
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Students' Perception towards the Strategies Used by the Teacher in Teaching English Using Virtual Learning Platforms

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ABSTRACT

The massive emergence of virtual learning platforms in early 2020 has gradually replaced face-to-face interaction in the teaching and learning process throughout the globe. All teachers and students have used virtual learning platforms due to the impact of the Coronaviruses Disease-19 (Covid-19) outbreak since the beginning of December 2019, including teachers and students at MTs. Negeri Palopo. This research aims to figure out students' perceptions towards the strategies used by the teacher in teaching English using virtual learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic at MTs. Negeri Palopo. The method used was a kuantitatif method. Through an online questionnaire, the researchers administered a close-ended questionnaire to the eighth-grade students of MTs Negeri Palopo. The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative and statistical analysis. The result of this research indicates that the students of MTs. Negeri Palopo had a very positive perception towards the strategies that the teachers used using virtual learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a mean score of 74,09.

KEYWORDS

Student's perception, teacher's strategy, teaching English, virtual learning platform, COVID-19 pandemic.

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1. Introduction

The outbreak of Coronaviruses Disease-19 (Covid-19), which is thought to have originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, in early December 2019, has had an impact on almost all aspects of human life such as economic, social, cultural, transportation, and education is no exception. The direct impacts in the education sector include the abolition of national exams at the primary and secondary education levels and the issuance of an appeal regarding Work From Home (WFH) or working from home by President Jokowi at the Bogor Presidential Palace, West Java, Sunday, March 15, 2020. Work From Home in the world of education means that students are encouraged to learn from home, as well as teachers and lecturers are also encouraged to teach from home.

World Health Organization (WHO) announced the COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic due to the fact that the number of infected and death cases by COVID-19 kept increasing globally. The announcement was delivered directly by the Director General of WHO, Tedros Ghebreyesus, in Geneva, Switzerland, in March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020; Lloyd-Sherlock et al., 2020; Mahase, 2020; Sohrabi et al., 2020; Watkins, 2020). Since April 2020, more than 400 million students all over the world have been required to study from home (Domenico et al., 2020; Gee, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). In other words, most countries in the world have eliminated face-to-face teaching and learning activities in order to break the chain of the COVID-19 spread where both the students and teachers could act as a carrier and spreaders of the virus.

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has strictly imposed online learning policies (Irawan, 2020; Kemendikbud, 2020). The online learning process is implemented at all levels of education. The WFH appeal is

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intended as an effort to prevent and break the chain of the spread of Covid-19. The president's appeal is in line with the Circular Letter of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia No. HK.02.01/MENKES/199/2020, Circular of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 3 of 2020 dated March 9, 2020, Circular of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 35492/A.A5/HK/2020.

In relation to the government policies on the physical closure of educational institutions and the shift from face-to-face learning activities to learning from home, all parties, including teachers, students, and parents, need to work together and adjust to the new system which is online-based or well known as e-learning (Aderholt, 2020; Karp & McGowan, 2020). Based on the joint decree of four ministers (Minister of Education and Culture Number 01/KB/2022, Minister of Religion Number 408 year 2022, Minister of Health Number HK.01.08/MENKES/1140/2022, and Minister of Home Affairs Number 420-1026 year 2022), regarding guidelines for the implementation of the learning process in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic; the circular letter from the governor Number: 443.2/6677/ Disdik; and also the circular letter from the Mayor of Palopo, Number 10, year 2020, all schools in Palopo, to include M.Ts. Negeri Palopo should carry out the learning process virtually.

The shift in the learning process from face-to-face to online has become a new challenge to most students and teachers in Indonesia. Not all teachers are ready for the sudden changes in the learning process. Teachers should be familiar with technology, online learning materials, teaching strategies, etc. It is assumed that the online learning process has not been implemented optimally due to several factors; among others are several students' domicile areas that are not covered by the internet network, and the income of parents who are mostly farmers and fishermen has decreased, and several other factors. Based on the explanation above, the researchers are interested in conducting research in order to know about the students' perception of the strategies used by the teachers in teaching English using virtual platforms during the coronavirus outbreak.

2. Literature Review

Perception is defined as the process of giving meaning and interpreting stimuli and sensations received by individuals, which formation is strongly influenced by internal and external factors of each individual (Arifin et al., 2017). Sarkol (2016, in Asmiati B, 2021) suggests that perception is the cognitive process that an individual uses to interpret, understand, and recognize objects or events with a certain meaning and certain expectation. It can be understood that perception is individuals' ability to see, hear, feel, and to present or understand what they feel regarding their environment and social life physically and mentally. Ramadhan (2009) defines perception as the individual's process of giving meaning to the stimulus in the form of information, event, object, or other things that come from an individual's environment. Lead to the previous explanations, students' perception can be defined as a student's point of view regarding the lessons, objects, experiences, or occasions that the students experienced.

Walgito (1981, in Arifin et al., 2017) described the process of perception formation as follows:

- The first step, which is called a physical process, is in which a stimulus is caught by the human senses.
- The second step is called the physiology process, in which the stimulus the receptor receives (the human senses) is transferred through sensory nerves.
- The third step, which is called a psychological process, is in which the individual awareness arises from the stimulus received by the receptor.
- The fourth step is the results obtained from the perception process in the form of responses and certain behavior.

Agus Suprijono (2010) added that in the student's perception, which consists of several aspects, there are three main components: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The cognitive domain contains behaviors that emphasize the intellectual aspects such as understanding, thinking, and knowledge. The affective domain contains behaviors that emphasize feelings and emotions, such as interest, appreciation, attitude, and self-adjustment. The last domain is psychomotor, which contains behaviors that emphasize aspects of motor or physical skills such as handwriting, typing, moving, and operating machines. However, in the formation of perception, there are several different factors that affect it. Nurmaleny et al. (2014) explain that the state of an individual being can affect the perception that comes from that individual's psychological state. This psychological state can be in the form of experience, feeling, thinking ability, attention, and motivation. These are all called internal factors. Other than that, there are also other factors that can affect the formation of perception, which is the object of the perception itself and environmental factor in which the perception take place. These factors are called as external factors. All these factors are related to one another in the process of perception formation of the students.

A study on Students' Perception of the Teacher's Teaching Strategies in English Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic at Second Grade Student of SMA Negeri 3 Palopo conducted by Asmiati in 2021 reveals that the strategies applied in English online learning by the English teacher were virtual or video conferences via Zoom or Google meet with lecture methods in explaining the material. Besides that, the English teacher also applied online chat via WhatsApp group to give assignments and further discussion.

The unpredictable situation of the Covid-19 outbreak forced the students and teachers to use any available online learning media, applications, and materials to substitute face-to-face learning. The successful implementation of online learning Students' Perception depends on how the students utilize their internet devices and technology skills. Lack of practical training regarding the use of online learning systems or applications is also the cause of adjusting to online learning (Oyedotun, 2020 in Nurhakiki & Senorica Yulia Sari, 2021). Furthermore, Nurhakiki & Senorica Yulia Sari (2021) argue that there are many factors that affect students' perception of online English learning, such as lack of motivation, students' environment or surroundings, students' inflexibility, and lack of computer skills. Some modifications, regulations, innovations, and evaluations need to be performed to reduce or remove these factors affecting students' performance and perception of online English learning.

Kiat-Hiong & Ying-Leh (2020) in their research under the title "Learning Styles and Online Technology Learning Platform among Undergraduate Students in Sarawak." A simple random sampling is employed with a study sample of 30 foundation students comprising 18 males and 12 females, all in the non-technical areas from a private higher educational institution in Sibu, Sarawak, offering an online technology learning platform. By implication, students' learning styles are associated with the usage of course components in the online technology learning platform. It is concluded with suggestions for the quality learning process and learning outcomes in an online environment; students are made aware of their learning styles and become more versatile learners with the usage of learning platforms. Educators with an emphasis on learning design in activity variables, whereas results would be more conclusive if the actual academic performance variable is included.

Cakrawati (2017), in her study on "Students Perception on the Use of Online Learning Platforms in EFL Classroom," found that students show positive responses towards the use of online learning platforms such as Edmodo or Quipper, and these online learning platforms facilitate them with the features allowing them to work independently yet share their thoughts through group discussion. The students who participated in the study perceive online learning platforms as user-friendly learning tools which encourage them to interact with their teachers and peers outside the classroom. In addition, students think that using online learning platforms in the learning process is effective since it saves time and effort as well as this online learning is environment-friendly because it can save paper used for the assignments.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted in August 2021. A closed-ended questionnaire was distributed online using Google Form to 21 students of M.Ts. Negeri Palopo to collect the quantitative data. The quantitative method was used to measure and analyze the statistical data based on the results of the questionnaire answer regarding the students' perception of the strategies used by the teacher by using virtual learning platforms amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The close-ended question gave options that the respondents could choose to answer the questions. In the questionnaire, each item was provided with five alternatives of attitude scale categories: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Every respondent was free to choose one of the five alternative answers that suited their own circumstance. The students' answers were then analyzed in the attitude scale analysis by using the Likert scale model. The scale categories are scores, which are 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1.

The data from the close-ended questions were analyzed as follows:

Researchers calculated the frequency and percentage of students' perceptions of each question from the questionnaire. The data were then analyzed using the basic statistical method of frequency distribution. The data was processed in the form of a frequency distribution table by using the formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{n} \times 100\%$$

Note:

- P = Percentage
- F = Frequency of respond
- n = Total number of sample
- 100% = Constant value

Source: Gay (2006)

3.1 Calculating students' total score and its perception category

In this step, the researchers gave a score on each item of students' answers by using a predetermined Likert scale. After that, the researchers determined the students' perceptions based on the student's total scores. The Likert scale was used to measure students' perception of the teacher's teaching strategies. The table of classifications in the Likert scale is shown as follows:

Table 1. Table of classification of students' perception

No	Classification	Point
1	Strongly Agree (SA)	5
2	Agree (A)	4
3	Neutral (N)	3
4	Disagree (DA)	2
5	Strongly Disagree (SDA)	1

Source: Sugiyono (2008)

- a. Calculating the students' mean score by using the formula

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Note:

\bar{X} = mean score

$\sum x$ = total of individual score

n = total number of sample

Source: Gay (2006)

- b. Classifying the students' scores into the level of perception category

The researcher used assessment criteria of students' perception category in grouping the students' answers on perception level category as follows:

Table 2. Table of students' perception level category

No	Score	Category
1	60-100	Very positive
2	50-59	Positive
3	31-49	Negative
4	1-30	Very negative

Source: Ary et al. (2009)

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The researchers administered an online questionnaire using Google Form on the 12th of August, 2021. The questionnaire was filled out by 21 students from M.Ts Negeri Palopo. The results of the questionnaire are as follows:

4.1.1 Result of the close-ended questionnaire

Statement 1: The student understands the English learning materials that the teacher taught through the virtual learning platforms

Table 3. The frequency and percentage of statement number 1 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	2	9,52
Agree	13	61,90
Neutral	4	19,05
Disagree	1	4,76
Strongly Disagree	1	4,76
Total	21	100

Table 3 shows that 2 (9,52 %) out of 21 students of MTs Negeri Palopo strongly agree that they can understand the English learning materials that their teacher taught through the virtual learning platforms. A much higher number of 13 (61,90 %) students agree, 4 (19,05 %) students feel neutral, and there is 1 (4,76 %) student for each disagree and strongly disagree category. Seeing the significant number of students who agree, the researchers conclude that the students at MTs Negeri Palopo understand the learning materials that the teacher taught through the virtual learning platforms.

Statement 2: The student feels motivated when the teacher gives explanations or teaches in English using the virtual learning platform during the distance learning

Table 4. The frequency and percentage of statement number 2 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	3	14,29
Agree	13	61,90
Neutral	4	19,05
Disagree	1	4,76
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	21	100

Table 4 shows that 13 (61,90 %) students of MTs Negeri Palopo agree with statement number 2. There are 3 (14,29 %) students who feel strongly agree and 4 (19,05 %) students who feel neutral about it. However, there is still 1 (4,76 %) student who disagrees about the statement. Seeing a significant number of students who agree, the researcher concludes that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo feel motivated when the teacher gives explanations or teaches in English using the virtual learning platforms during distance learning.

Statement 3: The student feels interested in the method that the teacher use in teaching English using virtual learning platforms

Table 5. The frequency and percentage of statement number 3 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	4	19,05
Agree	12	57,14
Neutral	5	23,81
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	21	100

From table 5, it can be seen that a high number of 12 (57,14 %) students of MTs Negeri Palopo agree with statement 3, while a lower number of 4 (19,05 %) students strongly agree and 5 (23,81 %) students feel neutral about the statement. In addition, no respondent chose disagree and strongly disagree category. It can be concluded that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo are interested in the method that the teacher used in teaching English using virtual learning platforms.

Statement 4: The student pays attention to the teacher's explanation through the virtual learning platforms

Table 6. The frequency and percentage of statement number 4 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	4	19,05
Agree	16	76,19
Neutral	1	4,76
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	21	100

Table 6 illustrates that the majority of the students of MTs Negeri Palopo agree that they pay attention to the teacher's explanation. There are 4 (19,05 %) students who strongly agree, whereas 1 (4,76 %) student feels neutral about the statement. No student chose to disagree and strongly disagree category. Given the above, it can be concluded that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo pay attention to the teacher's explanation through the virtual learning platforms during distance learning.

Statement 5: The students like the lecturing method better during the English class using the virtual learning platforms

Table 7. The frequency and percentage of statement number 5 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	5	23,81
Agree	6	28,57
Neutral	8	38,10
Disagree	2	9,52
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	21	100

Table 7 illustrates that there are 5 (23,81 %) students of MTs Negeri Palopo who strongly agree with statement number 5. Moreover, 6 (28,57 %) students agree and 8 (38,10 %) students feel neutral regarding the statement. Of the total number of 21, there are only 2 (9,52 %) students who disagree with the statement. Because the number of students who strongly agree and agree is much higher than the students who disagree, it can be concluded that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo like the lecturing method better during English class using virtual learning platforms during distance learning.

Statement 6: The student likes when the teacher does a lot of discussion with the students during the English class using the virtual learning platforms during the distance learning

Table 8. The frequency and percentage of statement number 6 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	13	61,90
Agree	7	33,33
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	1	4,76
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	21	100

Regarding statement 6, as shown in table 8, the majority of the students of MTs Negeri Palopo, with a total number of 13 (61, 90 %), strongly agree. There are 7 (33,33 %) students who agree and 1 (4,76 %) student who disagree regarding the statement. Based on that, it can be concluded that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo like it when the teacher does a lot of discussion with the students during the class using virtual learning platforms during distance learning.

Statement 7: The student can still feel the connection with the teacher even during distance learning using virtual learning platforms

Table 9. The frequency and percentage of statement number 7 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	6	28,57
Agree	11	52,38
Neutral	4	19,05
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	21	100

It can be seen in table 9 that 6 (28,57 %) students strongly agree with statement number 7. Higher than that, a total of 11 (52,38 %) students agreed that they can still feel a connection with their teacher even during distance learning using virtual learning platforms, while 4 (19,05 %) students chose neutral regarding the statement. Because of that, it can be concluded that the students

of MTs Negeri Palopo can still feel a connection with their teacher even during distance learning using the virtual learning platforms.

Statement 8: The student's English skills improve even during distance learning using virtual learning platforms

Table 10. The frequency and percentage of statement number 8 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	2	9,52
Agree	11	52,38
Neutral	5	23,81
Disagree	3	14,29
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	21	100

Table 10 shows that from the total number of 21 students, most students with a total number of 11 (52,38 %) agree regarding statement number 8. Moreover, 2 (9,52 %) students strongly agree, 5 (23,81 %) chose neutral, and 3 (14,29 %) students disagree. Because the number of students who chose strongly agree and agree is much higher than the students who disagree, it can be concluded that the English skills of students of MTs Negeri Palopo improve even during distance learning using virtual learning platforms.

Statement 9: Learning from home using virtual learning platforms is profitable

Table 11. The frequency and percentage of statement number 9 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	3	14,29
Agree	10	47,62
Neutral	4	19,05
Disagree	2	9,52
Strongly Disagree	2	9,52
Total	21	100

It can be seen in table 11 that the majority of the students of MTs Negeri Palopo, with a total number of 10 (47,62 %), agree that learning from home using virtual learning platforms is profitable. 3 (14,29 %) students strongly agree with that matter, while 4 (19,05 %) students chose neutral. However, there are still 2 (9,52 %) students for each disagree and strongly disagree category. Even so, because of the much higher number of strongly agree and agree categories, the researcher concludes that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo feel that learning from home using virtual learning platforms is profitable.

Statement 10: Learning English from home using virtual learning platforms is hard

Table 12. The frequency and percentage of statement number 10 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	1	4,76
Agree	5	23,81
Neutral	6	28,57
Disagree	6	28,57
Strongly Disagree	3	14,29
Total	21	100

Based on table 12, from the total number of 21 students, only 1 (4,76 %) students strongly agree with statement number 10. There are 5 (23,81 %) students agree and 6 (28,57 %) students chose neutral. However, there are 6 (28,57 %) students chose disagree and 3 (14,29 %) students chose strongly agree. Seeing the higher number of disagree and strongly disagree categories, it can be

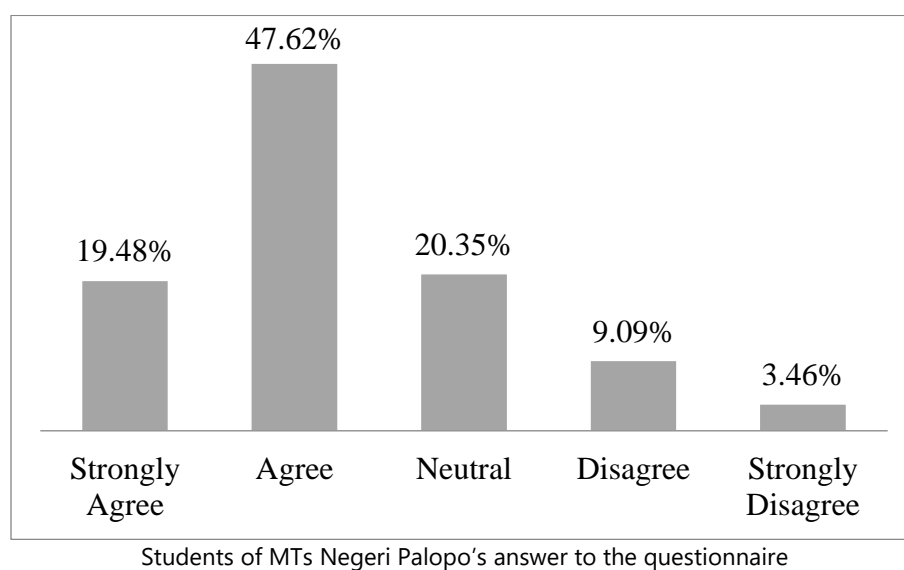
concluded that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo do not feel that learning English from home using virtual learning platforms is hard.

Statement 11: The student prefers learning English at home using virtual learning platforms than learning it at school

Table 13. The frequency and percentage of statement number 11 from the students of MTs Negeri Palopo

Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	2	9,52
Agree	6	28,57
Neutral	6	28,57
Disagree	5	23,81
Strongly Disagree	2	9,52
Total	21	100

Table 13 indicates that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo have different preferences regarding the place of learning. There are 2 (9,52 %) students strongly agree and 6 (28,57 %) students agree with statement number 11. Moreover, there are 6 (28,57 %) students chose to be neutral, 5 (23,87 %) students disagree, and 2 (9,52 %) students strongly disagree with the statement. Because the number of students who strongly agree and agree is higher than the students who disagree and strongly disagree, the researchers conclude that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo prefer learning English at home using virtual learning platforms to learn English at school.



The highest frequency from MTs Negeri Palopo is also in agree category with a percentage of 47,62 %. A more detailed description can be seen in table 14.

Table 14. The students of MTs Negeri Palopo's responses to the questionnaire based on each category

No	Category/Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Item	Frequency of students' answers				
				SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Cognitive	Understanding	1	2	13	4	1	1
2	Affective	Motivation	2	3	13	4	1	0
		Interest	3	4	12	5	0	0
		Attention	4	4	16	1	0	0
		Feeling	5	5	6	8	2	0
			6	13	7	0	1	0
			7	6	11	4	0	0
			9	3	10	4	2	2
	10	1	5	6	6	3		
	11	2	6	6	5	2		
3	Psychomotor	Skill	8	2	11	5	3	0
			Max	13	16	8	6	3

Table 14 illustrates that the highest frequency of students' choice is agree. The category is affective with attention as its sub-indicator, which is item number 4. There are 16 students of MTs Negeri Palopo who agree with the statement that the students pay attention to the teachers' explanations through the virtual learning platforms during distance learning.

Table 15. The total scores of MTs Negeri Palopo students

No	Respondent	Scores	Category
1	S1	76	Very Positive
2	S2	85	Very Positive
3	S3	65	Very Positive
4	S4	80	Very Positive
5	S5	85	Very Positive
6	S6	71	Very Positive
7	S7	71	Very Positive
8	S8	85	Very Positive
9	S9	62	Very Positive
10	S10	71	Very Positive
11	S11	69	Very Positive
12	S12	72	Very Positive
13	S13	67	Very Positive
14	S14	78	Very Positive
15	S15	84	Very Positive
16	S16	76	Very Positive
17	S17	78	Positive
18	S18	55	Very Positive
19	S19	76	Very Positive
20	S20	78	Very Positive
21	S21	69	Very Positive
Total Score		1.556	

It can be seen from table 15 that the qualification of students' scores is the category of their perception of the teacher's teaching strategies. Based on the data, the highest score is 85, which falls into the very positive category. In addition, the lowest score is 55, which is in the positive category. Moreover, the frequency and the percentage of MTs Negeri Palopo students' perceptions can be seen on the following table 16.

Table 16. The frequency and percentage of MTs Negeri Palopo students' perception

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Very Positive	20	95,24
2	Positive	1	4,76
3	Negative	0	0
4	Very Negative	0	0
Total		21	100

The data in table 16 shows that the highest frequency is 20 (95,24 %), which falls into the very positive category. Meanwhile, the frequency of the positive category is 1 (4,76 %) student. As for the negative and very negative categories, there is no student who falls into the category. Based on that, the perception of the students of MTs Negeri Palopo on the teacher's strategy in teaching English using a virtual learning platform during the COVID-19 pandemic is very positive.

Table 17. Mean Score of the Students of MTs Negeri Palopo

No	Total score	Number of respondents
1	1.556	21
Mean		74,09

From table 17, it can be seen that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo's mean score are 74,09. The mean score can be the determiner of the students' level of perception. The mean score of MTs Negeri Palopo students above indicates that the student's perception of the teacher's teaching strategies in teaching English using virtual learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic is very positive. It is in line with the result of the previous table, which shows the highest frequency is very positive, with the number of frequencies being 20 (95,24 %).

4.2 Discussion

In relation to the perception of the students of M.Ts. Negeri 3 Palopo on the distance learning implementation, the researchers used a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to measure the level of students' perception of the teacher's strategies in teaching English using virtual learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic at MTs Negeri Palopo. As a result of the close-ended questionnaire, students of MTs Negeri Palopo have a very positive perception towards the teacher's teaching strategy. The mean score of the students was 74,09. It is shown in the Figure on page 9 that from 21 students of MTs Negeri Palopo, the majority of the students chose agree category to the statements of the close-ended questionnaire. The percentage of students who chose agree at MTs Negeri Palopo was high with 47,62 %, strongly agree 19,48 %, neutral 20,35 %, disagree 9,09 %, and strongly disagree 3,46 %. This statement came from the affective indicator with attention as the sub-indicator. Regarding the cognitive category with understanding as the sub-indicator, the highest frequency was the agreed category. There are 13 students who agreed that they understood the English learning materials that the teachers taught through the virtual learning platforms.

Furthermore, the affective category was illustrated in statement number 4. The results are shown in Table 6. There were 16 students who agreed to statement number 4, which stated that the students paid attention when the teachers taught or gave explanations in English during distance learning using virtual learning platforms. This is in line with the motivation sub-indicator, which is for statement number 2. The highest frequency is agreed with 13 students who agreed that they felt motivated when the teacher gave explanations or taught in English during distance learning using.

It has been stated in the previous paragraph that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo have a very positive perception towards the teacher's strategy in teaching English using a virtual learning platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. This perception is something that needs to be noted in order for the teachers to provide effective teaching for the students. Based on the theory of Cardino & Ortega-Dela Cruz (2020), effective teaching requires flexibility, creativity, and responsibility in order to provide an instructional environment able to respond to the learner's individual needs. The student's needs are the main thing to consider in the process of teaching and learning. Thus, students' perceptions come as a bridge for the teachers to understand what students need in the learning process.

As stated in the finding, the teacher of MTs Negeri Palopo used WhatsApp, Madrasah E-learning, and Google Sites as virtual learning platforms. These platforms are more accessible for the English teachers of MTs Negeri Palopo. In addition, English teachers at MTs Negeri Palopo used Madrasah E-learning as a virtual learning platform. This implies that the use of a virtual learning platform is adjusted to the student's and teacher's situation and capability. This can be explained in the theory of Piotrowski (2010, in Costa et al., 2012), which stated that an e-learning platform represents a system that provides integrated support for six different

activities: creation, organization, delivery, and communication, collaboration, and assessment. The platforms used during the teaching and learning process, especially in the pandemics, have become a necessity and inseparable from the online or e-learning process. Virtual learning platforms play a big part in distance learning implementation and become one of the most important parts of achieving learning objectives that have been planned beforehand by the teachers and become the aim of the education itself in the first place.

Regarding the problems or obstacles that the teacher faced during distance learning using virtual learning platforms, the teacher of MTs Negeri Palopo put forward several points. The first problem is regarding improper internet connection. The second problem is about the students who all have different economic backgrounds in facing online-based learning. Some students did not have mobile phones to access learning; some had difficulty even buying internet data, which became another economic burden for the parents. The next problem is the distraction that both the students and the teacher's face during online learning. For the students, distractions such as games on the mobile phone or the internet could become a huge distraction that affects the students' focus during the teaching and learning process.

As for the teacher, teaching from home has its own difficulty, especially because of the distractions at home, so the teacher finds it hard to concentrate. The distraction also came from the children at home who also do the online learning and needed the phone to learn. Another one was the housework which needed to be done. The fourth problem is the virtual learning platform that is still ineffective for teaching and learning at a distance. Fifth is the fact that the teacher needed to adjust so many things, including the learning objectives, learning materials, and teaching strategy, in such a short time and with no preparation. The sixth problem is the fact that the learning objectives could not be fully achieved.

Regarding the problems stated above, Gillett-Swan (2017) also stated that the content or delivery used in face-to-face context could be adapted to a compatible online format. In the practice of online learning, the shift from the face-to-face contact mode into the online context is not simply a "one size fits all approach". Scales of adaptation and differentiation within the approach should be used to better differentiate between different learners as well as different contexts of teaching via online and live modes. This means that all of this requires time of adaptation for both the students and the teachers in the process of teaching and learning.

In addition, for the interest sub-indicator, which is for statement number 3, the majority of 12 students agreed that the teacher's strategy in teaching English using a virtual learning platform during distance learning was interesting. Moreover, the highest frequency for the feeling sub-indicator, which consisted of 6 statements, was for statement number 6. There were 13 students who strongly agreed with the statement that the students liked when the teachers did a lot of discussions with the students during the English class using a virtual learning platform during distance learning. As for the psychomotor category with skill as the sub-indicator, the highest frequency was agreed with 11 students of MTs Negeri Palopo, who agreed that there was an improvement in the student's English skills during the implementation of distance learning.

The next point is regarding the students' perception towards the implementation of distance learning using a virtual learning platform. As shown in table 20, the students feel that learning from home using virtual learning platforms during the pandemic is profitable. In addition, when the students were asked regarding the statement that learning using a virtual learning platform from home is hard, the majority of the students disagreed. The next table, which is in table 24, shows that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo prefer learning English at home using virtual learning platforms than learning English at school.

Students' perceptions can be different and are affected by many factors. This is in line with Nurmaleny et al. (2014), who explained that the state of an individual being could affect the perception that comes from that individual's psychological state. This psychological state can be in the form of experience, feeling, thinking ability, attention, and motivation. These are all called internal factors. Other than that, there are also other factors that can affect the formation of perception, which is the object of the perception itself and the environmental factor in which the perception takes place. These factors are called external factors. All these factors are related to one another in the process of perception formation of the students.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the close-ended questionnaire, the results of the study reveal that the students of MTs Negeri Palopo have a very positive perception towards the teacher's strategy in teaching English using virtual learning platforms, with a mean score was 74,09. The frequency of the student's responses to each statement illustrates that the majority of the students chose the 'agree category' in every statement. In addition, the teachers' teaching strategy in the implementation of distance learning and the materials taught by the teachers were adjusted to the pandemic situation. The materials were delivered to the students by utilizing virtual learning platforms, namely: WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom as learning media.

The students and the teachers got advantages in terms of technology skills improvement during the implementation of distance learning. The majority of MTs Negeri Palopo's students prefer learning English at home using virtual learning platforms to learning at school during the pandemic situation. In addition, based on the data regarding the teaching method that the teachers used, the students prefer more discussion in the teaching and learning process compared to the teacher's lecturing method.

In conclusion, even though the students have a very positive perception towards the teacher's strategy in teaching English, the implementation of distance learning at MTs Negeri Palopo is still far from being effective in achieving the learning objectives, which is one of the main points of educational goals. This could be improved by developing and utilizing more methods and strategies that can engage the students to learn English through digital channels.

5.1 Limitations

The results of this study prove that the students have very positive perceptions towards teachers' strategies in teaching English using virtual learning platforms. The virtual learning platforms used by the English teachers in teaching English at MTs. Negeri Palopo are: WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom. Therefore, one of the limitations of this study is that this study has not utilized diverse virtual learning Platforms such as: Learning Management System (LMS), Moodle, Edmodo, etc. Another limitation is the number of subjects is relatively small, 21 students of M.Ts. Negeri Palopo.

5.2 Suggestions

The teachers are expected to create more attractive strategies that could help the students to understand the materials better and to achieve the learning objectives. Other virtual learning platforms can be used apart from WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom. Future researchers can do similar research by involving more students and more schools in wider areas so that rich data can be gathered.

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