

Exploring internal challenges and coping strategies in online English learning via Google Meet: A study of 7th grade students in Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Google Meet is widely used application for distance learning, but its use presents both external and internal challenges for students. This study focuses solely on the internal challenges faced by students. The aim of this research is to identify the problems encountered in using Google Meet for online English learning and to explore the strategies students employ to overcome these issues. The study was conducted with seventh-grade students from a private junior high school in Yogyakarta. A descriptive qualitative method was used, with eight seventh-grade students participating as research subjects. Data were collected through interviews and documentation, with pseudonyms used to protect students' privacy. The research identified several key internal challenges, including a lack of motivation, difficulties interacting with teachers and peers, challenges in maintaining focus, reduced confidence in using Google Meet, and difficulties with group assignments. In response to these challenges, students implemented various strategies, such as taking notes on material presented by the teacher, seeking further clarification from teachers or classmates, completing assignments on time, being more active and communicative during lessons, and strengthening their focus and attention. The findings of this study suggest that educators need to be aware of the internal challenges students face when using digital tools like Google Meet for online learning. Schools and teachers may need to provide more guidance and support to help students stay motivated and engaged in virtual classrooms. Additionally, developing student-centered strategies to enhance interaction and improve focus during online sessions is essential for ensuring effective learning outcomes.

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Introduction

In recent years, technological advancements have transformed the educational landscape, introducing innovative tools and platforms that facilitate distance learning. One platform that has gained significant popularity for virtual classrooms and online learning is Google Meet. As the world transitioned to remote education, Google Meet emerged as a widely used application for facilitating synchronous learning, fostering interaction between teachers and students regardless of geographical barriers (Nantha & Siripongdee, 2024; Farahian et al., 2024; Al-Marouf et al., 2023). However, while the adoption of Google Meet in educational settings has provided numerous benefits, it has also posed challenges, particularly for students engaging in online English learning (Putri & Akbarani, 2023; Soviyah et al., 2023; Fauzi et al., 2022).

Online learning became a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted traditional face-to-face education systems. Both teachers and students were compelled to adapt to this new mode of instruction by utilizing various digital platforms and tools. Google Meet, which enables users to conduct video conferences, chat, and share screens, quickly became a popular choice for online learning (Hatmanto et al., 2023; Puspita et al., 2022). Nevertheless, learning via Google Meet also presents several challenges that require coping strategies from both teachers and students (Majed et al., 2024; Del Mundo et al., 2022; Besser et al., 2022).

Several studies have explored the use of Google Meet for online learning across various contexts and subjects. For example, Alrajhi & Razak (2021) examined the use of digital technology and digital literacy in teaching and learning English among Malaysian students and teachers. Their findings revealed that students used digital technology mainly for learning vocabulary and less frequently for reading skills. Similarly, teachers primarily used digital tools for general teaching practices, with less emphasis on reading skills. Both students and teachers exhibited high levels of digital literacy, though the study did not specifically address the challenges and coping strategies related to using Google Meet for online English learning.

Miller (2020) offered practical tips for using Google Meet in e-learning, including creating meeting nicknames, recording sessions, using captions, muting participants, sharing screens, and using breakout rooms. He also proposed innovative ideas for utilizing video calls in remote learning, such as virtual field trips, guest speakers, book talks, show-and-tell sessions, scavenger hunts, and educational games. However, Miller's work lacked empirical data or evidence to substantiate these recommendations.

Nguyen (2020) provided a comprehensive guide to using Google Meet for online teaching and distance learning. He highlighted the platform's features, including security, accessibility,

simplicity, integration with other Google products, live streaming, recording, attendance tracking, polling, Q&A, hand raising, noise cancellation, and background blur. Although the study detailed the technical advantages of Google Meet, it did not delve into the challenges or coping mechanisms employed by students and teachers in online learning environments.

These studies demonstrate a gap in the literature regarding the specific challenges and coping strategies related to using Google Meet for online English learning, particularly among Indonesian students. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the internal challenges and efforts of 7th-grade students at a private junior high school in Yogyakarta in the context of online English learning via Google Meet.

This research delves into the multifaceted nature of online English learning through Google Meet, with a specific focus on the experiences of 7th-grade students at a private junior high school in Yogyakarta. The study aims to shed light on the internal challenges students face while using Google Meet for language acquisition and explore the coping strategies employed by these young learners to navigate the obstacles encountered during their virtual learning journey.

Understanding the challenges associated with online English learning is crucial in devising effective pedagogical approaches that foster an inclusive and engaging virtual learning environment (Besser et al., 2022). By identifying the difficulties experienced by students, educators and educational institutions can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms to enhance the overall online learning experience.

Equally important is the exploration of coping strategies employed by the students, which highlights their resourcefulness and resilience in adapting to a novel learning medium. Recognizing these strategies can provide valuable insights into best practices for educators and encourage the integration of effective teaching techniques in virtual classrooms.

The context of this study—a private junior high school in Yogyakarta—represents an educational institution that has embraced technology integration in its curriculum, making it an ideal setting for exploring the nuances of online English learning with Google Meet. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this research aims to amplify the voices of the students, allowing their experiences and perspectives to shape our understanding of the challenges and coping mechanisms in virtual language education.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What specific challenges do 7th-grade students encounter while using Google Meet for online English learning?
2. How do these students cope with the challenges presented during their virtual learning journey?
3. What implications do these challenges and coping strategies have for the overall effectiveness of online English learning using Google Meet?

The findings from this research have the potential to inform educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the education sector about the nuances of online language learning through Google Meet. By contributing to the ongoing dialogue on technology-enabled education, this study aims to guide the development of evidence-based strategies to overcome challenges and create a thriving virtual learning ecosystem for young language learners.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach, which is trying to get information and describing the phenomena or events that appeared during the implementation of learning using Google Meet descriptively as a learning platform in the Covid-19 era in English Education lesson. Data was collected through interviews and documentation of seventh grade students. The subjects of this study were 9 students of the 7th grade registered in the academic year of 2021/2022. The data referred to is the data which is to complement and support the primary data source; additional data sources are used in the form of journals, and website.

Data collection in this study was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The advantage of this method is that researchers have the opportunity to ask further questions apart from the structured interview guidelines to respond to participants' answers.

The data collection was also carried out using documentation technique. This technique is collecting information from important records either from institutions or organizations or from individuals. Documentation technique is a research technique by finding the data about information, data or variables in the form of books, newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, meeting minutes, ledgers, agendas, and so on. Compared to other techniques, documentation is not so difficult, in the sense that if there is an error, the data source is still available or does not change.

Data analysis is a data processing step carried out by researchers after data from all respondents have been collected. In this study, researchers used qualitative data analysis to analyze interview distributed as raw material collectors related to obstacles to online learning

during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The data interview was recorded for data analysis purposes, because the primary data is in the form of audio, it must be copied into written data through a transcription process. After that the researcher brought the data process described by Creswell & Poth (2016). The first process involved reading the transcription consisting of many pages, the transcription of the text was divided into several segments. The researcher provided the code to the underlined points that were considered important. The next steps were identifying the same code and grouping it into fewer codes to make it easier to process data.

Results and Discussion

The Problems of using Google Meet as Learning Platform

Based on the interview results, there are five main problems of using Google Meet as a learning platform, which are presented as follows.

Low Student Motivation in Online Learning through Google Meet

The ongoing interviews revealed that students exhibited low motivation and enthusiasm during online learning sessions conducted via Google Meet. During these sessions, student participation was minimal, with many remaining silent and refraining from asking questions even when they did not understand the material presented by the teacher. As a result, students struggled to comprehend the content in each session. Despite the teacher's request for students to activate their cameras during Google Meet classes, some did not comply, hindering the teacher's ability to monitor their engagement effectively. Moreover, even when students did turn on their cameras, some were observed engaging in other activities, such as using their mobile phones, indicating a pervasive lack of motivation and active participation in online learning.

To further investigate this phenomenon, the researcher conducted interviews with eight students. One respondent, Susi, highlighted her lack of motivation for online learning. She admitted that during lessons, she often chose not to pay attention due to boredom, instead opting to keep her camera off and engage in other activities while ostensibly participating in the class.

"I find it difficult to understand English vocabulary, so it lowers my enthusiasm to take English lessons, especially online learning using Google Meet that makes me lazy to

listen to the teacher's explanation, I can turn off the camera and do other activities behind the scenes."

Challenges in Student Interaction with Teachers and Peers in Google Meet-Based Learning

Online learning is not always appealing to students for several reasons, one of which is the inability to meet and interact directly with teachers and peers, unlike in traditional, face-to-face classes. Students cannot engage in conversations or discussions with their classmates as easily on Google Meet. During lessons, students must mute their microphones to avoid causing disruptions while the teacher presents the material, which limits their participation in online learning. Additionally, language barriers and a lack of enthusiasm further hinder engagement during online classes.

Data collected from the researcher indicated that 2 out of 8 students faced challenges in interacting with teachers and classmates during lessons conducted via Google Meet. Below are their opinions regarding issues encountered during the online learning process:

"During activity using Google Meet, I found it difficult to interact with teachers and friends. When the teacher was explaining, we had to turn off the mic so it would not be noisy and not disturb the teacher when explaining the material, so I could not interact freely like when I was learning in class."

Another student shared:

"During online learning using Google Meet doesn't make it easy for me to understand the material presented, because apart from not understanding English vocabulary, I also cannot interact freely with friends and teachers. I find it difficult if there is a signal problem."

The statements above indicate that learning English through Google Meet is unappealing to students due to the lack of direct interaction with their classmates, resulting in difficulty comprehending and following lessons effectively.

Students' Difficulties in Maintaining Focus During Google Meet-Based Learning

In the learning process, concentration is crucial for comprehending material presented by the teacher, and maintaining seriousness during lessons enhances the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. However, some students struggle to engage seriously in lessons conducted via Google Meet. This lack of interest and tendency to become quickly bored with online learning often results in an inability to focus.

The statements of 2 out of 8 students illustrate the challenges they face in maintaining focus during online learning sessions using Google Meet. The first student expressed.

"During online learning through Google Meet, I often cannot focus, especially when a friend turns on the mic making noise and I also distracted of other learning activities such as playing on cell phones or snacking on snacks."

Another student offered the following perspective:

"There are several problems that I feel when learning English using Google Meet. I find it difficult to understand the English material because during the learning process I do not focus on the teacher but focus on the pictures of my friends."

These statements suggest that students face significant challenges in maintaining their focus on the material presented by the teacher during Google Meet-based learning sessions.

Students' Lack of Confidence in Participating in Google Meet Sessions

Online learning using Google Meet is not always well-received by students; some experience a lack of confidence when participating. This hesitation often stems from the requirement to activate their camera and microphone when responding to questions, which makes them conscious of seeing their own image and hearing their own voice, ultimately affecting their self-assurance in engaging with the class.

The researcher gathered data from eight students, one of whom shared their experience of feeling unconfident during Google Meet sessions. The student stated:

"The problem is that I don't feel confident about joining Google Meet. I will only activate the camera if the teacher tells us to. Because if I see my picture on the screen, I don't feel focused on listening to the teacher's explanation. If I turn on the camera and mic, there will be a lot of interference from my brother or sister."

This statement underscores the challenges some students face in developing confidence during Google Meet-based learning, highlighting the influence of self-consciousness and environmental distractions.

Students' Difficulties in Using Google Meet for Group Assignments

Another issue faced by students is the challenge of using Google Meet for group assignments. In addition to individual tasks, teachers often assign group projects to support students' overall grades. However, some students encounter difficulties when collaborating on group assignments through Google Meet.

The researcher gathered data from eight students, one of whom expressed their struggles with using Google Meet for group work. The student stated:

"I have difficulty using Google Meet for learning media when the teacher gives group assignments to students because I can't interact directly with my group friends."

This statement highlights the challenges posed by online learning in terms of group collaboration, indicating that the use of Google Meet for group assignments may create

obstacles for effective student engagement and interaction.

Efforts Made by Students in Overcoming Challenges of Using Google Meet

Student Note-Talking as a Strategy to Enhance Comprehension in Google Meet-Based Learning

Given that students may sometimes forget what has been taught, recording key material becomes a way to reinforce their understanding outside of online class hours. By revisiting these notes, students can better engage with the material and participate in discussions during subsequent sessions on Google Meet.

Two out of eight students described their efforts as follows:

"If I lose focus, then I will try to return to focus on listening to the teacher's explanation. If there is material that I don't understand, I will immediately ask the teacher, take notes on the material presented by the teacher, and study it repeatedly."

This statement reflects how students strive to record important material during Google Meet-based lessons and review it to strengthen their grasp of the content.

Student Efforts to Seek Additional Explanation via Chat or Phone Call

Throughout the learning process, students engage from start to finish. When using Google Meet, they encounter challenging parts in the material presented by the teacher. Some students seek clarification either during or after the session. They ask questions about topics or problems they find difficult, which helps facilitate their understanding.

One student expressed their approach as follows:

"If I don't understand the material delivered through Google Meet, I ask a friend who understands better or reach out to the teacher via chat or phone call."

This indicates that the question-and-answer activities provided by the teacher assist students in understanding the material effectively.

Timely Completion of Assignments

To understand the material thoroughly, students find it beneficial to complete assignments within the given deadlines. This approach encourages them to engage deeply with the content. As one student noted:

"I try to review the material from books or online resources. If I still don't understand, I'll ask the teacher. I also make sure to complete assignments on time and take them seriously."

This statement highlights that adhering to deadlines and treating assignments with diligence helps students comprehend material presented via Google Meet.

Efforts to Enhance Interactivity during Online Learning

Active participation from both teachers and students is essential for an engaging and

effective online learning environment. Students who contribute actively and communicate openly create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere and facilitate better comprehension of the material. A student described their experience as follows:

"I try to follow the lessons actively, engage in Q&A sessions, and assist friends who face difficulties."

This demonstrates that students can overcome comprehension challenges by staying actively involved and interactive during Google Meet sessions.

Strengthening Focus and Attention

Focusing on the teacher's explanations is crucial in online learning to ensure comprehension. Students who maintain focus can retain more material and grasp key concepts. One student shared their strategy:

"I pay close attention to the teacher to ensure I don't miss any part of the lesson."

This approach underscores the importance of focus and attention for students to fully grasp material delivered via Google Meet.

Discussion

Challenges of Using Google Meet as Learning Platform

The research findings reveal various challenges faced by students in online learning via Google Meet. Despite their familiarity with technology, students encounter new difficulties, as they are not fully prepared for the online learning system (Basar et al., 2021; Warriar et al., 2024). These challenges stem from internal factors, including low motivation, difficulty interacting with teachers and peers, trouble focusing, lack of confidence in using Google Meet, and obstacles in completing group assignments (Nguyen & Chen, 2024; Farahian et al., 2024). This aligns with Yulyanah & Khotimah (2021), who assert that learning obstacles can emerge from both internal and external factors. Each challenge is detailed below.

The first challenge is students' low motivation for online learning using Google Meet. Some students exhibit low engagement, choosing to remain silent rather than ask questions, even when they do not understand the material. This lack of participation prevents them from fully comprehending the content delivered by teachers. Panisoara et al. (2020) emphasize that learning motivation is crucial for academic success, suggesting that low motivation impedes student achievement in the context of Google Meet.

A second challenge involves difficulty in peer interaction. Online learning lacks the direct communication of in-person classes, where students can freely engage with teachers and classmates (Brennan et al., 2023). On Google Meet, students are often required to mute their microphones to avoid disruptions, which reduces the sense of connection and engagement.

Zeib & Tariq (2024) note that online learning can decrease solidarity among students due to limited interaction, highlighting this as a problem in Google Meet-based learning.

Another significant issue is difficulty maintaining focus. Students report feeling bored or fatigued from prolonged screen time, which hinders their ability to concentrate. This observation is supported by Bao (2024), who identify rapid disengagement as a common challenge in online learning.

Additionally, students often lack confidence when using Google Meet. Some are hesitant to turn on their cameras or microphones when called upon, as they feel self-conscious about appearing on screen and hearing their own voices. Civelek et al. (2021) found that many students refrain from asking questions due to discomfort with activating their cameras and microphones, which aligns with this finding.

The final challenge is difficulty with group assignments on Google Meet. When assigned group tasks, students struggle with the lack of direct interaction, which complicates collaborative work. Adedoyin & Soykan (2023) and Abidi et al. (2023) highlight that individual differences can influence online communication, with some students being more active and others more passive in virtual discussions, which can hinder group assignments.

In summary, the research findings and related studies indicate that Google Meet presents unique challenges that hinder students from optimally receiving instruction. Internal factors, such as low motivation, limited focus, and lack of confidence, contribute significantly to these difficulties, reducing the platform's effectiveness in supporting online learning.

Due to these internal factors, learning via Google Meet often proves ineffective in fully supporting online educational activities. Students may struggle with the rapid transition to online learning, as they have not yet adapted to this new model (Shrestha et al., 2022). Even minor internal or external obstacles can impact students' comprehension of the material. Learning motivation is a critical internal factor, with students reporting increased boredom, reluctance to participate, and low self-confidence (Nguyen & Chen, 2024). The limitations of Google Meet also stem from negative impacts, such as reduced interaction between students and teachers, poor communication among students, and passive participation during both individual and group tasks.

Overall, key challenges in Google Meet-based learning include low motivation, limited interaction with teachers and peers, difficulty focusing, lack of confidence, and obstacles in completing group assignments.

Student Efforts to Address Challenges in Using Google Meet

The research findings indicate that students employ various strategies to address the

challenges of online learning via Google Meet. These strategies include taking notes on the material presented by the teacher, seeking further clarification from teachers or peers, completing assignments punctually, participating actively in discussions, and enhancing their focus and attention. This aligns with Shuler (2013), who suggest that students need to be proactive in their learning as they are central actors in the learning process. Each strategy is discussed in detail below.

The first strategy is note-taking. By recording the material shared during lessons, students are better able to concentrate and maintain motivation. Moreover, notes provide a reference that students can revisit if they forget any part of the lesson. This finding aligns with Friedman (2014), who posits that effective note-taking promotes efficient learning practices and enhances learning outcomes by serving as an external storage of key lesson points. Thus, taking notes helps students engage more actively with the material.

The second strategy is seeking additional explanation from teachers or peers through chat or phone calls. Not all students have the same level of comprehension, and many reach out to teachers or classmates for clarification after the lesson. Personalized follow-up questions help students better grasp the material than they might through Google Meet alone. This practice is supported by Dzaiy & Abdullah (2024), who emphasize that quality learning involves active student engagement, including listening, task commitment, participation, valuing opinions, responsibility, and interacting with teachers and peers.

A third strategy is completing assignments on time. Students reported that doing assignments promptly after lessons, or within the designated time frame, reinforces their understanding. This immediate application of new knowledge allows students to study the material more thoroughly. Mebert et al. (2020) suggests that assignment-based learning fosters active engagement, as students who complete tasks diligently experience improved learning outcomes.

Another strategy involves increased interactivity during Google Meet sessions. Students recognize that a positive and engaging learning environment boosts their motivation to participate. By cultivating a lively and self-motivated atmosphere, students become more communicative and interactive. Indrijati (2017) emphasizes that the learning process should encourage students to construct their knowledge actively, fostering a pleasant classroom environment that motivates all students to participate.

Lastly, students attempt to strengthen their focus and attention during online learning. By actively working to eliminate distractions, students can better understand the material presented. Martias & Djamil (2023) argue that negative thoughts or distractions can lower motivation and focus, underscoring the importance of concentrated attention for effective

learning. This suggests that focusing on the teacher's explanation helps students overcome comprehension challenges.

The strategies outlined above highlight a significant relationship between the research findings and previous studies. While Google Meet presents unique challenges for students, they employ various methods to adapt and mitigate these difficulties. However, internal factors, such as motivation and focus, continue to play a significant role in influencing student engagement and learning outcomes.

Enhancing Student Engagement, Interaction, Focus, and Resilience in Online Learning through Structured Support and Innovative Teaching Strategies

The findings of this study underscore the substantial impact of internal challenges on students during online learning, particularly when using platforms like Google Meet. A major challenge identified was reduced student motivation, a common issue in remote learning environments (Zhou et al., 2020). The lack of physical presence, direct interaction, and the isolating nature of online education often lead to disengagement (Shrestha et al., 2022). To counter this, educators need to implement dynamic and interactive teaching methods that replicate the engagement found in face-to-face settings. Integrating tools such as breakout rooms, polls, and gamified learning elements within Google Meet sessions could foster greater motivation and engagement among students (Alrajhi & Razak, 2021).

Another significant challenge is the difficulty students face in interacting with both teachers and peers in an online environment. Hodges et al. (2020) assert that virtual learning platforms can diminish the social presence necessary for effective communication, which is crucial for language learning. In traditional classrooms, interaction is naturally facilitated through immediate feedback, body language, and social cues. However, online platforms like Google Meet require educators to be more intentional in fostering interaction. Structured opportunities, such as peer collaboration tasks and teacher-student discussions, are recommended to enhance engagement and communication skills (Garrison, 2017). These strategies can help address the interaction barriers commonly experienced in online learning.

The study also highlights the importance of addressing students' focus challenges during online classes. Cognitive overload, combined with distractions in the home environment, can undermine students' concentration (Jaggars & Xu, 2016). This challenge is particularly pertinent in language learning, where sustained focus is essential for vocabulary and grammar acquisition. Educators can mitigate this issue by introducing regular breaks, shortening online sessions, and incorporating interactive activities that require active student participation, thus

sustaining attention and reducing cognitive fatigue (Nguyen, 2020). Such adjustments in lesson structure and delivery can create a more conducive learning environment.

Lastly, the coping strategies employed by students, such as note-taking and seeking clarification, indicate their resourcefulness in overcoming challenges. However, these findings also highlight a need for formalized support systems to help students adopt effective learning strategies. Educators can play a proactive role by teaching strategies such as effective note-taking and time management in online learning (Bao, 2023; Miller, 2020). Additionally, schools can provide resources like online study groups or mentorship programs to support students in navigating the demands of virtual learning. By institutionalizing these coping strategies, educators and schools can promote resilience and self-directed learning, critical skills in both online and traditional educational contexts.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that students experience a moderate level of challenges when using Google Meet for online learning. A predominant issue is a lack of motivation, as many students report feeling less driven in the online learning environment. Additionally, some students find it challenging to interact and communicate as effectively as they would in offline settings with classmates. Difficulty focusing is also a notable concern, as prolonged screen time often leads to boredom and disengagement. A minority of students expressed feelings of insecurity when participating in Google Meet sessions, and some encounter obstacles in completing group assignments online. Overall, students face a range of issues when using Google Meet as a platform for online learning.

Despite these challenges, the study reveals that students employ various strategies to address these problems. Many students seek additional explanations from teachers or knowledgeable peers via chat or phone calls, both during and outside of learning hours, to clarify material they find confusing. Another strategy involves taking notes on key points presented by the teacher, allowing students to review and reinforce the material later. A few students demonstrate a commitment to completing assignments on time, which helps reinforce their understanding. Some students also make an effort to be more active and communicative, enhancing their comprehension and creating a more engaging learning environment. Moreover, the findings suggest that students improve their learning outcomes by strengthening their focus and attention during Google Meet sessions, which helps them overcome difficulties in understanding the material. In conclusion, this study suggests that, although students encounter several challenges in using Google Meet for online learning, they adopt effective coping strategies to mitigate these issues and enhance their learning

experience.

Declarations

- Author contribution** : Bambang Widi Pratolo was responsible for the entire research project. He also led the writing of the manuscript and the collaboration with the second and third authors. Liza Beliarita participated in the data collection, transcription and analysis. She also revised the manuscript. Naif Daifullah Alsulami proofread the final draft. All the authors approved the final manuscript.
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