Students' Perceptions: Utilizing WhatsApp and Google Classroom for Learning English in Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Students' Perceptions: Utilizing WhatsApp and Google Classroom for Learning English in Covid-19 Pandemic Tittle Research paper: This study is qualitative research focused on investigating the use of social media in English online learning. It aimed to find out the students' perceptions and the effectiveness of using WhatsApp and Google Classroom to learn English throughout the pandemic era. This study consists of 37 students in SMP Negeri 1 Galur. All the participants are seventh-grade students. The participants are required to respond to all the statements written in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is individually administered online using Google Forms. This study reveals that students found it easy to operate Whatsapp and Google Classroom. Both applications are helpful and effective in utilizing both applications even though there are some obstacles while utilizing the application such as keeping Internet connections stable, sharing a phone with their siblings to have online classes at the same time, or the phone itself suddenly getting blank. Hence, the use of Whatsapp and Google Classroom is successfully implemented as English Learning Media in Covid-19 Pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, online learning, smartphone,

Introduction

Technology has been developed rapidly. It invades every part of human life. Some of the technologies widely used by people are mobile devices, such as smartphones, laptops, or tablets. It takes energy and internet access to make human life simpler. It allows people to connect, get new information, and support their educational needs. It comes up with various features to access many sites and applications to facilitate students in learning activities.

Due to the Coronavirus Disease-19 (Covid-19) pandemic, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has agreed to apply the Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh (PJJ) or online class to avoid the spread of the virus. As a result, many teachers use technology to facilitate learning processes. As teachers and students need to

communicate with each other, they need a tool to facilitate their needs. Numerous social media applications can be used by students and teachers (e.g WhatsApp, Line, Telegram, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.)

WhatsApp is a free messaging service that runs on both Android and iOS devices. It is widely used since it serves multiple purposes. It requires an internet connection and makes it easier for users to send simple text messages, images, audio, videos, and other documents in real-time. Many researchers have carried out the topic of using WhatsApp in English Language Teaching. Paul and Abe (2017) described the usefulness of the WhatsApp application as a collaborative platform for teaching and learning. It is supported by studies conducted by Mbukusa (2018) and Robles et al (2019). Mbukusa (2018) presented WhatsApp attracted students and increased the student contribution by giving ideas, as well as providing faster and more comfortable communication. Moreover, Robles et al (2019) implicated the use of WhatsApp happened to be an innovative trend that performed better outcomes for both students and teachers.

In addition by using social media in language teaching, a specific application can be used to coordinate the classroom. Google Classroom is one of them. It can be used for exchanging materials, creating a quiz, assigning tasks, and much more. It is very easy to handle a class since each file can be classified into those categories. It is supported by Khalil (2018)'s discovery of utilizing Google Classroom to study English, specifically grammar. He said that most students enjoyed using Google Classroom.

During the sudden Coronavirus spread in Indonesia, many teachers are lost since the students are required to study at home. Therefore, the changes in teaching methods may confuse both teachers and students. Further investigation of students' expectations and the usefulness of using WhatsApp and Google Classroom to learn English during the pandemic period is therefore necessary.

To meet the purposes of this study, the researcher organizes the research questions as follows:

a. How are students' perceptions of utilizing WhatsApp in learning English?
b. How are students' perceptions of utilizing Google Classroom in learning English?
c. What are the obstacles while utilizing WhatsApp and Google Classroom in learning English?
d. Is it effective to utilize WhatsApp and Google Classroom in learning English?

This study is started with the background of the study and is followed by the theories related to the topics and the problems, the methodology of this study, the findings, and discussions. Then, the last part of this study is the conclusions.

Literature Review

Due to the Coronavirus Disease-19 (Covid-19) pandemic, almost all schools and universities are conducting online learning. It is mentioned in the Ministerial Decree on Surat Edaran Nomor 4 Tahun 2020 Tentang Pelaksanaan Pendidikan dalam Masa Darurat Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19). It describes an online learning process and the cancelation of the national test. Nadiem Anwar Makarim, as the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, has confirmed that the online learning process is being introduced to provide practical learning. It is focusing the students' interpretation of Covid-19. Activities between students can vary. It's all based on home or school facilitation. This does not mean that teachers only give assignments to students, but that they also connect and communicate to help students carry out their understanding and assignments.

Educational Technology

A smartphone, laptop, or tablet is one of the technologies most widely used by a student. Since not all students have a laptop or a computer, a smartphone is a convenient one. Many websites and apps can be accessed using a smartphone. To access information on the web, a smartphone requires an internet connection. These can help students learn online. In addition to the effects of Covid-19, technology is required for the implementation of the education system in the 21st century. As technology can be used anywhere and a language is a communication tool, learning a language can be easier. Students may do some practice by watching videos and reading information from the internet.

Plenty of sites and applications can be installed on a smartphone. To communicate with others, teachers and students need to install social media applications such as WhatsApp, Line, Telegram, Facebook, or Instagram. These applications have their strengths and weaknesses. It would be the same as an application that helps teachers organize the class such as Google Classroom and Moodle.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a free app that can be downloaded from the Google Play Store for Android users or the App Store for IOS users. It also has WhatsApp Web, which allows you to access data from a smartphone to a laptop or PC. Aside from texting, WhatsApp includes a variety of features. It allows you to share and receive a variety of media, such as text messages, images, videos, documents, and sharing locations. It has introduced end-to-end encryption to keep user data secure. It also allows users to have an uncountable group on the same account. These conveniences may enhance the number of WhatsApp users. It is supported by research from We Are Social, a British company that works with Hootsuite. The study reported revealed that there were 272.1 million people and 175.4 million internet users in Indonesia in January 2020. These numbers increased by more than 17% between 2019 and 2020. WhatsApp was the second most-used social media platform with 84% of users. These numbers make many teachers decide to use WhatsApp as a medium of teaching.

WhatsApp in education stimulates the collaborative work between a teacher and students. Paul and Abe (2017) discovered WhatsApp's efficiency as a collaborative medium for teaching and learning. They presented the z-test result in which the z-calculated value is at 0.587. It implied that there is a significant gap between students' ability after being taught using WhatsApp and those taught using the traditional teaching approach. Since WhatsApp is essentially a communication application, a teacher and students may communicate in a relaxed way. In addition, Mbukusa (2018) presented WhatsApp also provided easier, more comfortable communication. He claimed that students were drawn in and enhanced their participation by contributing ideas. Students may send texts in the class WhatsApp group and share their ideas. The teacher or other students may make comments on their ideas. In this case, Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) explored the benefits of the WhatsApp group for the teacher and students with an emphasis on educational advantages. They claimed that WhatsApp encouraged a nice atmosphere, group participation, and the quality of communication among students. Moreover, the teacher can share audio lessons, send PPT materials or documents in the form of Word, Pdf, Jpeg, etc. It is also possible to share videos and direct links to certain websites or videos on Youtube. So, it is easy for the students to get a lot of information. Another feature of WhatsApp is a video call. The teacher may communicate with the students not only by voice like on a phone,

but also see the students' faces. The number of users who can join the video call is up to 8 users. Then, the other students may take turns. In addition, when the school comes up with announcements, notices, and other information, it is very reachable and fast through the WhatsApp group.

Google Classroom

A free website designed by Google available to both students and teachers is Google Classroom. It assists teachers to develop online classrooms where they can organize all of their students' documents. The main purpose of Google Classroom is to share documents among teachers and students. However, it is also integrated with other websites developed by Google. Since it has multi-functions, many teachers use Google Classroom to set up the class in online learning. According to the report, Google Classroom has 40 million users in more than 230 countries in 2019 ("Google Classroom, One of the", 2019).

Conducting Google Classroom in an online learning class can be effective. As it can be used to communicate and set the class up. This idea is in a line with the report of a study conducted by Dr. Barman and Dr. Karthikeyan (2019). They discovered that the use of Moodle and Google Classroom in a class was using a cooperative/collaborative principle. Students had sufficient time in communicating with their teacher and classmates. They also reached a level of competence and performance with the spirit of teamwork. Chung et al (2020) added that the majority of students enrolled in two online UiTM courses favored online learning methods using pre-recorded lectures, which were uploaded to Google Classroom and YouTube.

Google Classroom allows teachers to design a space for having online classes and they can organize all the documents needed. A teacher may also deliver assignments to students. The teacher can provide the relevant documents for the students to read or work on while setting an assignment. Students will accept a notification through e-mail for getting a new assignment. After completing the assignment, the students will "turn in" their works and the teacher will be able to give scores. Google Classroom provides quiz and question features. These works are similar to designing an assignment. Another feature is that a teacher may share the materials with the students through the feature 'Material' along with relevant documents. The teacher can give a label to all the posts to categorize. All the posts

and documents can be re-upload in different classes. In each feature, the teacher and students may communicate in the comment section.

Google Classroom connects Google Calendar, Google Forms, Google Docs, Google Spreadsheets, Google Slides, Gmail, Google Drive, and more together to help the process of online learning. Google Calendar is integrated to help teachers with the due dates of the assignment. Google Forms can be used as an attendance list the data can be seen in a Google Spreadsheet. It also can be used as a tool to conduct a quiz. Each Google Classroom class creates a different folder on the user's Google Drive, and all documents uploaded in Google Classroom are stored in Google Drive.

Students' Perceptions in utilizing Whatsapp and Google Classroom Applications

It seems the use of WhatsApp and Google Classroom applications may help teachers and students to communicate with each other and conduct online learning. By looking at the plenty of features, both applications are easy to use and set the class. A teacher needs to be concerned about students' perceptions since students are the focus of the learning process. Many studies had been conducted due to the use of both applications in English language teaching. As stated by Mbukusa (2018), WhatsApp enhanced the students to be more active in the learning process. Besides it encouraging the students' motivation, the use of WhatsApp may affect students who didn't have smartphones. Since students have different backgrounds, a teacher needs to be concerned about the facilitation students' have.

Utilizing Google Classroom may not always be beneficial. According to Islam (2018), students discovered some technology barriers they faced while using Google Classroom. They noticed that Google Classroom did not have a private messaging option, a barrier to providing an e-mail address with a different domain, a learner cheating option, and a homepage auto-update (stream) problem, but that could not be solved by a teacher. These ideas are opposite to research studied by Khalil (2018). He found students enjoyed using Google Classroom and thought it was a convenient application for learning English.

Methodology

To examine the students' perceptions and the effectiveness of using WhatsApp and Google Classroom in learning English during the pandemic era, this study consists of 37 students. The participants are students of SMP Negeri 1 Galur. The participants are specified as students in year VII. The participants are taken randomly from all the students' grade VII. The significance of conducting a study in SMP Negeri 1 Galur is that the school is one of the favorite middle schools in Kulon Progo. This school has implemented online learning since March 2020 and is using WhatsApp and Google Classroom as a tool to promote online learning.

The researcher managed the classes by greeting the students in the Whatsapp group chat. Then, it was followed by asking a question about conditions and giving a link for the students to list their attendance. After that, the researcher uploaded materials to Google Classroom and informed the students to check them out. The students tried to read and comprehend the materials before discussing them in the WA group chat or Google Classroom comment section. If there was homework that needed to be completed by the students, the researcher uploaded the instructions or the questions right before the class ended.

The researcher utilizes a qualitative method. The researcher conducts an online questionnaire. A questionnaire is used to gather information about students' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as participants. The questionnaire is administered online on an individual basis using Google Forms. The participants are expected to respond to all the statements in the questionnaire. The data taken from the questionnaire are classified into some categories. After that, the findings of the questionnaire are related to the theories.

Findings and Discussions

Utilizing WhatsApp in Learning English

WhatsApp is a social media service with a convenient instant messaging feature that allows students and teachers to engage and is supported by other features for document sharing. In Diagram 1 below, this study found that students enjoy the class. There are 91.9% of students are pleased to use this application to learn English. While the rest of them are not in line with this idea.
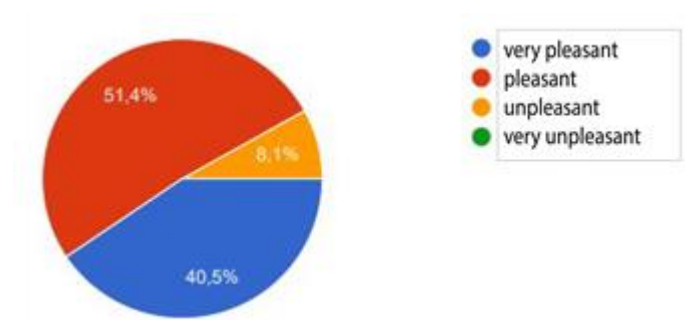
Diagram 1. The Convenience of Utilizing WhatsApp

Not all students understand English learning materials easily. They might have trouble understanding it. To solve this problem, students are trying to be active in the learning process. Students use WhatsApp to address questions related to the discussion. WhatsApp is not only used to share and discuss materials, the teacher gives assignments through this application. Then the students submit their assignments using feature chat. They send a chat and document of their assignment one by one to the teacher. It's very simple for the students but not for the teacher. The teacher will get many messages as many as the number of the students. The teacher needs to check it one by one. In addition, to get all students' work, the teacher has to connect her WhatsApp to WhatsApp Web on the laptop then download the works one by one. It takes so much time for the teacher to get all the assignments.

Figure 1. Opening a Class Using Whatsapp
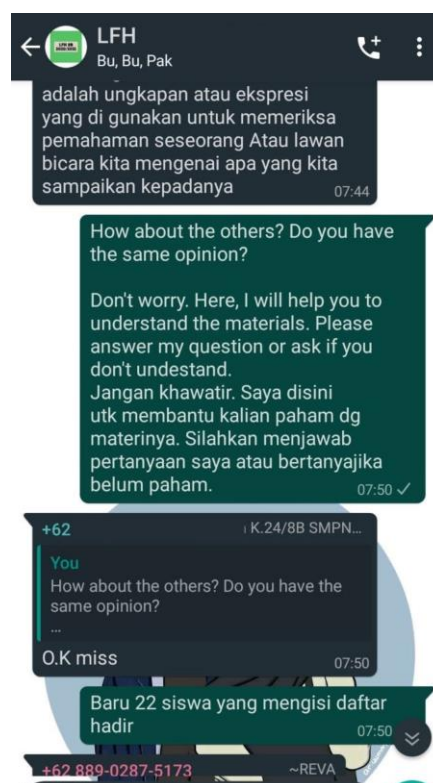
Figure 2. Class Discussion Using Whatsapp

In figures 1 and 2, the researcher and students used the Whatsapp application to have a discussion. The researcher sometimes applied bilingual in order to make students understand the instructions or the explanations. Another feature used by the researcher was a Group Video Call. This was conducted to have a speaking evaluation about self-introduction. Since Whatsapp only allowed 8 speakers in a group, the researcher divided the students into several teams. The rolls were turned at random, hence the students were always prepared for their turns.

Figure 3. Speaking Assessment Using Group Video Call on Whatsapp

While the use of Google Classroom in English online learning will be explained in the next subheading.

Utilizing Google Classroom in Learning English

Google Classroom has a variety of features to set up online learning. Teachers may set up a variety of classes and courses. An English teacher organizes her classes and posts a variety of documents related to the courses using Google Classroom. From the teacher's point of view, the use of this application is very beneficial. The teacher doesn't need to organize the students' work manually. All documents are linked and arranged automatically on Google Drive. Thus, the teacher may check everything either in Google Classroom or Google Drive. Looking at the result of the questionnaire in Diagram 2, shows that many students enjoy using Google Classroom. There are only 13.5% of the students seem uncomfortable. It is appropriate with the study conducted by Khalil (2018) that the students were comfortable using Google Classroom because it was very convenient.
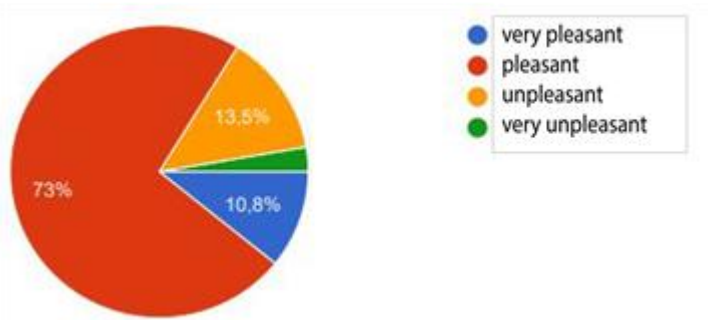
Diagram 2. The Convenience of Utilizing Google Classroom

The main function of Google Classroom is to set up the class and provide with comment section to enable the students to communicate with each other or the teacher. It can be used to discuss the materials or ask questions. In this case, there are 8.1% of students always use this feature to deliver their difficulties and the other 43.2% of students often use it. Meanwhile, 45.9% of the rest of the students are rarely asked. These results can be seen in Diagram 3.
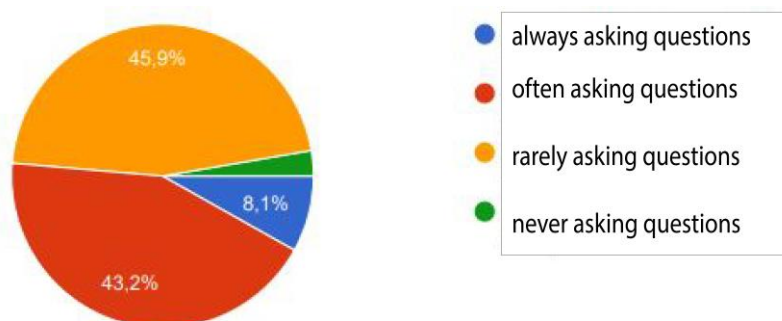
Diagram 3. The Use of Comment Section in Google Classroom

Since the teacher shares materials and assignments in Google Classroom, students access this application frequently. They submit their works in Google Classroom. According to Diagram 4, all the students agree that this application helps them to submit their work. In addition, Google Classroom provides a feature to give grades and comments to the students. It is more helpful than WhatsApp related to submitting and giving feedback on the assignments.
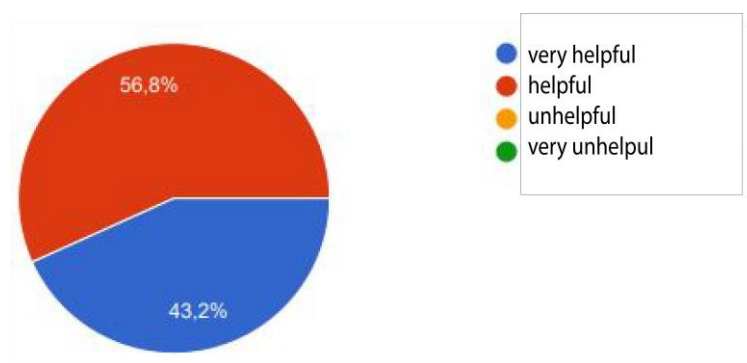
Diagram 4. The Use of Google Classroom related to the Materials and Assignments

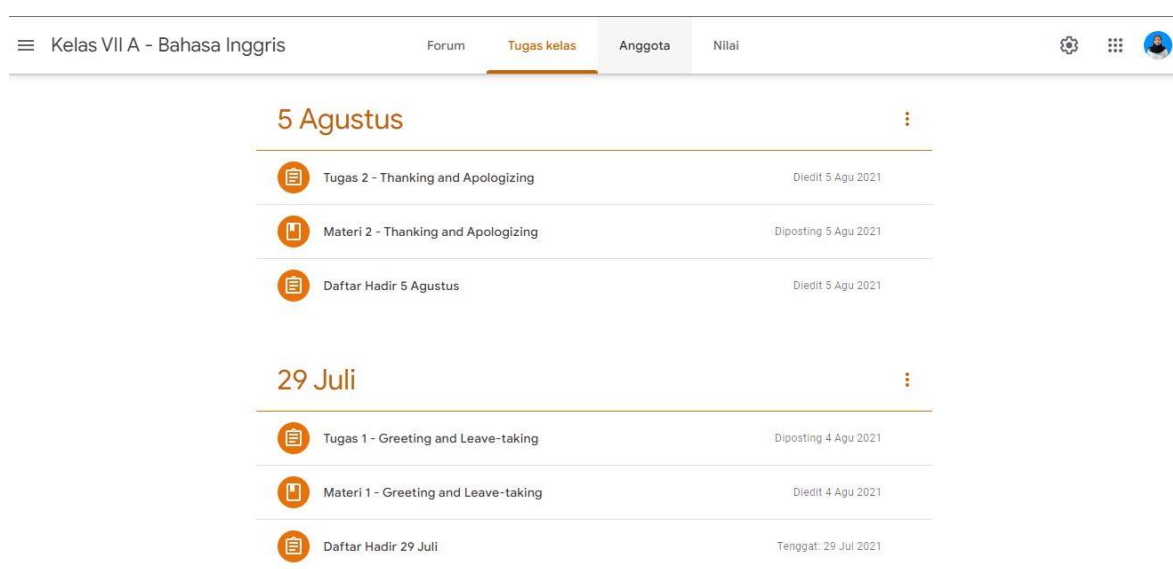The organization of the Google Classroom can be seen in the figure 3 below.

*Figure 4. The File Organization using Google Classroom*

The Obstacles of Utilizing WhatsApp and Google Classroom

Aside from the many advantages that teachers and students get from using WhatsApp and Google Classroom, there are some issues they might face. Since both applications require an internet connection, both teachers and students need to be worried about the internet connection. The teacher works in a school that has good facilities. The school is trying to provide a good internet connection to facilitate the learning process. However, students live in different locations that have different internet connectivity stability. Some students can find it difficult to access

WhatsApp and Google Classroom. The researchers found separate results in diagrams 5 and 6 below.
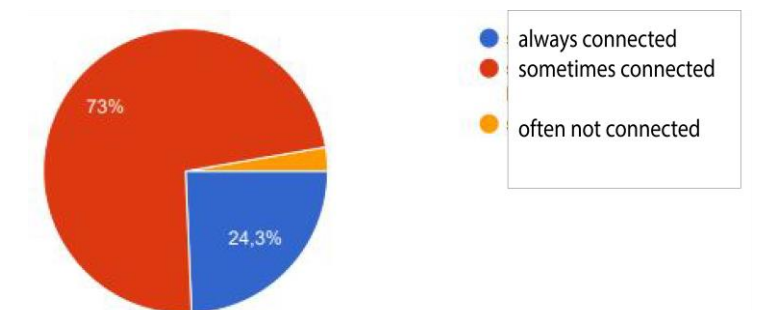
Diagram 5. The Internet Connection Stability in Using WhatsApp
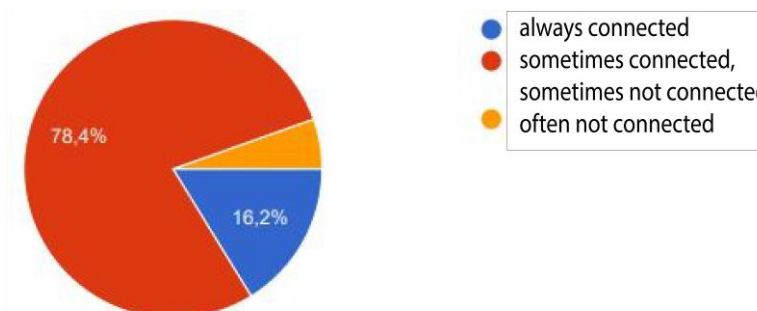
*Diagram 6. The Internet Connection Stability in Using Google Classroom*

Both findings revealed that most of the students have difficulties in using WhatsApp and Google Classroom for online learning due to the internet connectivity stability. There are only 24.3% of students who have a good internet connection in utilizing WhatsApp and 16.2% in utilizing Google Classroom. This problem affects the students in the learning process. Students find it difficult to submit their attendance list using Google Forms that connect with Google Classroom, obtain the materials, participate in the discussion of materials in WhatsApp and Google Classroom, and submit their works.

The other problems that students face are phone storage, their phones sometimes are broken, and even they don't have a phone. The phone storage depends on what kind of phone the students have. Since the students do not have the same situation, some students have an old type of phone which has small internal storage. Moreover, some students' phones are broken sometimes. This can happen because of a processor or a phone system, and few students may not have

their phones. Few students use their parents' phones to study online. This kind of problem cannot be solved by the teacher. Cooperation between the parents, the teacher, and the school is required to support the students.

The Effectiveness of Utilizing WhatsApp and Google Classroom

It can be seen from the results that there are advantages and disadvantages to the use of WhatsApp and Google Classroom for learning English. The usefulness of using both applications from the perspective of students is seen in the diagrams below.
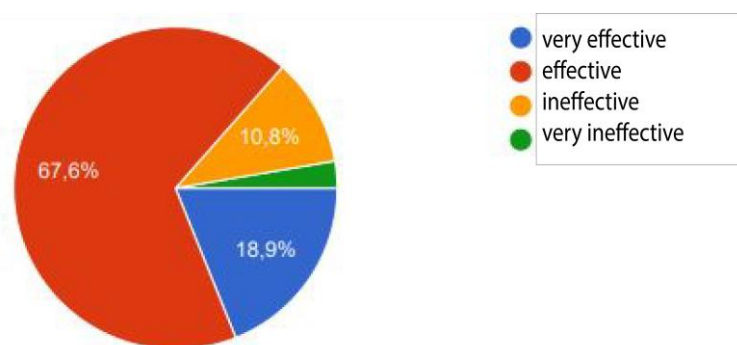

Diagram 7. The Effectiveness of Using WhatsApp
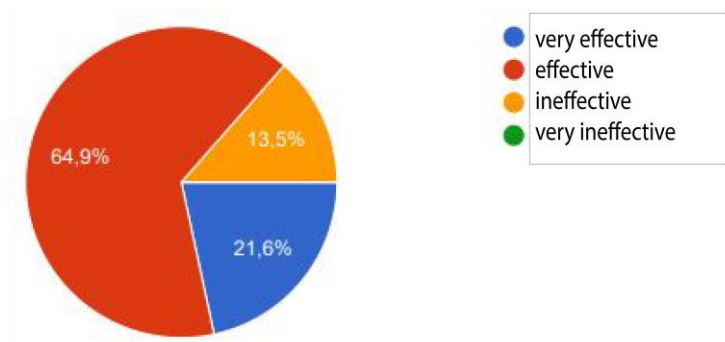
*Diagram 8. The Effectiveness of Using Google Classroom*

From both the diagrams above, the students found that using WhatsApp and Google Classroom is effective. It is in line with the study conducted by Paul and Abe (2017). However, some students do not agree with this idea. 10.8% of students considered it inefficient to use WhatsApp and 13.5% of students disagreed with the efficacy of using Google Classroom in the learning process.

The researcher conducts what applications can be used to support online learning. The result of this study states that 8.1% of students want to use WhatsApp only, 67.6% of students choose to use both Whatsapp and Google Classroom, and the other 24.3% of students want to try other applications for an online conference. These findings can be seen in Diagram 9 below.
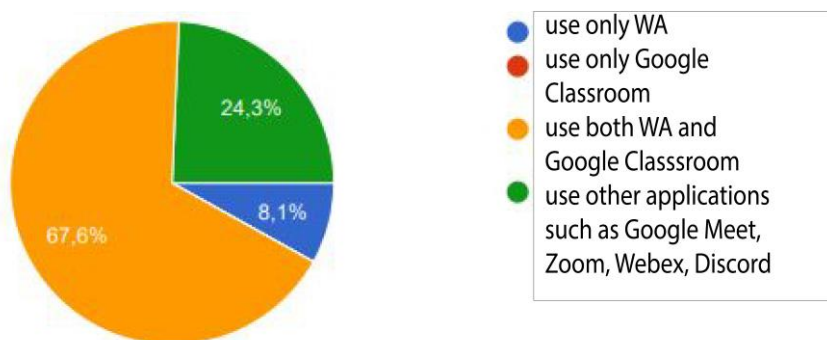
Diagram 9. The Use of Online Learning Applications

The students who choose to use other applications might think they will understand easier by utilizing online conference applications. The teacher can explain the materials like in a real class and the students will listen to them. Of four applications written in Diagram 9, 34 out of 37 students choose Google Meet to hold an online conference class. This number is written in Diagram 10. To have an online conference class, students must have a good internet connection. As discussed earlier, students have problems with internet stability then teachers may not be able to hold a conference.
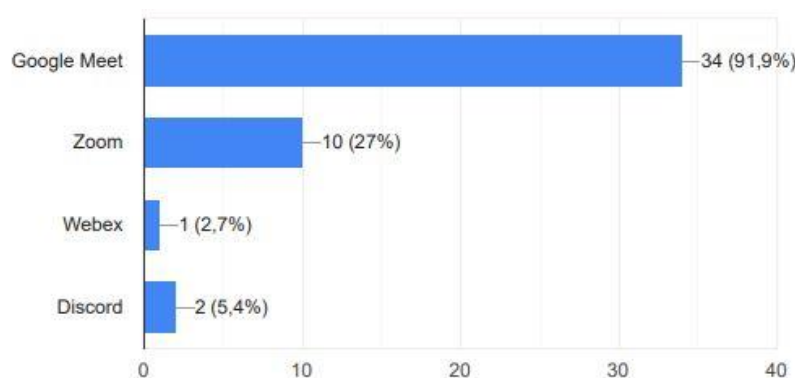
Diagram 10. Using Online Conference Application in Online Learning

Conclusion

The purpose of the study can be answered from the above discussion. It can be inferred that almost all students enjoy learning English using WhatsApp and Google Classroom. They're communicating on WhatsApp and getting all the materials and assignments in Google Classroom. Google Classroom is only used to set up documents that are more structured and easier to access. They find it successful to apply for both online learnings even though students have difficulties such as keeping Internet connections stable, sharing a phone with their siblings to have online classes at the same time, or the phone itself suddenly gets blank. Some students want an online conference class to make it easier to understand the materials the teacher presents.

Limitations

The researcher tries not to generalize or draw conclusions about other students besides grade VII students also students from other schools. The researcher, therefore, suggests that potential implementation studies in the online learning phase involve participants from other grades and schools with a broader selection of study items in terms of technology and a variety of circumstances. Moreover, the questionnaire used in this study had not been tested yet. The credibility of the results in this study would be higher if the triangulation of the instrument were tested and conducting interviews with the participants were.

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