English Learning and Teaching are Like a Rollercoaster: Metaphor of Online Learning amid COVID-19 Outbreak in Indonesia

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Abstract. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has a direct impact on educational setting, schools and universities finally have to use an online platform as a way out. This present research aims to analyse EFL students’ and teachers’ perception on their online learning during the outbreak using metaphoric words. A questionnaire using metaphor analysis concept was distributed online to 55 students and 14 teachers at one private university in Indonesia. Data coding was done through qualitative analysis software, NVivo 12 Plus. Results show that EFL students and teachers have various metaphoric entailments to describe their perceptions. Three major metaphoric words used by students were related to hobby, game, and food for 11 coding references respectively, whereas for teachers the metaphoric used were hobby (4 coding references); game (3 coding references); relationship (2 coding references), others was in small distribution. Derived from the metaphoric words used by the students and teachers, the nuance can be drawn into their perspectives towards the online learning. The results also revealed that EFL students perceived online learning negatively; whereas, teachers were mostly in a neutral position towards their online teaching. This study has shed a light that this pandemic has essentially shown that in the future educational curriculum, particularly in EFL context, online learning activities should be made a part of ELT class.

Keywords: COVID-19, Online Learning, EFL Learners, Metaphor Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak has become an increasing topic recently. World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared this outbreak as a global pandemic on March 12, 2020. This causes several adverse impacts on all sectors of people’s lives including education. The global education is now facing disruptions in students’ learning amidst this pandemic. As of April 30, 2020, The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimated that 182 countries had to shut down schools’ activities in all educational levels, leaving more than one billion students out-of-schools (UNESCO, 2020). This is according to the evidence and assumptions that influenza outbreak can be stopped by reducing physical and social contacts between students (WHO, 2020). Consequently, many countries are attempting to utilise online learning to overcome this education disruption.

It is now to look how the didactic process run in the global world. In Georgia, the online education at school was successful and projected for future use (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). Furthermore, in graduate medical education in the U.S, virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was considered positive as it was facilitative in terms of its flexibility—materials were easily shared using Zoom and Microsoft team—that previously in offline class, the teaching was only covered only once a week (Almarzooq, Lopes, and Kochar, 2020). In this case, Indonesia is one of the countries which has implemented national schools’ closures in attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19. Indonesian schools and universities had cancelled face-to-face classrooms and resorted to online learning to continue learning process. This learning shift generates multiple views from students and teachers. Unfortunately, as many of 16 secondary school EFL teachers in Indonesia were asked their reflective teaching of their online teaching during the pandemic of COVID-19 and revealed that the challenges of online learning were found about teachers’ lack of preparation and students’ technical and digital literacy issue (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020).

Metaphor studies in language learning has been widely used. One previous study used metaphor to explore students’ and teachers’ perception of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) class (Ishak, 2019). This research reveals that through metaphor, students have neutral attitude towards ESP class, while teachers perceive ESP as a physical activity entailing process, thorough measurement, effort, preparation, and time. Also, through metaphor analysis of colour and embodiment, Coffey (2015) uncovers the story of language teachers experiences/engagement in language learning. The study highlights the importance of phenomenological word through descriptive and replicable frames that cannot be measured in a rational scientific method or even done quantitatively. Another, qualitative metaphor analysis was also implemented in discovering Iranian students’ belief in the language educational system and its impact on their success of their foreign language learning (Pishghadam et al., 2011). Results depict public school students’ failure on learning the language mainly because of the behaviouristics methods used in their class; while private school students’ success was apparent because of the cognitive style of learning.
However, in view of this pandemic, the use of metaphor analysis to elicit students’ and teachers’ perception towards online EFL learning during the pandemic of COVID-19 in developing country is still limitedly discussed. In light of the reason on using metaphoric word, it is to find and clarify a complex conceptual issue in education, thus, the researcher can locate problem through analogies or models. Metaphor is used in education obviously “to find a salient, memorable label for an otherwise difficult concept” (Low in Gibbs, Jr, 2008). This present study in particular will look how teachers and students feel about their online teaching and learning during COVID-19 outbreak at an Indonesian university. Students and teachers are requested to write their perspectives towards online learning using metaphors. Based on their opinions, Elicited Metaphor Analysis (EMA) will be employed as a method to examine the collected perceptions and elaborate the entailments. Furthermore, the theory and practice will be elaborated exclusively. Thus, a clear phenomenon of online teaching and learning in EFL context can be well described.

**Metaphors**

The recent view of metaphor shows that it is not merely a figurative speech to illustrate one kind of object by referring to something similar, but it is also an interpretation on how people construct their thought and beliefs to certain object (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). This is in line with Lakoff & Johnson (1980), stating that metaphors are often employed as a cognitive tool to demonstrate a processing way of thought in human mind. It is considered significantly effective as metaphors are able to conceptualise the abstract and complex idea into something concrete (Zhang, 2016), to portray a reflection and consciousness of certain practices (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000), and to provide a visual element in expressing phenomenon or situation (Farrell, 2006). Therefore, there is an increasing number of researches which adopted metaphors to interpret perceptions, beliefs, motivation, practices, and professions (Baş & Gezegin, 2015; Fang, 2015; Farrell, 2006; Jin et al., 2014; İnceçay, 2015).

**Metaphors in Language Teaching and Learning**

In the language educational environment, it is no exception that metaphors are often employed to interpret teachers’ perceptions and beliefs towards their practices and roles. Farrell (2006), for example, attempts to investigate pre-service teachers’ beliefs attending teacher training courses using metaphors on reflection of their practices. A similar research of metaphors is from İnceçay (2015) who examines the tacit knowledge and beliefs of pre-service English teachers during intensive teaching course through metaphors. It was revealed that teachers could express their ideas and beliefs about their practice straightforwardly using metaphors. Moreover, metaphors are also beneficial to uncover teacher’s roles. Guerrero & Villamil (2000) who investigate teachers’ roles in ESL found that teachers identified themselves with conventional notions attached to teachers such as mentor or knowledge provider. In addition, metaphors are adopted to view the concept of teaching and learning as shown in Saban, Kocbereker, and Saban (2007). This study shows that using metaphors assist the teachers to conceptualise their
values and attitudes toward teaching and learning. Therefore, the abovementioned studies suggest that employing metaphors leads to similar beneficial results to visualise teachers’ thought from the reflection of their performance.

Apart from the teachers’ perspectives, the effects of metaphors on students’ thought are worth to discuss. A plethora of studies has demonstrated the use of metaphors to convey students’ perceptions, beliefs, coursebook and motivation. Take for example, Ishak (2019) who conducted a metaphorical analysis to investigate students’ perception on ESP learning. It is found that students generally had positive attitudes towards their learning which were associated with food metaphors. Similarly, Fang (2015) obtained an affirmative result on students’ perception of their English learning experiences through metaphors. It shows that students had a thorough understanding and positive mindset of their learning such as persistence and hard work. Another interesting topic is exploring students’ metaphorical perception on their EFL coursebook by Kesen (2010). It is reported that the elicited metaphors on coursebooks implied the positive perceptions of the learners, stating as ‘guidance and enlightenment’ (p. 116). Interestingly, metaphors are also adopted to study students’ motivation on learning English. Jin et al. (2014) obtain that students had relatively high motivation in learning English as shown in their excitement and self-confidence to achieve better outcomes despite several difficulties. Thus, metaphors are also beneficial in investigating students’ view on certain themes.

Metaphors in Online Setting

Metaphors also function strategically on online education environment. Literature review has shown that metaphor studies in online education generally focus on the complex experience of participants both teachers and students denoting situations, feeling, and ideas within the online space. Vayreda and Núñez (2010) conducted a metaphorical study on the participants of online forum to define an online environment and reported, for example, as a new place to be discovered. This study extends its focus on portraying participants’ feelings and emotions in joining the forum as well as describing the content and information flow. As online learning gains more popularity in academic field, a study from Nicholson and Sarker (2002) obtains the metaphors on students and teachers’ perceptions of their online education. This study aims to uncover a widely-believed assumption on online learning as it is effective method to support the student-centered learning through the collected metaphors. Although a number of research has documented the use of metaphors to investigate the opinions of teachers and students on attending online learning, it seems that the metaphorical analysis to examine the perception of students and teachers towards online learning as a consequence of school closures during COVID-19 pandemic is relatively new in this recent phenomenon, so it is interesting to elaborate further.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study took place in an Indonesian university. The participants, both students and teachers were from English Language Education Department. The students were in the sixth semester and they had passed the Literature in ELT
course at the time being. As many of 55 students were selected randomly, then requested to reflect their own English learning experiences and perceptions during the pandemic. Among the students, 35 were females and 20 males. The other participants were the English language teachers in that department, consisting of 14 teachers.

The data for this study was collected by inviting the participants to present a metaphor which best depicts their experience of online learning. The data was gathered virtually through the google form by asking the participants to complete a sentence “Online learning is like ... because ....”. The example of metaphors is also provided to enlighten the readers how to use metaphors in a sentence. This metaphorical study is based on Lakoff (1993) which is commonly known as Elicited Metaphor Analysis (EMA). As the study analyses the elicited metaphors from the participants, a qualitative research method is employed. The data were interpreted by using researchers’ interpretations in line with Pitcher (2013), asserting that researcher’s own intuition can be used to analyse and identify metaphors. The types of metaphors and their entailments were examine further to understand the participants’ emotions and feelings within online learning situations.

The data were analysed using NVivo 12 Plus, a qualitative research analysis software. Data were input in the software and coded based on their nodes and cases. Hierarchy chart was used to visualize the data for perception and metaphorical entailment used by EFL learners and teachers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students’ Perception towards Online Learning

Data show that the major entailments of metaphor used by the students to describe their perceptions towards online learning amid the outbreak were hobby, game, and food which have the same distribution (11 coding references). The hobbies used as metaphors were: singing, watching a movie/tv, adventure, travelling, fishing; for games were: rollercoaster, treasure hunt, RPG, bungee jumping, playing chess, riddle, skating; for food were coffee, durian, tea & sugar, pancake, ice cream, chocolate, fried rice, satay, and brown sugar. Meanwhile, the other entailments have the small portion for 3, 2, and 1 entailment; such as: nature, emotion, relationship, friend and others.
It is clear from the data that EFL students were dominantly in a negative view towards online learning. As there were 32 coding references for negative; 12 coding references for neutral; and 10 coding references for positive.

Figure 1. Hierarchy Chart of Students’ Metaphoric Entailment

Figure 2. Hierarchy Chart of Students’ Perception
The students’ perception towards the online learning are described metaphorically as follow,

**Negative**

Online learning is like a *pancake* because it is *flat*.

Explanation: The reason why I use that expressions is because based on what I have experience in the reality, online class is tend to be flat. There's no something that able to trigger me as the students to become excited to do the online learning. And sometimes, the lecturer only gives us bunch of tasks that make me feeling under pressured. (DQSR14-T1)

Online learning is like *setting across an open ocean* because *you don't know where the destination point is*.

Explanation: Online learning is like setting across an open ocean because you don't know where the destination point is means you have to do online learning for now but you don't know when it's over. all you have to do is keep doing tasks and get a new material even though you know that it's difficult to digest the information effectively when online learning rather than face to face on class. (DQSR16-T1)

**Neutral**

Online learning is like *fried rice* because it is *rich in taste*.

Explanation: Online learning is rich in taste because of there are many ways and methods for learning through online platforms. (DQSR29-T2)

Online learning is like *crafting* because it is *challenging*.

Explanation: The word crafting means the student learning by the guidance from teacher but the student still needs to search additional information by themselves, it trains the student to become more independent and creative. Students’ effort to learning by themselves is the challenging part, they have to master the material with the limited explanation from the teacher. (DQSR33-T2)

**Positive**

Online learning is like *cold water* because it is *refreshing*.

Explanation: Online learning is a new way of learning that I just tried and it is new and different and I like it other than face to face. (DQSR8-T3)

Online learning is like *singing* because it is a *relief*.

Explanation: When you singing you feel better through sing along some songs with different genres it can lifting up your mood. (DQSR3-T3)
Teachers’ Perception towards Online Teaching

Records show a similar presentation to students’ data that the major metaphoric entailments used by teachers were hobby, game, and relationship. The metaphorical entailments used for hobbies were: making industrial table, adventure, playing, travelling, climbing a mountain; for game: puzzle and rollercoaster; for relationship: long distance relationship.

Figure 3. Hierarchy Chart of Teachers’ Metaphoric Entailment

In teachers’ perception, statistic shows that majority of teachers’ view towards online learning during the pandemic of COVID-19 was neutral, for 6 coding references, followed by the same distribution of positive and negative view, 4 coding references respectively.
Figure 4. Hierarchy Chart of Teachers’ Perception

Neutral
Teaching an online class is like rollercoaster because sometimes we are on fire, but sometimes we also chill and slow down.

Explanation: Rollercoaster is unstable, we can be up and down, and still enjoying the rides. (DQR12-T1)

Teaching an online class is like climbing mountain because it is challenging.

Explanation: I always want to reach the top on time, but the time I need is often more than provided. (DQR7-T1)

Positive
Teaching an online class is like making an industrial table because it is fun.

Explanation: Making industrial table requires our patient, hard work, endurance and creativity but the result will be so satisfying. (DQR1-T2)

Teaching an online class is like a dreamland; that's what I want.

Explanation: It is dreamt that I could work while staying at home to nurture my children well. It is associated to my expectation/mind. (DQR10-T2)

Negative
Teaching an online class is like a puzzle because we have many questions on the process.
Explanation: Puzzle is like something difficult and unclear. (DQR9-T3)

Teaching an online is as bitter as medicine.

Explanation: Basically, teaching online is very good in many ways in light of the nature of the technology and the digital learners. However, the Covid-19 pandemic disease has changed many things—students and teachers are in a difficult situation. I have to do many unpredictable jobs at the same time. (DQR14-T3).

Referring to the data, metaphoric words are used to reveal students’ and teachers’ perception towards their experience of online learning and teaching. The study elicits that students were competent to make analogies of their perceptions of online learning through metaphor. The dominant metaphors used are related to hobby, game, and food for 11 coding references respectively; while for teachers the metaphoric used are hobby (4 coding references); game (3 coding references); relationship (2 coding references), others was in small distribution. These metaphors have finally drawn into their entailments and they bring forth the finding that students are more in a negative perception toward the online learning; whereas teachers are in neutral position to this issue.

EFL students’ major perception was more into negative view. There are some triggering issues on this, among others are: technical problems, that students’ internet connection at home was not that supportive for online learning; the other is insufficient explanation given by teachers, this condition has led students difficult to understand the material; the last one is that some students complain about the load of tasks. However, in a neutral sense, some EFL students are having good awareness that the blame is not always directed to the condition or even their teachers, but students themselves are actually the ones who need to be more independent and creative in responding teachers’ limited explanation on online platform as respondent 34 writes: “Online learning is like crafting because it is challenging”. The positive vibes are also elicited from the other EFL students, that they are interested in online learning as it is a new way of learning as respondent 43 writes: “Online learning is like playing chess because it needs focus.”

This finding on students’ perspective is in line with Atmojo & Nugroho’s (2020) study that Indonesian students’ challenges in online learning are found to have problems around technical issue. Thus, online learning performance in EFL context is a way different to online learning in developed countries such as in Georgia and the U.S (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020; Almarzooq, Lopes, and Kochar, 2020). In regards to this, respondent 29 writes: “Online learning is like mathematic because it is difficult in term of its internet connection. Further, a comparison between students enrolling in face to face vs online learning at Business English course at one Indonesian university also reported that students taking online class have unsatisfactory results in term of communicative, behavioural, emotional, and affective aspect (Yunhadi, Armadi & Didi, 2020). This is answering the response of respondent 8 writing, “Online learning is like a roller coaster, as it is up and down activities because she feels having less interaction with her teacher, thus, it affects
her affective trait. Another perplexing issue is that students’ being overwhelmed with bunch of tasks. This situation can be explained that normally during the offline class, students’ activity is dominated by listening to teachers’ talk with guided class work. For example, respondent 4 has written “Online learning is like coffee, as it makes me stay up late.” However, what needs to be encountered in having online learning is the awareness on students’ self-regulation and independent learning. This support the study conducted by Barnard-Brak, Paton, & Lan (2010) revealing that environmental factors such as the design of online course for the first hand experienced by students is not going to develop their self-regulation. As this present study was conducted during the first semester upon the COVID-19 outbreak, students are still adapting to the online learning environment.

In teachers’ view, major perception is in neutral position. Teachers recognize that yes online learning is indeed a help for learning activities during the pandemic as it is perceived, “Online teaching is like traveling to a new country as there are many things to explore.” In positive view, teachers perceive that online learning is satisfying although it requires patient, effort, and creativity. For this entailment, a male teacher has the analogy of online teaching to doing his hobby, “It is like making industrial table because it requires our patient, hard work, endurance and creativity but the result will be so satisfying.” This is supported by a study conducted by Hung (2016) revealing that there is a tendency for gender difference for online learning readiness, it is argued that male teachers are better than their counterparts in applying online course and found to have high expectations for online-learning performance.

However, in a negative sense, some teachers perceive online learning is difficult to proceed in the situation and it is unclear. Without a doubt, the shift in teachers’ daily routine is not only dealing with academic performance. In light of this issue, one teacher writes: “Online learning is as bitter as medicine, as I have to do many unpredictable jobs at the same time.” This is confirming the study conducted by Rasmitadila (2020) uncovering that one of the challenges confronted during the online teaching is support. To well implement the online teaching, support from colleagues, parents, headmaster, and school is vital. Also, this finding is congruent with the study of Joo, Joung, and Sim (2011) stating three important institutional supports to corporate online educational environment, among others are superiors’ support, colleagues’ support, and positive organizational atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

This present study explores students’ and teachers’ perception on their online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak using metaphoric words. Metaphor is not only a figurative word but it can be a way for the respondents to express ideas based on their mind concept. It is revealed that major students’ perception toward online learning is negative. The metaphor used to articulate their perceptions are dominated by hobby, game, and food for 11 coding references respectively. Meanwhile, teachers’ perception on online teaching is more neutral, teachers voice their thought using the metaphoric words such as hobby (4 coding references); game (3 coding references); relationship (2 coding references), others was in small distribution.
From the finding, it elicits that metaphor can be implemented as an effective approach to explore participants’ perception towards an issue. In this research, data show that students using metaphoric word affirm their feeling of like and dislike toward the online learning, as well as telling their hands-on experience; whereas, for teachers, metaphoric words are used to display their online teaching performance.

Addressing students’ perceptions, teachers need to be equipped with skills of applying more interesting activities to attract students’ attention to online learning. As it is suggested that to encourage students’ maximum participation, teachers need to be selective in providing web-based language learning material (Zamari, Adnan, Idris, Yusof, 2012). As it is proven that students listening skills were recorded to have an improvement through Moodle mobile App as its suited students’ pace and time (Sasirekha, Rathiga, Sarpparaje & Suresh, 2018). Lastly, so as teachers, students have to encourage themselves to be more self-regulated and be autonomous and they have to redefine their negative perception towards online learning. Thus, in the future, online language learning course needs to be emerged as a part of the curriculum in the learning.

REFERENCES


