Examining The Transformation of English Learning Outcomes in Post-Pandemic Higher Education

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the impact of the change from online learning to face-to-face learning on the academic performance of students majoring in English Education and to identify the key factors affecting students' academic performance in the context of face-to-face learning (post-pandemic era) in a university located in a disadvantaged area in West Kalimantan. This qualitative study involved 30 students who experienced both online and face-to-face learning transformation. Data were collected through open and closed questionnaires. The results showed that most students experienced an increase in grades after returning to face-to-face classes compared to online learning. Some influencing factors include social interaction, ease of understanding the lecturer's explanation, better focus, and active class participation. This finding implies that blended online and face-to-face learning may be ideal for least-developed regions.

Keywords: Achievement, Post pandemic, Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which broke out globally, undermined public health and shook many sectors of life, including education systems worldwide. Education, one of the main pillars of societal development, faced tremendous challenges during this period (Büscher et al., 2021). The government assigned all schools in Indonesia to learn from home in April 2020 (Wahyono et al., 2020). As a result, the teaching media, techniques, and methods were transformed from offline to online. Tarkar (2021) highlights some fundamental changes in English learning methods caused by the pandemic and covers the impact on schools and the assessment system.

Similarly, research by Batubara (2021) focuses on the situation in Indonesia and emphasizes the difficulties students face in accessing online learning during the pandemic. However, the proverb "blessing in disguise" seems to be accurate since there are positive impacts on English language students during the pandemic. As stated by Ironsi (2020), one of the positive impacts is the utilization of technology in English language learning. While distance learning may present barriers, the diversity of online resources can help ELL students

to hone their language skills.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the English Department students of Unika Santo Agustinus Hippo located in Landak Region also conducted online learning. Landak region is categorized as the least-developed region. Given the conditions, the teaching and learning process met some obstacles. The main issue was the internet connection (Agung et al., 2020). The fact is that some districts in Landak lack internet access. Thus, the students faced difficulties and obstacles in online learning (Agung et al., 2020). They stated that the limited infrastructure there, such as the lack of internet access and electricity, forced the students to move and climb several hills to get an internet signal.

Moreover, most of them rely on online learning through low-end mobile phones. Unfortunately, their cell phones are incompatible as they have limited memory and cannot save more supported applications. This situation naturally leads to frustration among the students. Moreover, they also need help with financial issues, such as a lack of money to buy data packages, which are expensive. Therefore, efforts to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of English language learning in the pandemic era need to be strengthened. Agung et al. (2020) suggested that educators and education providers need to continue to innovate and find solutions so that every ELL student can reach their maximum potential in developing their English language skills during the pandemic era.

Based on The Convention Letter of 4 Indonesian Ministers assigned to open schools, this condition lasted for a year, considering the COVID-19 trend in each region (Editorial Team, 2021). Since July 2021, the students have had to experience the transformation from online learning to face-to-face learning. Transformation in Education aims to alter the game's rules regarding certain elements, behaviors, and educational establishments responsible for disseminating knowledge (Hatip, 2020). This study alludes to the paradigm shift from online learning to face-to-face learning.

Research in the literature has found that school environment, teacher achievement, and teaching media affect the student's academic achievement (Ozcan, 2021; Berhanu & Sabanci, 2020). Thus, the shift from online to face-to-face learning may influence student achievement. The student's academic achievement is the demonstration of knowledge acquired or skills honed in a particular subject area demonstrated by a single person (Iroegbu, 1992; Busari, 2000). Zheng & Mustappha (2022) argue that academic achievement indicates how thriving students are learning and can be used to assess students' general development and the efficacy of

teaching and learning in higher Education. The present study holds that the student's academic achievement pertains to the assessed achievement of students during a specific study phase, as determined by exams.

Studies on the transformation in online learning show that it impacts the student's academic achievement (Agung et al., 2020; Almaududi Ausat, 2022; Pareek, 2023; Tümen-Akyıldız & Fırat, 2021). Ausat (2022) notes that the shift in the English learning paradigm from traditional classes to virtual learning has changed how students access and understand the subject matter. It had a significant impact on the student's academic achievement. In addition, Reshi et al. (2023) provide a decisive view on the urgency of developing new approaches in teaching and testing in the context of the pandemic era to enhance students' academic achievement. Pareek (2023) highlights the transformation in English learning approaches before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. His research findings have revealed that there are some strategies, including enhancing students' engagement in learning activities to improve their academic achievement. It can be stated that scholars have investigated students' academic achievement from the perspective of online learning. However, students' academic achievement in face-to-face learning in the post-pandemic era has not yet gotten scholars' attention. In addition, the study by Agung et al. 2020 showed the impacts, including students' academic achievement, of online learning in the context of the Landak region. However, during the post-pandemic era, educational institutions have progressively returned to in-person instruction as the pandemic has improved (Singh et al., 2021).

The transition from online to in-person instruction during the pandemic has substantially changed the educational landscape. While online learning offered a short-term solution to carry on with academic work, it also presented difficulties for effective learning, resource access, and student engagement (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020). The more traditional classroom setting has been made possible by the return to in-person instruction. Here, students may engage with their teachers and peers, access tangible learning materials, and gain from a more regimented learning environment (Bower et al., 2017).

Nevstill needs to determine how this change will affect students' academic performance in the post-pandemic age instead of the online (pandemic) era. The return to in-person instruction may have impacted several variables affecting students' academic performance,

including classroom dynamics, teacher-student relationships, and experiential learning opportunities (Zhou et al. Mustappha, 2022).

More studies must be done to understand how student academic attainment has changed from the internet to the post-pandemic age. Thus, in a disadvantaged area, namely the Landak region, this study aims to evaluate the impact on student academic progress and the essential elements that determine it. Examining this should yield important information on how effective in-person instruction is compared to virtual instruction. This study will aid in recognizing the opportunities and difficulties brought about by the return to the classroom, and it will support policymakers and educators in formulating plans to raise academic success levels in the post-pandemic age. Based on these objectives, the researcher formulated the following research questions:

1. What are the impacts of the transformation from online learning to face-to-face learning of English language learning on the students' academic achievement?

2. What are the key factors affecting students' academic achievement in face-to-face learning (post-pandemic era)?

METHOD

The current study uses a qualitative approach to explain the influences and contributing variables to students' academic success. Qualitative research aims to explore and provide a more profound comprehension of the natural world's challenges (Tenny et al., 2022). This study gathers participants' experiences of the impacts of learning transformation. The research subjects were the English Language Education Department study program students of Unika Santo Agustinus Hippo, Landak Region's class of 2021. The total participants were 30 English students, of which 73% were female and 27% were male. The classes of 2021 have witnessed the evolution of in-person and virtual learning. It serves as the justification for the topic selection. The participants' experience was obtained from an open and closed questionnaire composed in the Google Form. The questionnaire consisted of 9 questions, combining open questions and closed questions. Data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing are the three steps of data analysis (Miles et al., 1994; Sugiono, 2014); these techniques were used for data obtained through open-ended questionnaire data. Then, for closed questionnaire data, researchers used descriptive statistical techniques through several steps such as data reduction,

data visualization in the form of pie charts, and conclusion drawing (Creswell, 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the results of the questionnaire distributed by the researcher, several interesting findings were revealed as follows:

1. The impacts of the transformation from online learning to face-to-face learning of English language learning on the student's academic achievement

1.1. Learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic

Most students stated that they experienced online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.
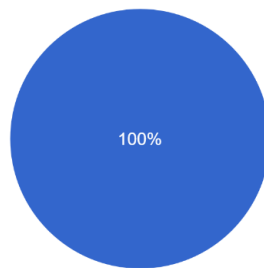

Figure 1. Students who experience online learning

Regarding their learning experiences during online learning, the students confessed that online learning brought significant changes to their learning process as they had to rely on digital devices and the internet. Here are some statements conveyed by several respondents regarding learning during the pandemic (COVID-19):

Excerpt 1. Student A: "During online sessions, I often faced connectivity issues that made it difficult to understand the lecturer's explanation."

Excerpt 2. Student B: "During online sessions, I frequently experience disturbances like drowsiness and a lack of understanding of the surrounding environment."

Excerpt 3. Student C: "During online learning, it is difficult to focus and be less engaged in learning, both with lecturers and fellow students."

Excerpts 1, 2, and 3 show that the students struggle with obstacles during online learning. Some challenges experienced included connectivity issues, difficulty concentrating, and limited interaction with lecturers and fellow students. The finding is in line with Hollister et al. (2022), stating that online learning caused students' engagement to be limited. The students were limited to having discussions through online media. Some students considered this case an obstacle (Agung et al., 2020). Moreover, learning obstacles contribute to the student's intrinsic motivation (Ahshan, 2021).

1.2.Impact of changes to the learning process

In terms of learning achievement, the majority of the students (66.7%) experienced changes in learning achievement (grades) during online learning, and the rest did not experience this. Figure 2 shows the complete result.
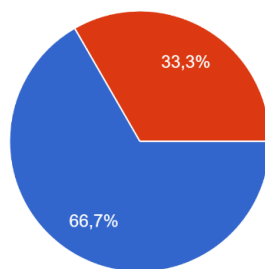

Figure 2. The impact on the student's academic achievement

The result also shows that 30% of students stated that during online learning, their grades increased, 16.7% thought that their learning achievement decreased, 43.3% did not experience significant changes in learning achievement during online learning, and the remaining 10% did not experience changes in grades online or before the pandemic. Figure 3 shows the phenomena.
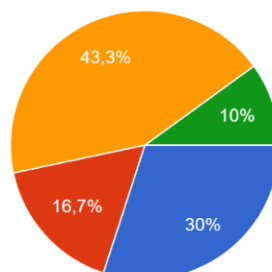

Figure 3. The changes illustration

The findings corroborate the previous study that students achieved lower levels of online learning (Stephan et al., 2019). According to their findings, students faced boredom, anxiety, and anger during online learning. It was caused by the transformation from offline to online learning, and they must adjust. However, there is a similar positive effect on students' engagement with technology from Stephan et al. (2019) and Agung et al. (2020), in which students' skills related to technology mastery remained high.

1.3.Impact of changes to the learning process

In terms of learning achievement, the majority of students (96.7%) experienced changes in learning achievement (grades) after returning to offline learning (post-pandemic), and the rest did not experience this. Figure 4 shows the full results.
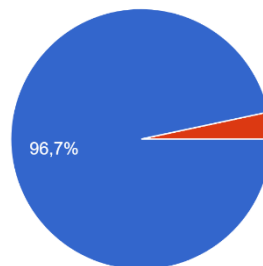

Figure 4. Impact of changes to the learning process

The results also show that 66.7% of people stated that after offline learning, their grades increased, 3.3% thought that their learning achievement decreased, 16.7% did not experience significant changes in learning achievement after offline learning, and the remaining 13.3% did not experience changes in grades either after offline learning or online. Figure 5 shows this phenomenon.
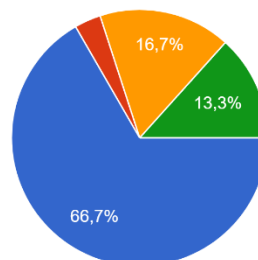

Figure 5. The changes illustration

This finding corroborates previous research showing that students achieve more online learning (Veerasamy & Goswami, 2022). According to their findings, students' academic performance (grades) was slightly higher in offline classes than online. It is due to increased social interaction and direct communication during offline learning, making it easier to understand lecturers' explanations, better focus and concentration, and active participation in class discussions and presentations. In line with research by You et al. (2022), which states that most students (86.14%) prefer offline classes. The reasons include a more conducive learning atmosphere, easier interaction, and tighter supervision.

2. The key factors affecting students' academic achievement in face-to-face learning (post-pandemic era) context

Some of the main changes mentioned were improved social interaction and direct communication, ease of understanding lecturers' explanations, better focus and concentration, and active participation in class discussions and presentations. Some of the factors mentioned as influencing the grade improvement include more effective teaching methods of lecturers offline, a more conducive learning environment, and increased motivation and interest in learning, such as the following statements:

Excerpt 4. Student D: "Offline learning allows direct social interaction with
classmates and lecturers. This interaction can
increase student engagement and facilitate the exchange of
ideas."

Presented by Student D, highlights the benefits of offline learning, particularly the direct social interaction it allows with classmates and lecturers. The argument emphasizes how such interaction can enhance student engagement and facilitate the exchange of ideas. This viewpoint underscores the value of interpersonal communication and collaboration in learning, suggesting that face-to-face interaction fosters a richer educational experience.

Excerpt 5. Student F: "Direct interaction with lecturers in an offline classroom
environment can provide more direct support to
understanding the material. Lecturers can provide
real-time clarification, help, and guidance."

Student F's voice focuses on the advantage of direct interaction with lecturers in an offline classroom

setting. The argument suggests that this direct interaction enables students to receive real-time clarification, assistance, and guidance from their instructors, which can enhance their understanding of the material. This perspective highlights the importance of personalized support and immediate feedback in promoting learning effectiveness.

Excerpt 6. Student G: "Physical presence in the classroom can help to focus and concentrate more on the learning material without technical distractions or connection issues that may be encountered during online learning."

Articulated by Student G, emphasizes the benefits of physical presence in the classroom for maintaining focus and concentration. The argument suggests that offline learning reduces technical distractions and connection issues often encountered in online environments, enabling students to immerse themselves fully in the learning material. This viewpoint underscores the role of the physical learning environment in optimizing student attention and engagement.

Excerpt 7. Student H: "Offline learning provides opportunities for me to actively participate in class discussions, group activities, and presentations."

Delivered by Student H, underscores the opportunities for active participation provided by offline learning. The argument emphasizes the value of engaging in class discussions, group activities, and presentations, highlighting the role of interactive learning experiences in promoting a more profound understanding and retention of material. This perspective emphasizes the importance of student involvement and engagement in the learning process.

Excerpt 8. Student I: "Lecturers explaining the material offline is more effective then online learning, where sometimes the network is bad, so when the lecturer explains the material, it is less effective."

Presented by Student I, offline learning is contrasted with online learning, highlighting the perceived effectiveness of offline lectures due to the absence of technical issues. The argument suggests that offline lectures are more impactful because they are not hampered by poor network connectivity, which can detract from the learning experience in online settings. This viewpoint underscores the importance of reliable technology infrastructure in facilitating effective online learning.

Excerpt 9. Student J: "More focused and active in the classroom."
Student J succinctly expresses the perceived benefit of offline learning in promoting focus and active engagement in the classroom. Physical presence in the classroom contributes to heightened attentiveness and participation, leading to a more focused and productive learning experience.

Excerpt 10. Student K: "I am more diligent in reading and easily understand the
material that has been delivered offline, and also when
studying offline, I feel more comfortable than studying
online because when studying online, there are more
obstacles than studying offline; therefore, I prefer to study
offline."
Student K's articulation emphasizes personal preferences and comfort levels associated with offline learning. Studying offline leads to greater diligence, understanding, and comfort than online learning, which various obstacles may hinder. This viewpoint underscores learners' subjective experience and individual preferences for learning modalities.

When examining the differences and similarities among these discourses, it becomes evident that each student brings a unique perspective to the discussion. While some emphasize the benefits of social interaction and engagement in offline settings (Excerpts 4, 7), others highlight the advantages of direct support from lecturers (Excerpts 5, 8) or the absence of technical distractions (Excerpts 6, 10). Despite these variations, all perspectives underscore optimizing the learning environment to facilitate student engagement, understanding, and comfort. Additionally, the diversity of viewpoints reflects the multifaceted nature of the learning experience and students' varied preferences and experiences.

Most respondents suggested making the offline learning process more interactive and exciting, such as group discussions, presentations, and the utilization of learning facilities. They also suggested that lecturers provide materials and lecture schedules earlier so that students can prepare themselves. In terms of facilities, increasing the capacity of Wi-Fi and learning facilities is an input to support the offline learning process.

Excerpt 11. Student L: "My suggestion in offline learning is that it is essential to create

an interactive and supportive classroom environment.

Teachers can apply teaching methods that involve active

student participation, group discussions, and the use of

relevant learning technologies."

Student L's response emphasizes the benefits of an interactive classroom environment, highlighting its positive impact on learning outcomes. The student demonstrates a strong understanding of the importance of student engagement in the learning process and a belief in the effectiveness of active learning strategies.

Excerpt 12. Student M: "My advice is that lecturers provide lecture materials and

schedules earlier if there are changes so that we can prepare

ourselves."

Student M's response focuses on the practical aspects of preparation and time management, emphasizing the importance of timely access to resources. The student voices the need for clear and transparent communication from lecturers, enabling students to manage their time and resources for optimal learning outcomes effectively.

Excerpt 13. Student N: "Hopefully, the campus Wi-Fi speed capacity will increase so

that it does not hamper the use of the network during

presentations."

Student N's response addresses a specific technological concern related to campus infrastructure. The student highlights the importance of reliable technology resources in supporting smooth access to educational materials. The comment demonstrates an awareness of the role of technology in supporting learning and expresses hope for infrastructure improvements to enhance the student experience.

This study found that most students experienced an increase in grades after returning to face-to-face classes compared to during online learning. This finding aligns with the research of (Agung et al., 2020), who found online learning challenges in the Landak area due to poor internet connectivity. However, this finding is different from several other studies (Almaududi Ausat, 2022; Pareek, 2023; Tümen-Akyıldız & Fırat, 2021; Irshad et al. et al., 2023), which shows that there is a significant

increase in students' academic performance during online learning. This difference may be due to the context of the Landak area, which is less developed than the previous research locations.

In addition, research by Batubara (2021) highlighted the difficulties Indonesian students face in accessing online learning during the pandemic, which aligns with the challenges in Landak. Meanwhile, (Ironsi, 2020) mentioned that the positive impact of the pandemic was the utilization of technology in English language learning, which was less felt in Landak. Overall, this study provides insights into the impact of COVID-19-induced learning transformation on university students in less developed regions. Further research is needed to explore strategies to improve learning outcomes across modalities in various contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of online to face-to-face learning transformation on academic achievement and the key factors affecting students' academic achievement in face-to-face learning (post-pandemic era) of students majoring in English at a university located in a less-developed area in West Kalimantan.

The results showed that most students experienced an increase in academic grades after returning to face-to-face learning compared to the online learning period. Some of the factors that influence this improvement are better social interaction and direct communication with lecturers and other students, ease of understanding material explanations from lecturers directly, better focus and concentration because there are no technical disruptions or connectivity problems experienced during online learning, and opportunities to actively participate in class discussions, group activities, and presentations in class.

The findings of this study indicate that learning environments and modalities have an essential influence on students' learning outcomes. Although online learning provides flexibility, students in less developed areas tend to experience difficulties due to limited internet access. Therefore, this study suggests using a blended learning approach combining online and face-to-face learning to utilize technology while still supporting in-person learning.

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