# Students' interest level in English online learning

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ABSTRACT

English is one of the subjects that students in Indonesia are required to study, including during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. As a result of the the pandemic, the English learning process is conducted online. Therefore, students are expected to adapt to this new learning mode, and to be interested in it as well. This research aims to find out the level of the students' interest in learning English online. The research utilizes descriptive quantitative method. A questionnaire is used as the research instrument. Taking SMPN 2 Girimulyo Junior High School, Yogyakarta, Indonesia as the research setting, it involves 40 students which consist of 25 female students and 15 male students. The research data are collected online through Google form distributed to the respondents to reveal their interest in learning English online. The study findings show that 77% of students are interested in learning English online and 66% of the students master the material. Furthermore, the interaction between students and the teacher is very good reaching the perfect score of 100%. However, when asked about their preference, 60% of the students prefer learning English offline under face-to-face mode.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

English is an international language that is used throughout the world. English is also used in most of the aspects of human life until now. In the modern era today, the massive use of English is proof that the existence of the English language is indispensable. The ability to speak English is needed to survive in this era. Therefore, people agree that being competent in English is an important thing today in order to communicate and collaborate with other people worldwide in today's sophisticated era (Beal, 2014).

As one of the human communication tools to help convey messages and knowledge, English is studied as one of the lessons in schools. English is a subject that is taught from elementary to university level. The reason why English is considered necessary to be taught even from primary school because it will be used to reach many things in the modern and sophisticated world (Ahmad, 2013). So, English should be learned from an early age because having English, it can be a way for children to expand relationships worldwide so they will be more ready to explore the world. Due to the importance of English in today's era, children have been taught to speak English early. According to Ur (1996), children are better at learning a foreign language or a second language, and language learning are better started early. Furthermore, children are faster than adults in learning a

language (Santrock, 2007; Wahyuningsih, 2008). Therefore, there's a necessary need to teach English early.

In English language learning process, interest is needed to help understand what is being learned easily. Interest refers to a situation in which a person has a strong desire for something. Therefore, interest in learning can be referred to a situation when a person has a strong desire to learn something (Syah, 2008). According to this definition, interest in learning is a state in which a person wants to comprehend the knowledge of what he/she is studying. Students' interest in learning plays a significant part in teaching and learning activities (Sadler, Sonnert, Hazari, & Tai, 2012). To generate learning interest in students, a large enough motivation is needed. This motivation can be obtained from within or outside a person (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2012).

In relation to COVID19 pandemic situation, as a result of the pandemic, the English learning process is conducted online. Therefore, students are expected to adapt to this new learning mode, and to be interested in it as well. Students who used to do all of their learning activities in class now have to learn how to do them online (Khasanah, Pramudibyanto & Widuroyekti, 2020; Curtiz, 2001). Before the pandemic, English learning is carried out by teachers and students are, as usual, in schools doing face-to-face learning process. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, learning is carried out by teachers and students using online media. This may have an impact on student's motivation and interest to learn (Muslimin & Harintama, 2020). Interesting methods and media are needed in order to trigger students' learning interest as they can naturally improve the interest of the students when they learn English.

The English online learning also happens in SMPN 2 Girimulyo junior high school, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. All students at SMPN 2 Girimulyo must adjust to the new learning system. Some students feel that they can enjoy the new learning system as it offers flexibility and safety. However, many other students feel that they are not interested in learning English online with various reasons. They prefer carrying out offline learning. This is due to several factors such as the media used is too monotonous. Another problem that occurs is that their English subject scores are low. This low score can be caused by the lack of interest and motivation of students in learning English online. The change in the way how learning is conducted because of the situation certainly affects students' interest in learning, especially learning English. However, there's not much research done related to the issue of students' learning interest in online learning in SMPN 2 Girimulyo. Therefore, research on it is badly needed. This research aims to find out the level of the students' interest in learning English online. It's expected that this research will be able to find out the level of the students' interest in learning English online so that it can help teachers in schools to improve their teaching methods so the students' interest in English learning gets better.

## 1.2. Research Question

What is the level of interest in learning English online of the grade eight students of SMPN 2 Girimulyo Junior High School Yogyakarta Indonesia?

## 1.3. Literature Review

### 1) Interest Defined

According to Hurlock (2004) interest is a source of motivation that encourages someone to do something that is directed at a certain goal. Interest is a preference for activity over other activities quoted by Winkel (1996). Interest is one of the dimensions of affective aspects that affects various aspects of life Stiggin in Slameto (2010). Affective aspects are aspects which are related to emotional conditions, dispositions, and mindsets that influence a person's actions in doing something. Interest is the most important thing to have in a person as a foundation for doing something. Especially when learning a language interest is needed to fulfill the goals of learning itself.

According to Conny Semiawan (2010) and Oemar (2004), the mental state that produces a directed response to the object that is used as a goal so that it creates a sense of satisfaction when doing it is called interest. Surahman, Faradisy and Syakur (2020) and Nyanyu (2014) also state that interest is a desire that encourages a person to do something after seeing, observing, comparing, and considering what will do according to the needs. The definition above explains that interest is a stimulus that makes someone do something specifically according to their needs.

According to Hurlock (2004), interest is a source of motivation that encourages people to do something they want when they are free to choose. This will bring satisfaction to the person concerned. Syaiful (2013) also states that interest is basically a form of acceptance of a relationship between oneself and something outside oneself. The closer or stronger the relationship, the greater the interest.

Every interest satisfies a need in the child's life, even if this need is not immediately apparent to adults. The stronger this need, the stronger the hold on the interest. The explanation above explains that interest will grow in a person which if the interest is carried out will lead to self-satisfaction so that the more interest is channeled and expressed, it will be deeply rooted in a person which makes someone who is directed according to the interests he has. The following are the indicators of interest in learning according to Darmadi (2017):

a. A statement expressing a preference for one thing over another.

b. Take part in an activity actively.

c. Pay close attention to anything that is interesting.

Suryabrata in Irsan (2018) and Mahmud (2010) states that there are two factors that influence a student's interest in learning, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors are factors that come from within the student, such as focus and concentration, curiosity, and learning motivation. While external factors are factors that come from outside of the student's control to motivate them in learning, such as teacher encouragement or environmental circumstances.

*2) Online Learning*

According to Effendi (2020) online learning is a teaching and learning activity carried out online, where teachers and students do not meet directly. Gunawan, Suranti & Fathoroni (2020) also stated that online learning is an interaction that happens not at school between students and teachers but is done through virtual/online media. With the current technological developments, educational institutions in Indonesia take advantage of it by holding online learning to increase effectiveness and flexibility in learning. With online learning, teaching and learning activities become easier. The material can be accessed anywhere and anytime. There has been much research conducted under the issue of English online learning in Indonesian context (Fitria, 2020; Rojabi, 2020). In terms of students' interest, the results show that there has been a variety of levels in students' interest and motivations in following English learning online. The factors are identified to be various from region to region.

## 2. Research Method

The method used by the researchers in this study is descriptive quantitative research. This is based on what Arikunto (2019), Moleong (2010) and Moleong (2012) state that descriptive quantitative research is a type of study that takes the form of a report and tries to analyze a situation or phenomena taking the quantitative side as its angle. Furthermore, Punaji (2010) states that a research method used to explain an event that occurs in the community specifically is called descriptive research. This study is conducted in SMPN 2 Girimulyo Yogyakarta Indonesia. To reveal the students' interest in online learning, a questionnaire is used as the research instrument. The researchers collected the data by distributing the questionnaire to the targeted students. The use of questionnaire is based on Suharsimi Arikunto's statement (2002) which defines questionnaire as several written questions used to obtain information from respondents about their personal reports or things they know. The questionnaire is then distributed online using Google form. As for the research respondents, the research involves the total of 40 students of grade eight of SMPN 2 Girimulyo, who consist of 25 female students and 15 male students. These 40 students are given a questionnaire in the form of Google Form. The collected data of the students' interest in English online learning are analyzed quantitatively in which the researchers calculate the percentage and portion of each of the items in the questionnaire.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

### 3.1. Findings

Based on the data collected, it can be concluded that, in general, the interest of the SMPN 2 Girimulyo students to take part in an online English learning is in the sufficient category. Viewed from the aspect of the students' English mastery during the online learning, the collected data show that the students are in the sufficient category as well. The aspect of the urge to learn English online among the students also shows the tendency of being in the sufficient to low category. Fortunately, as for the aspect of interaction between students and teacher during the English online learning, all student respondents agree that it has been well established and great. Figure 1 below depicts the precise total percentage of each of the items asked:
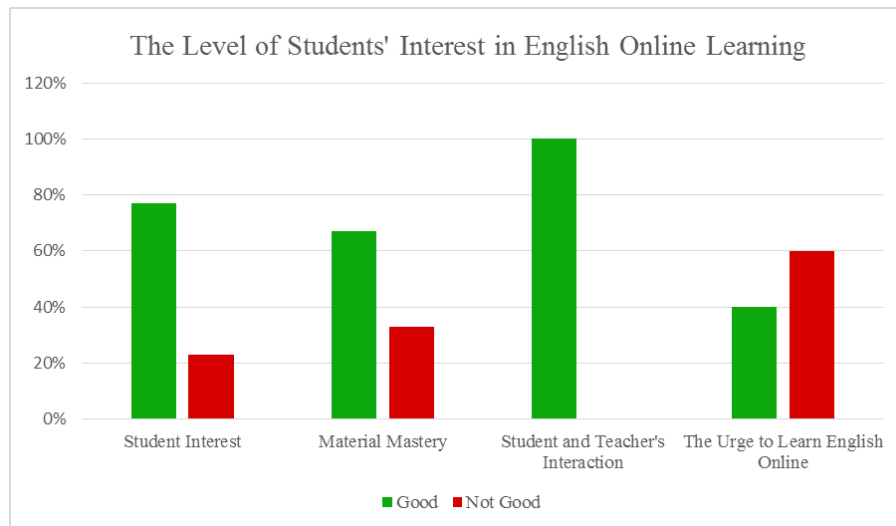


**Fig. 1.** The Level of Students' Interest in Online English Learning

In the aspect of students' interest in taking part in an English online learning, the data show that in general, the students are in sufficient category. Out of the 40 student respondents, 77% of them agree that they are "interested" in following an English online learning. Meanwhile 23% of the student respondents state that they are "not interested" in it. This number is quite high, though, especially when considering that learning during pandemic is not easy. The following Figure 2 shows the percentage of the students' interest in following English online learning:
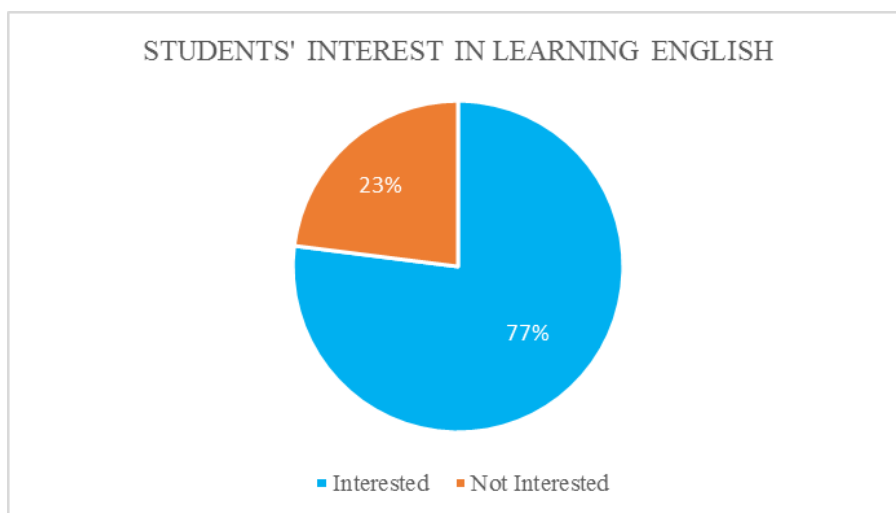


**Fig. 2.** Students' Interest in Online English learning

In the aspect of the students' mastery toward the subject learned, which is English, the data show that the students are in sufficient category. As shown through Figure 3, of 40 students respondents,

67% of the students master the material that has been taught by the teacher, while 33% of them show that they do not master the material taught yet. Based on this, it can be concluded that the students basically can follow the online English learning process as they understand the English material that has been delivered by the teacher. The detailed percentage of it is displayed through Figure 3 below:
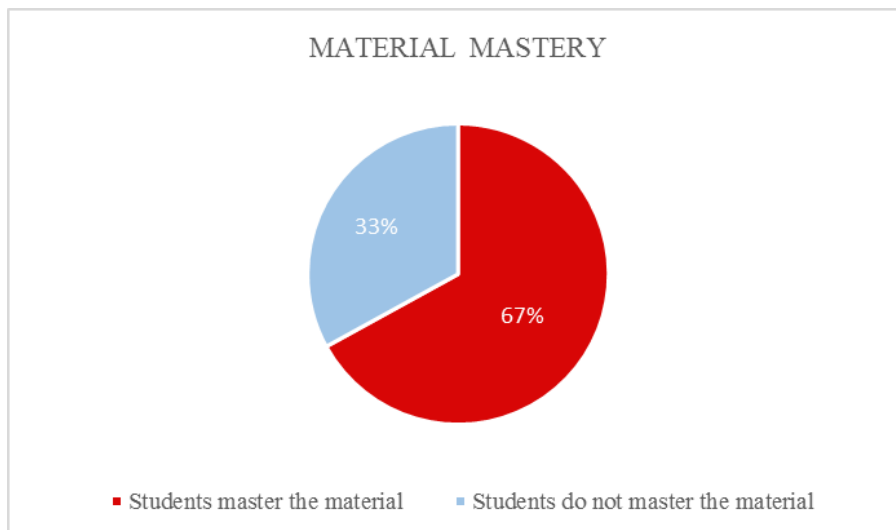


**Fig. 3.** Students' English Mastery in Online English learning

Viewed from the aspect of the interaction between students and the teacher during the English online learning, the data show that all of the student respondents agree that the it's obvious and well established. As shown through Figure 4, of 40 student respondents, 100% agree that they feel and notice that the interaction between the students and the English teacher is very good and strong. All student respondents state that both the students and the teacher interact often during the online learning process such as the students often ask about the material that they do not understand and the teacher answers the questions asked by students promptly. The following Figure 4 shows the total number of the percentage:
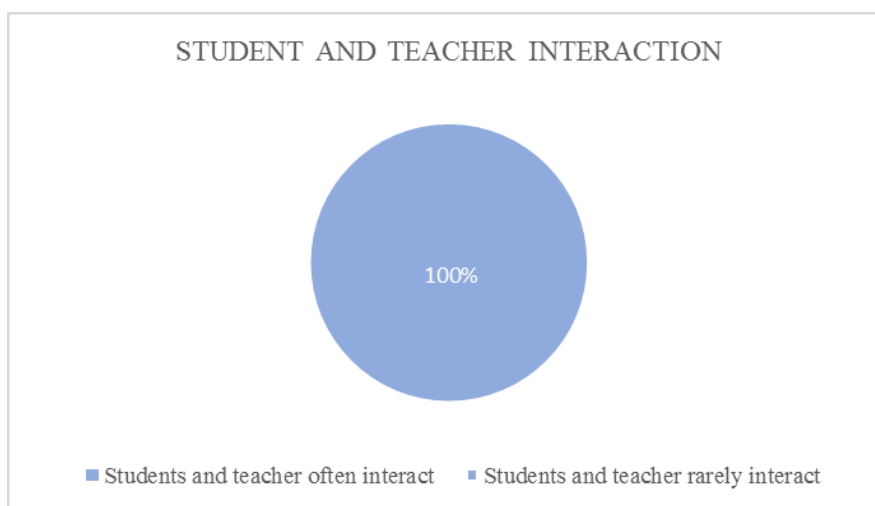


**Fig. 4.** Student and Teacher Interaction in English Online Learning

The last aspect related to students' interest in English online learning is related to the urge of learning English in an online way. Based on the collected data, asked about the issue of whether they want to take part in an English online learning or not, of the total 40 student respondents, only 60% of the respondents' state that they want to take part in an English online learning. Unfortunately, the other 40% of them state that they do not want an English online learning. These students prefer the offline learning to an online one. They further state that they are less enthusiastic about joining

English learning online. Furthermore, they also think that the online learning is boring. Figure 5 below depicts the data of the students' willingness in taking part in an English online learning:
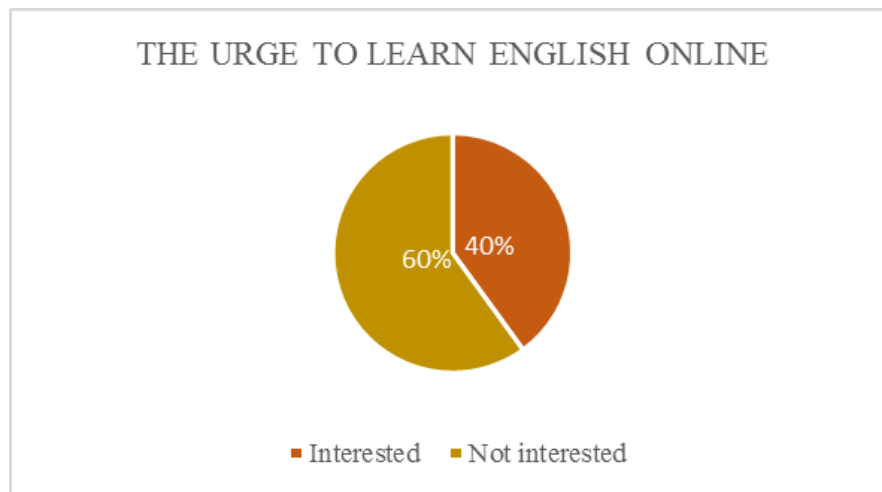


**Fig. 5.** The Urge to Learn English Online

## 3.2. Discussion

Based on the data collected, it's found out that in terms of the interest in English online learning of the grade eight students of SMPN 2 Girimulyo Junior High School, they are categorized in sufficient to high level with the total percentage reaching 77%. This profile signals a good thing because it means that in spite of the pandemic situation, the students can still find motivation to learn English through online mode. This result is in line with what Lim (2004) and Dumford & Miller (2018) studies summarize stating that interest and motivation tend to increase among the students to follow the online learning system. There are some reasons for this increase, though. Irsan (2018), explains that there are two factors which can influence student's interest in learning, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors are the factors that come from within the student while external factors are the ones which come from outside the students. Zooming into these two factors affecting students' interest in online learning, Saputra & Tjahjadi (2022)' study gives the details of what specific factors they are. Utilizing the hypothesis test using multiple regression test and t test, the study's results accept the three hypotheses proposed and prove that the variables of attitude, regulation, and perception of control positively affect interest in online learning.

As for this study, based on the collected data, it's found that for the internal factors which affect the students' high interest in English online learning include the factors of students' motivation, students' mastery of the material learned, and students' willingness to take part in the English online learning. As the research data and indicators show, students have a high interest in learning English online because they're simply motivated to do it. They have an internal drive to actively take part in it. Internal drive here can be referred to the biological aspect in the students as due to its biological roots, interest is essentially a form of motivation. It's a unique motivational variable (Hidi, 2006). Because of this, motivation and interest often complement and influence one another (Ikbal, 2011; Eva, 2012; Isriani, 2012). Students who have high motivation to learn tend to have a high interest in the learning process, and vice versa (Schiefele, 1991). As motivation affects the learning process, highly motivated students are able to make the learning they take become more effective and they are able to achieve the learning objectives themselves. And this is definitely relevant with the results of this study where the students' mastery of the English tends to be in sufficient level.

The second internal factor that is believed to cause the high interest in the students to take part in English online learning is because their level of mastery of the material being studied is also quite good, reaching the total of 67%. Even though the 67% figure is not classified as very high, it is worth noticing. It's because considering that when this online learning process occurs, students are in a pandemic life situation which is basically not easy. Furthermore, understanding the material

through online learning process is complicated. In the process of understanding the materials, students are required to adapt to new learning style, be independent and be able to do self-regulated learning as well. Considering these challenges, therefore, the figure of 67% can be said to be quite good. The relationship between learning achievement and learning interest is actually not a new thing. Kpolovie, Joe & Okoto (2014) and De Fruyt & Mervielde (1996) explain in a detailed way how these two are directly related and complementing one another. Furthermore, practically, there have been relatively many previous studies discussed it. The study of Köller, Baumert & Schnabel (2001) specifically proves to be supporting this in which they find out that there's a moderate correlation between students' achievement and their learning interest.

The last internal factor causing the students' interest in English online learning is related to the students' willingness to actively participate in an English online learning system. Based on the data obtained, for the willingness for online learning, the students tend to have a sufficient to low level reaching the percentage of 60%. This means that though they're quite motivated to learn online, they prefer the offline one. This is due to some factors. It's assumed that they're basically having willingness and desire to learn English because they're fully aware and realize that English is an important thing to know for a better future. Not only for the sake of school and grades, but English will be able to help them in expanding their relationships with people around the world. This has made the 60% of the students agree to join English online learning process. However, as learning online is basically quite complicated and adaptation to it needs time, there are obstacles present (Mahyoob, 2020; Mahfouz & Salam, 2021; Lassoued, Alhendawi & Bashitialshaaer, 2020). Many obstacles are obvious during an online learning process, especially in the aspects of needed facilities and internet connection. The issue related to facilities and internet connection can affect the students' interest in learning surely. In addition, learning material that is relatively new and abstract in nature will certainly be difficult for them to understand easily. These obstacles and limitations caused by the circumstances of the online learning require them to study independently under an online way can reduce their interest in learning. This is why out of 40 student respondents, 40% of them prefer the offline learning one.

Meanwhile, what is included in the external factor is the interaction between students and teacher (Nambiar, 2020; Curtis & Lawson, 2001). Based on the research data, the total percentage of this aspect is perfect in which all of the student respondents agree that the interaction between them and the teacher during the online learning has been excellent reaching the total percentage of 100%. One of the reasons for this is assumed to be related to how well the teacher has been in delivering the material and communicating with the students (Sher, 2009; Dumford & Miller, 2018; Nurfalah, 2019; Pupuh, 2009). According to the students, the teacher does the job well. She explains the material well, and responds to questions given by the students as well as providing explanation that is easily understood by the students. In addition, the teacher also provides many learning media, and teaching methods that are more creative and quite interesting so that the students feel happy in following the English online learning. And this affects positively the students' motivation to learn. As a consequence, the interest level of the students in learning during online learning increased.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the level of interest in following English online learning among students of grade eight of SMPN 2 Girimulyo Junior High School Yogyakarta is categorized into sufficient level reaching the total score of 77%. This means the stated students are interested enough in following English online learning. In relation to it, there are two kinds of factors which potentially cause it, i.e. internal and external factors. Motivation, mastery of the material, and willingness to take part in an online learning are categorized in to the internal factors affecting the students' interest in following English online learning. Meanwhile the interaction between the students and the teacher, which is very good, is assumed to be contributing as the external factor causing the students' interest in following English online learning. Referring to this fact, it's recommended that the school and the English teacher of SMPN 2 Girimulyo Junior High School Yogyakarta should not hesitate to continue the practice of online learning process for any immediate necessity because the students are basically interested in taking part in it.

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