1) using Google Meet decreased student engagement in speaking activities, (2) it did not create an enthusiastic learning atmosphere for speaking, (3) it reduced students' attention to learning speaking, and (4) it was unhelpful in improving the students' speaking skills. These implied that the use of Google Meet application was ineffective for English speaking activities. However, it could be used as a supplementary online English teaching media.

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Introduction

The aim of learning English is to expand the ability to communicate with other in an English-speaking environment. The English language encompasses various skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, all of which must be mastered by English learners. Among these skills, speaking is often considered the most challenging. According to Burns and Joyce (1997), speaking is an interactive process that involves the construction of meaning through the reception, processing, and production of information. It goes beyond simply uttering words and sentences; it is about effectively expressing and articulating a communicative message using words and phrase.

Speaking skills are crucial for English foreign language students as they serve as the primary means of delivering messages to others. Bahadorfar and Omidvar (2014), Babita (2013), and Bashir, Azeem, and Dogar (2016) have all emphasized that speaking is the most important skill among the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) because people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language, and many language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak. In conclusion, it is understood that through speaking, someone can communicate or express their ideas to understand one another. According to Leong and Ahmadi (2017 as cited in Abrar et al., 2018), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information.

Currently, as of early 2020, all countries in the world are facing a global pandemic of large-scale proportions. This situation requires a change in behavior at an individual level to help align human behavior with the new social norms, especially in Indonesia. Smith and Freedman (2019) state that this includes implementing a policy of social distancing, which is designed to reduce interpersonal contact on a large scale. Therefore, Prasojo et al. (2018) argue that it is worth analyzing whether technology plays a role in helping teachers adapt their teaching methods to suit the technology-oriented ways of the 21st century. The government's policy encourages the community to carry out their daily activities from home, including all educational activities. Tutoring and literacy instruction must be conducted remotely to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, especially in educational institutions. According to Kemendikbud (2020), education during the COVID-19 pandemic and the policy of remote learning have been implemented. Tutoring and literacy instruction are conducted online using various educational tools that are used in English language learning and have comprehension activities for students to improve their literacy skills.

The developments in information and communication technology have had a significant impact on the educational environment. This has led to the emergence of various methods of learning, such as electronic learning, web-based learning, and online education. When it comes to implementing these methods through online learning platforms, there are numerous benefits that teachers can provide to students to enhance their learning experience. One such platform is the Google Meet application, which was introduced in 2017. Google Meet offers a unique learning experience that combines distance learning with interactive features. Among its many advantages, it has been found to boost students' confidence in speaking. According to Fakhruddin (2018), Google Meet can effectively enhance students' speaking skills and

improve their self-confidence in learning English. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the impact of using the Google Meet application for online teaching and learning activities in the context of English language instruction.

In relation to that purpose, a preliminary study was conducted at a private *madrasah* in Palembang through informal interviews with the teacher and students. It was found that during this pandemic, the teacher implemented online learning using Google Meet for speaking practice. Google Meet is considered an alternative or supporting medium due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, especially in a pandemic situation where students must study from home. In such a situation, Google Meet can be used for online interaction, allowing direct questions and answers without the need for physical meetings. Therefore, the use of Google Meet for speaking practice became a primary concern in this study. This research examined the students' perceptions of the use of Google Meet for speaking practice among 11th-grade students at a private *madrasah* in Palembang. We have chosen this school because it is one of the most well-known schools in Palembang, with renowned teachers and students who teach and learn English. Based on the description above, the research problem has been formulated in the following question: What are the students' perceptions of the use of Google Meet in their speaking activities?

Literature Review

English Speaking Skills

The term "speaking" can be defined in various ways in linguistic terms. According to Hornby in Harahap et al. (2015), speaking refers to expressing ideas and opinions through verbal communication. Additionally, Kushartanti (2005) mentions that speaking involves uttering a set of words that are understood by others, with the intention of delivering ideas or opinions. Speaking is a productive skill that demonstrates the students' ability to communicate in everyday activities. According to Harmer (2017), speaking is a language skill in which students produce the language themselves. The productive skills, categorized as speaking and writing, are essential for effective communication. However, improving one's ability to communicate in English requires practice outside of the classroom as well. By doing so, students will experience a direct impact on their verbal communication skills. In conclusion, speaking is a productive skill that requires practice and exposure to various speaking situations. It involves clear pronunciation, appropriate intonation, fluency, a wide range of vocabulary, and an understanding of basic grammar rules (Harmer, 2007). By continuously developing these aspects, students can enhance their ability to communicate effectively in English.

The concept of online learning

Online learning is a method of instruction that utilizes an internet connection and technological equipment to deliver lessons and facilitate all educational tasks. Anderson (2008) defines online learning as the use of the Internet to access educational materials, engage with instructors and peers, and receive support throughout the learning process, with the goal of

acquiring knowledge, developing personal understanding, and benefiting from educational experiences. Bakia et al. (2012) further state that online learning is a method of imparting knowledge in an Internet-enabled environment.

Online learning encompasses various programs that utilize the internet both inside and outside the classroom to provide access to educational resources and facilitate interaction between teachers and students. Hiltz and Turoff (2005) describe online education as a relatively recent social activity that is increasingly serving as a comprehensive alternative for both distant learners and those seeking flexible learning options.

There are two distinct forms of online education: blended learning and fully online learning. Blended learning, as defined by Yuliyanto et al. (2020), combines face-to-face and online instruction. On the other hand, fully online learning, according to Picciano and Seaman in Bakia et al. (2012), utilizes internet-based technologies, remote techniques, and online platforms for education and evaluation. Mellieon (2016) highlights the benefits of online education for students, such as the ability to continue working and the flexibility to attend classes from their own computers, whether it be on campus or at home. Khan et al. (2016) also emphasize the importance of institutions and schools utilizing distance learning to maintain communication with students and facilitate the learning process.

Google Meet application

Google Meet is an application that supports online learning. It is beneficial for students, educators, and remote workers as it allows for easy participation in video conferences from the comfort of their homes. According to Aswir and Fatimah (2021), the Google Meet interface not only enables direct and efficient face-to-face meetings, but it is also lightweight, fast, and can accommodate many participants. It can be accessed on desktop or laptop computers, as well as on mobile phones without the need for additional application installation.

Furthermore, the Google Meet feature is integrated within the Gmail application service. This makes it convenient and tailored to individual needs. Additionally, there is no need to spend money on purchasing a data plan to use this application. Google Meet is known to be data-friendly, although a stable internet connection is necessary for smooth usage (Sunardi, 2021). As we are aware, Google Meet is widely used for various purposes such as online classes, virtual meetings and discussions, and remote collaborations. It is a user-friendly application and has a number of features that support learning activities, including an unlimited number of meetings, live captioning during meetings, device compatibility, real-time video and audio preview, customizable layouts and screen settings, meeting hosts' controls, screen sharing with participants, and messaging with participants (Helmi, 2020).

Methodology

Research design, site, and participants

This research employed a qualitative research technique. Qualitative approaches to research place a premium on the richness of meaning derived from individuals' subjective experiences and meaning-making processes (Leavy, 2017). In relation to this, the research was conducted using a case study method. According to Creswell (2018), a case study is a type of inquiry used in various areas, particularly assessment, in which an in-depth investigation of a particular situation is conducted. This situation often involves a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Consequently, the case study is frequently utilized as a research technique to enhance our understanding of individual, group, organizational, societal, and political phenomena (Yin, 2003). In this study, our focus was on a specific phenomenon: the use of Google Meet in speaking activities.

The participants of this study were the students from a private Islamic senior high school (*Madrasah Aliyah)* in Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia. The selection process utilized the strategy of maximal variation sampling, which involves selecting cases with differing characteristics or traits, thus providing a diverse perspective for the research. Maximal variation sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy aimed at capturing different perspectives through variations in the selected sample (Crewell, 2012). We conducted maximum variation sampling by selecting 12 students from 11th grade, representing different majors such as science and social studies. The selection criteria were based on their speaking scores and willingness to participate in this study.

Data collection and analysis

We carried out a semi-structured interview type for gathering information about students' perception of using Google Meet in speaking activities. According to McIntosh and Morse (2014), a semi-structured interview is designed to elicit subjective responses from individuals regarding a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced. The interview consisted of sixteen questions about the use of Google Meet for speaking practice. It was recorded and later transcribed into English. Before conducting the interview, we explained the purpose of the interview and the use of audio recording.

We utilized thematic analysis as the technique for analyzing the data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis method used to examine classifications and recurring themes that are relevant to the data (Alhojailan, 2012). The data analysis process involved reviewing the results of interview transcripts and document reviews. We gathered detailed data through interviews, such as interview transcriptions, and translated it into English. Subsequently, all the data were organized and stored in computer files. We carefully read through the transcriptions and proceeded to code the interview data that pertained to the research question. Then, we applied coding to categorize the recurring themes identified by the participants. The data were categorized based on the various aspects of writing that influence perception and the feasibility

of using Google Meet as a learning medium. Finally, we analyzed the data and conducted comparisons to some previous related studies.

Findings and Discussion

We classified the findings into several themes and codes. Table 1 summarizes the themes and codes identified in this study.

Table 1. *Students' perceptions on the use of Google Meet in speaking activities*

Themes	Codes
Decreased student engagement in speaking activities	Dissatisfaction with the teacher's teaching method through Google Meet Lack of clarity in the instructions Unclear speaking materials Learning constrains due to poor internet connection
Did not create an enthusiastic learning atmosphere for speaking	Learning through Google Meet at home is boring Learning through Google Meet is monotonous Lack of interactions between teacher and students Lack of time, facilities, and resources to study through Google Meet from home
Reduced students' attention to learning speaking	The students had difficulty in understanding the materials taught through Google Meet The students could not focus on their learning The students rarely paid attention to the teacher's explanation through Google Meet
Unhelpful in improving the students' speaking skills	Google Meet did not help students in improving their vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency in speaking Google Meet did not have special features for facilitating student speaking practices

Decreased student engagement in speaking activities

The results of the interviews with the students indicated that teachers typically initiated speaking activities by directly assigning a topic for discussion. Therefore, misunderstandings often arose among the students due to communication, interaction, and time constraints in learning through Google Meet. Teachers usually provided only brief explanations and failed to capture students' attention and participation in speaking practices. For example, one student, identified as AM, expressed his dissatisfaction with the teacher's teaching strategy by stating, "Our teacher only briefly explains the material we are going to study and gives instructions for completing assignments. Occasionally, the teacher corrects our pronunciation errors, but I still feel that something is lacking." Similarly, another student, AT, commented, "I don't feel very engaged because when the teacher initiates a speaking activity, there is often a lack of clarity in the instructions, which makes it difficult for me to participate fully."

Did not create an enthusiastic learning atmosphere for speaking

The researchers gathered information from the students regarding their experience with speaking activities on Google Meet. The students expressed a lack of enthusiasm towards teaching and learning speaking activities on Google Meet due to various factors. Firstly, they mentioned that the learning experience was negatively impacted by poor internet signals, which resulted in boredom. AS specifically stated, "I am less enthusiastic about learning through Google Meet because studying at home is boring. This lack of enthusiasm hinders our motivation to learn speaking through Google Meet." Similarly, RI mentioned, "Some of us are enthusiastic because it is in line with the current trends, but some others lack the necessary facilities and resources to effectively study from home." In summary, the students find learning through Google Meet to be monotonous, leading to a decrease in their enthusiasm for learning, as they are unable to interact directly with their teachers.

Reduced students' attention towards learning speaking

The students reported that when using Google Meet for speaking activities, they had a lack of attention and struggled to understand the materials. One student stated, "I don't think all of us are paying attention when using Google Meet because some of us find it difficult to understand the material being taught, which leads to a lack of attention in the learning process." Additionally, another student mentioned, "When learning through Google Meet, we rarely pay attention, especially when studying from home. We are less focused on learning, so it would be better to have face-to-face learning activities." In conclusion, students seldom pay attention when using Google Meet for learning, resulting in reduced focus and difficulty in understanding the material provided through this platform. Another student also reported having difficulty understanding the instructions, "Some of us find it difficult to understand the instructions. This hinders our ability to focus on the learning process." He added, "It would be better to have face-to-face learning activities." In summary, the students have experienced a lack of attention when learning through Google Meet, resulting in decreased focus and difficulty in comprehending the learning materials provided through this platform.

Unhelpful in improving the students' speaking skills

The results of the interviews indicated that most of the students felt that there was no improvement in aspects of their vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. This is because if they do not know the meaning of a word or a sentence, they do not know who to ask for clarification. In speaking activities using Google Meet, there are no special features to enhance their speaking skills. For example, one student, TA, mentioned, "Sometimes, I get confused and don't know the meaning of the words, whereas in the dictionary, one word usually has many meanings." Additionally, the students stated that Google Meet does not facilitate them in choosing the appropriate words in speaking activities. For instance, ET expressed, "I usually use a dictionary to find out the meaning of a word, so I don't think it's really helpful."

The study conducted revealed the ineffectiveness of using Google Meet as a tool for speaking activities. Several students' perceptions emerged regarding the use of Google Meet in learning speaking. The first perception was that Google Meet resulted in reduced student engagement in learning English. Google Meet led to decreased student learning activities due to signal constraints and unclear materials. The findings demonstrated that lack of learning participation in class was attributed to unclear instructions, signal inference, and suboptimal learning environments at home. Consequently, students were less engaged in learning speaking. Pambudi et al. (2021) also claimed that signal constraints and poor internet access hindered students to fully comprehend the materials and participate in online learning. To address these issues, teachers had to repeat the materials to ensure that students could grasp and actively engage in learning. To enhance student participation, it is crucial for teachers to adopt more effective strategies during Google Meet sessions. First and foremost, teachers should provide clear and detailed instructions when assigning speaking tasks to ensure that students understand what is expected of them. This can help mitigate miscommunication and confusion, enabling students to actively participate in speaking activities.

The second perception was that Google Meet did not create an enthusiastic atmosphere for learning. However, Google Meet is beneficial for both students and teachers as it reduces the need for distance and time in teaching and learning activities. According to Pratama et al. (2020), virtual meetings through online applications, especially video conferencing, offer numerous advantages that make the learning process efficient, practical, and safe. However, based on the findings of the interviews in this study, some students found it boring to learn speaking using Google Meet. They agreed that learning speaking by using Google Meet was ineffective due to lack of interaction and communication between the teacher and students. This lack of interaction resulted in inconvenience within the class, with some students ignoring the teacher's explanations, and a few even turning off their cameras, paying no attention to the teacher's explanation. Therefore, the students' level of enthusiasm in the learning process was negatively affected.

The third perception was that Google Meet caused the students to pay less attention to learning speaking. Additionally, students stated that they continue to face difficulties in their speaking practices due to the usage of Google Meet technology, which lacks a specific tool for improving fluency. They do not focus on the material of speaking and neglect the usage of fillers when it comes to talking effectively. Furthermore, Brown (2007) emphasized that one of the foundations of teaching speaking is to prioritize fluency and correctness in the speaking component, but the teacher in this case did not effectively do so.

The last perception was that Google Meet was unhelpful in improving the students' speaking skills. Students argued that Google Meet did not facilitate them in improving their vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency in speaking. They found it challenging to use appropriate words in speaking. Google Meet did not help them in selecting appropriate words in speaking. They spoke without knowing if the sentences they use were correct or not. Therefore, the students claimed that learning speaking through Google Meet was ineffective. From the explanation above, the researchers concluded that Google Meet can be one of the

online learning options. However, teachers must be aware of not only the benefits but also the limitations of using Google Meet for teaching.

Conclusion

The results of data analysis indicated that some students had negative perceptions regarding the use Google Meet application as an additional media for speaking activities. There were several perceptions were identified: (1) decreased student engagement in speaking activities, (2) did not create an enthusiastic learning atmosphere for speaking, (3) Reduced students' attention to learning speaking, (4) Unhelpful in improving the students' speaking skills. These implied that the use of Google Meet application was ineffective for English speaking activities practices as perceived by the students. However, it could be utilized as a supplementary online English teaching media.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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