A Narrative Inquiry into Indonesian Elementary Students' Experiences in English Online Learning during Covid-19

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Abstract

Despite the extensive research on the issues of online learning in various contexts and at any education level, there is a paucity of exploration on elementary students' perceptions and experiences in online English learning. This study therefore attempts to fill this gap by drawing on narrative inquiry to allow students to voice and express what they perceive of learning English in online mode. Through shared reflection, the students offer a snapshot of their lived experiences related to English online learning. The findings from this narrative investigation show that the problems faced by elementary school students when English learning online by using digital media are related to individual factors, and differences in students' family backgrounds to be actively involved in verbal communication. To overcome these challenges, the participants applied direct communication with their classmates in outside of the online class. Face-to-face language learning has a very important influence on the understanding of communication for young learners. In addition, this study suggests the importance of digital literacy for students particularly in time of online learning era.

Keywords: Covid-19, elementary students, English online learning, digital media, narrative inquiry

Abstrak

Meskipun sudah banyak penelitian tentang pembelajaran online dalam berbagai konteks dan tingkat pendidikan, persepsi dan pengalaman siswa sekolah dasar dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris online masih belum banyak diteliti. Oleh karena itu penelitian ini mencoba untuk mengisi kesenjangan ini dengan melakukan penelitian inkuiri naratif yang memungkinkan siswa untuk menyuarakan dan mengekspresikan apa yang mereka rasakan dari belajar bahasa Inggris dalam mode online. Melalui refleksi bersama, para siswa menawarkan gambaran tentang pengalaman hidup mereka terkait dengan pembelajaran online bahasa Inggris. Temuan dari investigasi naratif ini menunjukkan bahwa masalah yang dihadapi siswa sekolah dasar ketika belajar bahasa Inggris online dengan menggunakan media digital adalah faktor individu dan perbedaan latar belakang keluarga siswa untuk terlibat aktif dalam komunikasi verbal. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, siswa menerapkan komunikasi langsung dengan teman sekelasnya di luar kelas online. Pembelajaran bahasa tatap muka memiliki pengaruh yang sangat penting terhadap pemahaman komunikasi bagi pelajar muda. Selain itu, penelitian ini menyarankan pentingnya literasi digital bagi siswa khususnya di era pembelajaran online.

Kata kunci: Covid-19, siswa SD, pembelajaran online bahasa Inggris, media digital, narrative inquiry

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected education at all levels in various ways, resulting the closure of universities and schools and forcing them to all levels in various ways. This drives the educational institutions and teachers over the world, including Indonesia, to hurriedly respond to an unanticipated transition from offline face-to-face to online learning mode[12].

The enforcement of social distancing rule to mitigate the spread of the pandemic has also influenced the way children learn and interact socially. Like adults, children are required to study at home, online. More than 40 millions children all over the world have not been given face-to-face instruction at school to keep them away from the virus.[3] However, having online class has excerted the problem of boredom among the children since they naturally like to meet each other in person, not virtually.

Moreover, online learning has become a popular and challenging learning at the same time during the Covid-19 pandemic. Online learning is a form of learning that is carried out through a browser or digital application.[4] Meanwhile, Stein, et al revealed that online learning does not only prioritize the use of technology, but focuses on

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[1] Carmen Carrillo and Maria Assunção Flores, "COVID-19 and Teacher Education: A Literature Review of Online Teaching and Learning Practices," *European Journal of Teacher Education* 43, no. 4 (2020): 466–87, https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1821184.

[2] Budi Azhari and Iwan Fajri, "Distance Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic: School Closure in Indonesia," *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/0020739X.2021.1875072.

[3] A. Gromada, D. Richardson, and G. Rees, "Childcare in a Global Crisis: The Impact of COVID-19 on Work and Family Life. An Innocenti Research Brief, 18. UNICEF." (2020), https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/IRB-2020-18-childcare-in -a-global-crisis-the-impact-of-COVID-19-on-work-and-family-life.pdf.

[4] W. Horton, *Designing Web Based Training* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

learning that is associated with the use of digital tools and communication tools.[5] The advantages of online learning are that teachers and students do not need to meet face-to-face, and simply use digital media in virtual learning. Schools and teachers have provided many online learning management systems to support a smooth learning process, such as learning applications, virtual tutorials, and conference tools.[6] Therefore, the use of technology is one of the conditions for achieving success in online learning.[7]

In spite of several advantages in online learning, there are still some weaknesses that students or teachers face in carrying out learning. Many learning children experience frustration when faced with subject assignments that must solve difficulties in learning independently.[8] Especially in English subjects, elementary school children still have challenges in understanding skills both spoken and written. The limited verbal ability of children in elementary school can be a barrier to improving English language skills effectively.

In the field of foreign language learning, many advocate the emergence of online learning due to its affordability, accessibility, and flexibility[9]. It could contribute to the increasing learning motivation and mitigating learners' frustration and anxiety[10][11]. Online learning method is also found to result in an observable improvement in students' listening and speaking performance[12]. In a similar but slightly different vein, Kitakachan argue that online activities in Facebook or other social networks should have their place within the English language teaching and learning activities as they can be used as a platform for students' self-study, which gives students opportunities to exchange their ideas, comments, attitudes, and feelings and in turn improve their knowledge in English grammar and writing as well[13]. However, it is important to bear in mind that not all students have sufficient online learning skill and self-regulated learning, leading to lack of readiness to study English online[14]. As a consequence, it is of imperative to ensure whether students'

[5] S.J. Stein, K. Shephard, and I. Harris, "Conceptions of E-learning and Professional Development for E-learning Held by Tertiary Educators in New Zealand," *British Journal of Educational Technology* 42, no. 1 (2011): 145–65.

[6] A. Ariffin et al., "Discovering Students' Strategies in Learning English Online.," *Asian Journal of University Education (AJUE).* 17, no. 1 (2021): 261–68.

[7] E. Usta, "The Effect of Web-Based Learning Environments on Attitudes of Students Regarding Computer and Internet," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 28, no. 1 (2011): 262-269.

[8] N. Doghonadze et al., "The Degree of Readiness to Total Distance Learning in the Face of COVID-19 – Teachers' View (Case of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq, Nigeria, UK and Ukraine).," *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region* 5, no. 2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.31578/jebs.v5i2.197.

[9] Shivangi Dhawan, "Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis," *Journal of Educational Technology Systems* 49, no. 1 (2020): 5–22, https://doi.org/10.1177/0047239520934018.

[10] Martin Lamb and Fauziah Eka Arisandy, "The Impact of Online Use of English on Motivation to Learn," *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 33, no. 1–2 (2020): 85–108, https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2018.1545670.

[11] Munassir Alhamami, "Learners' Beliefs about Language-Learning Abilities in Face-to-Face & Online Settings," *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 16, no. 1 (2019): 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0162-1.

[12] Zuzana Kurucova, Janka Medová, and Anna Tirpakova, "The Effect of Different Online Education Modes on the English Language Learning of Media Studies Students," *Cogent Education* 5, no. 1 (2018): 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1523514.

[13] Orachorn Kitchakarn, "How Students Perceived Social Media as a Learning Tool in Enhancing Their Language Learning Performance," *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology* 15, no. 4 (2016): 53–60.

[14] Settha Kuama and Usa Intharaksa, "Is Online Learning Suitable for All English Language Students?," *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand* 52, no. December (2016): 53–82.

basic learning needs could be met when online mode is the only possible choice for teaching and learning activities from home[15].

The undeniable call for online learning during Covid-19 pandemic recently has attracted many researchers across the globe to investigate it. To this date, there have been a growing number of empirical studies conducted to examine the implementation of online learning in English language teaching (ELT) context from various aspects. Aladsani studied the stories of six English instructors regarding their experiences with promoting student engagement during the COVID-19 fully online teaching in Saudi universities[16]. Another study by Tarrayo et al., employed a survey and focus group discussions among 38 Filipino university teachers of English to investigate how the teachers view the problems, advantages and disadvantages of online learning amidst the pandemic[17]. Looking at more specific issues, Lim et al., inspected Korean university students' online English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) engagement and perceptions of teaching and learning[18].

Meanwhile, Luan, et. al., developed a model which portrays the connections between first-year undergraduate students' perceived social support and their online English learning engagement in compulsory EFL language course at a Chinese public university.[19]

In Indonesia, there is also an increasing body of studies which have been previously done regarding the enactment of online learning in EFL teaching and learning context from various aspects and perspectives. Ma'rufa & Mustofa[20] and Atmojo & Nugroho[21] examined the implementation of online learning from the perspectives of English teachers in senior and junior high schools. Meanwhile, Anwar & Wahid[22] and Agung et al.[23] and identify the university students' perception regarding online learning mode in the context of higher education. More specifically, a narrative inquiry by Suryana et al. explored and made sense of the stories

[15] Ruth Wong, "When No One Can Go to School: Does Online Learning Meet Students' Basic Learning Needs?," *Interactive Learning Environments* 0, no. 0 (2020): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1789672.

[16] Hibah Khalid Aladsani, "A Narrative Approach to University Instructors' Stories about Promoting Student Engagement during COVID-19 Emergency Remote Teaching in Saudi Arabia," *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 2021, 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2021.1922958.

[17] Veronico N. Tarrayo, Rafael Michael O. Paz, and Emejidio C. Gepila, "The Shift to Flexible Learning amidst the Pandemic: The Case of English Language Teachers in a Philippine State University," *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2021.1944163.

[18] Hyejung Lim, Yvette Denise Murdoch, and Jiyoung Cho, "Online EMI Learner Engagement and Perceptions of Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Innovations in Education*

and Teaching International 00, no. 00 (2021): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2021.1905030.

[19] Lin Luan et al., "Exploring the Role of Online EFL Learners' Perceived Social Support in Their Learning Engagement: A Structural Equation Model," *Interactive Learning Environments* 0, no. 0 (2020): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1855211.

[20] Ika M.U Ma'rufa and Mutmainnah Mustofa, "A Narrative Inquiry into EFL Teachers' Professional Experiences in Blended Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 1–15.

[21] Arief Eko Priyo Atmojo and Arif Nugroho, "EFL Classes Must Go Online! Teaching Activities and Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia," *Register Journal* 13, no. 1 (2020): 49–76, https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v13i1.49-76.

[22] Indry Widyasti Anwar and Jusmin HJ Wahid, "Learners' Perception on Online Learning Implementation During Covid-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching* 9, no. 2 (2021): 126, https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v9i2.3576.

[23] Antonius Setyawan Nur Agung, Monika Widyastuti Surtikanti, and Charito A. Quinones, "Students' Perception of Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study on the English Students of STKIP Pamane Talino," *Soshum: Jurnal Sosial Dan Humaniora* 10, no. 2 (2020): 225–35, https://dx.doi.org/10.31940/soshum.v10i2.1316.

of English teachers in using a social media platform in online classroom[24] while Syahputri et al. explored the drawbacks of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic from psychological perspective.[25] Although extensive research has been carried out on the issue of online learning across countries, there is, to the best of our knowledge, scarce exploration on the voices of Indonesian elementary students concerning online English learning during COVID -19 pandemic, making this study relevant to fill the gap.

Therefore, referring to the problems above, this study aims to explore the stories of elementary school children in Lampung Province about their experiences in the process of learning English during the Covid-19 pandemic using various digital media platforms. The information obtained in this study highlights the experiences experienced by children in the process of learning English when they conduct online learning. Overall, the study attempter to answer the question: How do participants experience learning English online during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Method

In this study, the researcher used qualitative research with an inquiry narrative approach. Narrative inquiry is a way of conducting research that focuses on interpretive-reflective about one's own life story and reliving one's life story in a community context.[26]

The instruments to collect data were questionnaires and interviews. Researchers collected information from nine questionnaire participants and then conducted in-depth interviews to two participants. Researchers used interviews for oral narrative data using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were then transcribed, translated into English, coded and analysed. Transcription is essential for dealing with findings. Selective coding is an analysis to emphasize the relationship between participants' experiences. The data was then analyzed to explore in detail the story in terms of its content containing who, where, and when which is translated into the context of the story.[27]

This study selected two participants to participate in the interview. Both participants are elementary school students who use digital media to learn English during the Covid-19 pandemic. The two students were deliberately selected to be involved in this narrative research. In the selection process, researchers prioritized their eligibility for inclusion. This is important because the purpose of this study is to explore their experiences in learning English online. The selection is also based on the participants' willingness to be involved in this study. The two participants are Munir and Nisa is a pseudonym in this study. Munir is 11 years old, and Nisa is 10. Both participants attended a public elementary school in the city of Metro.

As part of the interpretive analysis process, the researchers used narrative participants as 'collective stories' and discussed the interrelated themes and

[24] Irfan Suryana, Vicky Hidantikarnillah, and Didik Murwantono, "A Narrative Inquiry of Language Teachers Perceptions and Experiences in Using WhatsApp during New Normal Post-Covid-19 Era," *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2021): 55, https://doi.org/10.30659/e.6.1.55-70.

[25] Veni Nella Syahputri et al., "Online Learning Drawbacks during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Psychological Perspective," *EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka) : Culture, Language, and Teaching of English* 5, no. 2 (2020): 108–16, https://doi.org/10.26905/enjourme.v5i2.5005.

[26] F.M. Connelly and D.J. Clandinin, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry," *Educational Researcher* 19, no. 5 (1990): 2–14, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002.

[27] G. Barkhuizen, P. Benson, and A. Chik, *Narrative Inquiry in Language Teaching and Learning Research* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

subthemes that emerge from the stories through cross-case analysis techniques.[28] The collective story aimed to narrate their experiences from individual stories by telling the experiences of the social categories to which the individuals belong.

Findings and Discussion

Munir's Story: Adjusting the English Learning Process

Munir is an elementary school student who is very interested in learning English. He began to know English since he was in the fourth grade of elementary school. He explained that learning English in the fourth grade was his first experience in getting to know English. He revealed that "the first impression of learning English is that it is difficult". However, throughout the learning process, he continued to adapt and try to learn to understand new words in English. He continued this process until he was in fifth grade. More than that, Munir also got motivation from his English teacher to be diligent and enthusiastic in learning English. This is what keeps him motivated to continue studying English, even though he still has a weakness in pronouncing the right vocabulay in English.

English learning experiences in online classroom

Munir was very enthusiastic about joining his first online class, and at the same time, he was also curious about how to learn in an online class. At the first meeting, he was a little surprised because the class was held through What'sApp media. He explained that the teacher gave an explanation through the What'sApp group, and after giving the explanation the teacher gave an exercise assignment that had to be collected on the same day. The

number of students in the online class was about 22. In his first meeting in class, he thought that the learning process was going well and thus completed the assignment. Most of the time, Munir understood all the material explained by his teacher.

Munir's enthusiasm and adaptation in online English courses show that young students have adequate digital literacy skills. Digital literacy skill is highly needed in supporting students' learning activities in online settings as it allows young learners to improve English language skills, get used to authentic materials, increase frequency of digital technology use, and enhance online teacher-learners and learners-learners collaboration.[29]

When he interacts with his teacher, he remembers that the material is understandable and he can adapt to the situation in the context of understanding the meaning of words in writing. However, he revealed that interactions between students and teachers in the classroom are rare because most of these studies are not social science based. He concretely describes the typical classroom learning and interaction he experiences when conducting face-to-face learning (offline), as safely expressed his experience:

> "…because I learned English in the fourth grade, it was really fun when we [classmates] could practice to pronounce the language correctly which was guided by the teacher directly. The teacher explains and gives examples of how to use the language directly. My classmates and I interacted with each other to understand and practice directly the material explained by the English teacher."

In learning English during the Covid-19 pandemic, interaction with classmates

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[28] J.W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions.* (London: Sage Publication, 1998).

[29] Heri Mudra, "Digital Literacy Among Young Learners: How Do Efl Teachers and Learners View Its Benefits and Barriers?," *Teaching English with Technology* 20, no. 3 (2020): 3–24.

during the learning session was less intense and interactive. This is because there are limitations in the online space. The interaction was not an easy activity for him because he found it difficult to communicate with the teacher and his friends. He had some technical-language problems, such as how to use and pronounce English vocabulary correctly. He further admits that his strategy to persist in adapting to online learning appears to be effective because, over time, he begins to adapt to both written and spoken material; although he still faced some difficulties. He said,

> "......and, after months or today, it still— [happens] to me when I try to pronounce some English words with [talking to] classmates, but not very often."

Using digital media to learn English

The experience of learning English in an online class was Munir's first experience. He is a quiet and shy student in interacting in class. He recalls that he had his first interactive 'chat' when he participated in an English class that was held live before the Covid-19 Pandemic with his teacher. He recalled that the first interaction was not easy, because English is a foreign language, but the interaction was very enjoyable. He can engage in conversation with teachers and friends as they speak clearly and seem to know how to communicate in English. Munir further explained that most of his classmates were very enthusiastic and happy to learn English. This is in contrast when Munir has experience learning English online, where he must recognize and use digital media to support the online learning process. He told several online media such as Google classroom, Google meet, and What'sApp that he had never experienced before. Because most of the classmates have signal difficulties in online learning, English

teachers more often use What'sApp media which is considered effective for all students. This is in line with orther studies showing the benefit of social media in improving English language learning.[30][31]

Moreover, Munir is now not really worried about the way he speaks in English, besides the online class conditions he faces he is trying to adapt the material from the module using digital media from Youtube. This experience seems to have a positive side in getting to know digital media in the digital era. He gave this explanation when asked to recall his experience in using digital media:

> "The experience of using digital media for the first time in an online class is WA, which is not too foreign for me to know and use it. I still feel comfortable for the WA media. At the next meeting my English teacher tried to use Google classroom to collect assignments from the module book. The media is a new media in the online classroom learning process where I need the teacher's help to use the media."

Nisa's story: English, an interesting subject

Since Nisa was first introduced to English, she has shown that she really likes the subject because English is a cool language for communicating internationally. She likes listening to English songs and watching English films. Moreover, she is always actively involved in learning English in class, although she still has weaknesses in mastering vocabulary. Her English skills have not developed much when Nisa is still

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[30] Mona M. Hamad, "Using WhatsApp to Enhance Students' Learning of English Language 'Experience to Share,'" *Higher Education Studies* 7, no. 4 (2017): 74, https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v7n4p74.

[31] Minwuyelet Andualem Desta et al., "Social Media Usage in Improving English Language Proficiency from the Viewpoint of Medical Students," *Advances in Medical Education and Practice* 12 (2021): 519–28, https://doi.org/10.2147/AMEP.S310181.

in grade 4 in elementary school, but she is always happy to take English lessons with her teacher. He revealed that his English teacher was not only beautiful but also had good English skills. Moreover, Nisa also asked for permission from her parents to be able to take English lessons outside of school, but it only lasted for three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, she has a very strong willingness to be able to speak English well.

English learning experiences in online classroom

The first time Nisa heard a question regarding the experience of learning English online, she expressed it with a big smile. She stated that the online classroom was an inconvenient place for her to study yet. This is different from Munir's case and other studies revealing children tend to show more excitement in online learning.[32]

She has not been able to adjust herself to the process because she cannot focus on the explanations and the material she gets. Here, teachers and parents are expected to be more aware of young children's inadequate self-regulation in online learning.[33]

She described the online class as an assignment class only. This was revealed because she received more assignments than interactions in understanding the material between teachers and students. Most of her classmates often complain and sometimes do not collect the assignments given by the teacher. This is an important factor that affects Nisa's mood in learning English. She explained

> *"my motivation to learn English has decreased because I was only asked to complete written assignments with a lack of direct interaction with the English teacher".*

Young students tend to have good willingness participate and engage in conventional school activities. However, what articulated by Nisa showed that lack of participation and engagement have been one of barriers faced by students and teachers in online classroom[34]. This fact makes sense because online learning may be more difficult than learning in a face-to-face environment. For example, students who are not yet familiar with technological devices and those who are unskilled in independent study may experience decreased performance if they do not have a teacher physically present to direct the subject.[35]

In online settings, teachers do not have many chances to interact with their students, leading to poor communication between teachers and students.[36] Moreover, decreased interaction and communication between among learners and teachers might engender the decreasing of learning motivation. The lack of motivation to participate in online learning is also caused by the lack of technical facilities.[37]

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[32] Jomana S Zboun and Mohammed Farrah, "Students' Perspectives of Online Language Learning During Corona Pandemic: Benefits and Challenges," *Indonesian EFL Journal* 7, no. 1 (2021): 13–20.

[33] Chuanmei Dong, Simin Cao, and Hui Li, "Young Children's Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic: Chinese Parents' Beliefs and Attitudes," *Children and Youth Services Review*, no. January (2020): 1–9.

[34] Jenna Gillett-Swan, "The Challenges of Online Learning: Supporting and Engaging the Isolated Learner," *Journal of Learning Design* 10, no. 1 (2017): 20–30.

[35] R. Bork and Z. Rucks-Ahidiana, "Role Ambiguity in Online Courses: An Analysis of Student and Instructor Expecta Tions (Working Paper No. 64)" (2013), Retrieved from the Community College Research Center website: http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu /media/k2/attachments/role-ambiguity-in-online-courses.pdf.

[36] Claudiu Coman et al., "Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education during the Coronavirus Pandemic: Students' Perspective," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 12, no. 24 (2020): 1–22, https://doi.org/10.3390/su122410367.

[37] Sri Gustiani, "Students ' Motivation in Online Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic Era : A Case

Although Nisa can do learning outside the classroom, such as learning through videos or reading books, this does not mean that she does not find challenges in learning English directly. Through some of the vocabularies that he acquired through watching videos or reading books, he still has a lack of confidence to practice his own pronunciation. Nisa revealed that

> "Learning English by listening to videos and reading books is not too difficult, but it will be more fun when we have friends or teachers who can provide suggestions or corrections when we have errors in pronunciation of vocabulary in English".

English learning experiences in online classroom using digital media

The next question submitted to Nisa was about her experience in using digital media in learning English during online learning at school. She spontaneously said, "it's too foreign to me". She is an elementary school student who only knows the learning media used during online classes is only the What'sApp platform which is familiar to Nisa and her friends. She explained that:

> "During online classes, English teachers are more likely to only use the What'sApp group platform. The media will only be active during class hours, because my parents and I are still limited access to it."

She remembers the first time she received an announcement from the school to do online learning, the classroom teacher informed all students about learning through the What'sApp group platform, not other apps. She can understand what the teacher is telling her and her classmates. Even if there are other media, maybe some of us will have difficulty with

Study," *Holistics Journal* 12, no. 2 (2020): 23–40.

media such as laptops and smartphones, which not all students have. As our conversation continued, she shared her experience while learning English online through the WhatsApp platform, Nisa said that:

> "….the only problem is that they also rarely interact in the What'sApp group, actually they want to say something but there are no instructions from the teacher to interact between friends. So my friends and I only focused on understanding the teacher's explanation through writing and voice messages. It was an experience learning English online with my classmates, but overall I learned to adapt."

However, Nisa seems to have gotten used to learning through the What'sApp group platform with her friends. He shyly said, *"I also never did collect assignments from the English teacher given through What'sApp, because I once felt lazy and bored studying online on What'sApp"*. Nisa sometimes interacts with classmates who are near her house to learn and interact directly, *"it's more fun,"* she said with a smile.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicates that the elementary students find it easier to learn English in person face-to-face than virtual learning despite using digital media. In online learning, students' independence or agency is highly required since teachers' direct guidance is limited.[38] In other words, the students' participation in online learning was the result of their selfdetermination, motivation, and personal interest and belief.

Furthermore, this narrative investigation evokes new attention and

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[38] Margaret Vaughn, "What Is Student Agency and Why Is It Needed Now more than Ever?," *Theory into Practice* 59, no. 2 (2020): 109–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2019.1702393.

sensitivity to children's perceptions of online English learning using digital media. The immersive experiences of elementary school students have important implications for those who are doing online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Children need to get support in the process of learning English to achieve learning objectives effectively. In supporting this success, the school and parents must be able to adapt some media and appropriate strategies in learning English online for them. In addition, school curriculum stakeholders should be able to find ways to take advantage of the various experiences that elementary students bring to the classroom to help them improve English language learning outcomes.

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