

Websites as Supplementary Reading Materials: Challenges Faced by Vocational Students

*¹Sri Rejeki, ²Diah Kristina, ³Agus Wijayanto

¹⁻³Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta, Indonesia

***Correspondence**

srejek60@gmail.com

Submission History:

Submitted: June 2, 2022

Revised: August 29, 2022

Accepted: August 31, 2022



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Abstract

Responding to the needs of vocational students to master English skills once they graduate from vocational college, a group of vocational students used three English websites, namely English Club, BBC Learn English, and Learn English British Council, for three months as supplementary reading materials. Twelve students majoring in Accounting Information systems from the Diploma 3 Program at one of the private colleges in Surakarta participated in this study. This study employed questionnaires and online artifacts to collect the data. It was found that most of the students mentioned technical challenges that they faced when accessing websites as supplementary reading materials. Easy to get tired, and having different levels of English comprehension were challenges faced by them. Furthermore, students felt that they could save money, download the materials and improve their skills by accessing the websites. It is suggested to conduct further research in the same field with broader respondents and extended periods to determine the students' significant impacts.

Keywords: vocational, websites, challenges, artifacts, EL websites

INTRODUCTION

Technology has developed rapidly, influencing everyone to change their routines unconsciously. One of the influences is in the educational sector, which is one of the results that the students feel more enjoy when teachers use technology in the learning process (Raja & Nagasabramani, 2018). The data showed that the number of smartphone users in Indonesia increased from 183.68 million users in 2020 and is estimated to reach 199.18 million users in 2021 (Statista, 2021). Surprisingly, children and teenagers in the age range 10-24 years old reached 24.4% million users, equal to 18.4% of internet users in Indonesia

(Lavigne, 2019). Although the smartphone is one of the good products of technology, it has some limitations that hinder students from doing their activities, such as the smartphone's capacity depending on its memory. Therefore, students cannot install as many as apps they want, such as learning apps. On the other hand, as a solution, some learning platforms let the users use it without installing it. Users need to access it from their browsers.

The website presents as one of the products of the advancement of technology which is widely used in the education sector. Many types of websites could be accessed by users, starting from the primary service or free until the premium one, whereas users could enjoy the support not offered in the basic service. Some websites were reported helpful for learning English, such as 86.9% for www.go4english.com, 74% for britishcouncil.org, 68% for elscafe.com, 84.9% for zozanga.com, and 82.9 % for English-online.org-uk and 90.9% for englishclub.com (Aly, 2008). They are many activities that users could use by accessing the websites, including quizzes and text varieties.

On the other hand, English is one of the world's most spoken languages and is also categorized as one of the compulsory subjects for university students. Some industries also require their employees to be good at English, either actively or passively. When learning English, there are four critical skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A study mentioned that reading greatly helps students (Sadiku, 2015). When students have more vocabulary, it could be inferred that they could listen better, write, and speak better because they already have a stock of vocabulary they get from reading. The education sector was affected when covid started to hit Indonesia at the beginning of 2020, and institutions started to use learning management system (LMS), but a surprising fact showed that LMS available on campus is less attractive to lecturers (Irfan, et al., 2020). Teachers must use other media to support and motivate the students to learn.

Unfortunately, the reading level of Indonesian students was relatively low. It was about 397, which was quite far from the standard, of 493 (OECD Country Note, 2016). A similar study also reported that Indonesian students' interest in reading is relatively low, whether it is reading for pleasure or academics (Nugrahanto & Zuchdi, 2018). Then, to facilitate students in improving their skills in English, teachers tried to integrate websites into the teaching and learning process.

Furthermore, vocational education in Indonesia is crucial because they are ready to enter the job market once they graduate. Therefore, they need more time to practice what they learn at school. This is in line with what was mentioned by Lauglo & Lillis (1988) as cited in Jaelani et al. (2017), that vocational education aims to produce students with a diverse skills base and range to improve the quality to be skilled workers. Surprisingly, vocational college is becoming popular in the last few years, and more than one-third of students took a pre-vocational or vocational program in OECD countries (OECD, 2015). In Indonesia, the vocational position also attracted the Indonesian government's attention. Some actions were planned, such as massive revitalization in vocational education, vocational education and training should be done in massive, adding the number of teaching factories in a short-term period, and giving opportunities for practitioners to teach in vocational schools and polytechnics (Sakarinto, 2021).

To give more time for the vocational students to practice their skills, teachers use various means to facilitate them, and one of them that they use is English Learning (EL) websites. Several researchers proved that EL websites positively impact users, such as

improving their motivation (Duffy & McDonough, 2011) and practicing their language skills (Vogel, 2001 as cited in Shen, et al., 2014). Teachers use many English websites as products of technology to provide learning materials to practice for vocational students. Some of the websites are BBC Learning English, Learning English British Council, and English Club.

Several research has been conducted on the sector of supplementary materials, like using it for teaching speaking (Hoai & Hoa, 2020), resulting in the students feeling delighted and motivated to learn when using the media. They used a questionnaire to gather the data from the participants by focusing on the types of supplementary materials they used, frequency, effectivity, and reflection. It resulted that supplementary materials could bring effectiveness for them as the users. Another study showed that using EL websites helps EFL teachers in many ways because it helps students develop their cognitive and communicative abilities (Abramova & Boulahnane, 2019). In addition, using technology also influences the students' attitudes in the learning process. Students responded positively to using CALL and web-facilitated language learning (WFLL) (Bashori 2018). Mobile learning also gives benefits, such as relatively inexpensive opportunities because students could use a smartphone, decrease training costs and improve literacy levels (Mehdipour & Zerehkafi, 2013). Among those benefits, employing mobile learning also challenges the users. Connectivity and battery life, screen size and key size, good bandwidth for fast streaming, limited memory, and the number of file formats supported by specific devices are common challenges users face when using mobile learning (Mehdipour & Zerehkafi, 2013).

Based on previous research, it was mainly discussed the positive impacts of using technology in the teaching and learning process. It needs to know the challenges faced by students when using the websites in the learning process so the expected results could meet the learning goals and minimize the issues faced by students when using the websites. By knowing the challenges, it is hoped that the teachers could provide the right assistance for the students and alternative methods of teaching. Compared with the previous study on supplementary materials, this study tried to focus on the challenge faced by vocational students when using the three EL websites, namely BBC Learning English, Learning English British Council, and English Club when they used it as supplementary reading materials. In addition, this study also tried to find out how the students utilize the websites. Due to limited research time, this research used two blogs for each website from different participants, so there were six blogs from two participants.

METHOD

The term case study has been employed in some educational fields such as medicine, law, clinical health, and business as an alternative to traditional lectures as an instructional one (Habasisa & Hlalele, 2014). The case study is usually used to study in-depth to understand an individual's experiences, issues, insights, developmental pathways, or performance within a specific context (Duff, 2014). Those were in line with the goals of this study which was to find out the challenges faced by vocational students when using EL websites as supplementary reading materials. It involved twelve students who registered in the class, but unfortunately, one student did not fully participate in this research because she decided to withdraw from college. So, she participated partially in giving the data for the research. The students who participated in this study were freshmen majoring in

Accounting Information Systems (AIS) in Diploma 3 (D3) program at a vocational college based in Surakarta, Central Java. The students used the three websites for three months; Learning English British Council, BBC Learning English, and English Club. Students accessed the websites outside the classroom and used them as supplementary reading materials. First, students accessed the websites, read the readings there, and then did the activities on them, including the practices. Once the students finished with the readings and exercises, they posted the results, such as scores, and wrote what they felt on their blogs.

This study used some techniques to collect the respondents' data, questionnaires, and online artifacts. The questionnaire is a commonly used data collection method and is crucial to the study (Boparai, et al., 2018). It is an instrument in which the respondents react to the questions by marking things or giving responses to represent their responses (Ary et al., 2010, p. 648). Questions in the questionnaires are aimed to explore the feelings, experiences, beliefs, and activities done by the respondents. The questionnaire used the Likert Scale with strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree as the offered answer in the written questionnaire. It not only presents a range of feedback to a given statement or question (Cohen et al., 2018 p.480) but also helps the researcher to obtain the relevant information most reliably and validly (Taherdoost, 2016).

The students' blogs were used to collect the data from respondents using online artifacts in this study. Rose et al. (2014) mentioned artifacts as objects such as pieces of technology, clothing, or products that people use in their everyday or organizational lives. A similar definition is delivered by McDonald as cited in Huong & Hung (2021) that artifact in general, is defined as a technological device that, combined with labor use, transforms the consciousness of those who use it and the society in which it is used. From those descriptions, it could be inferred that what is meant by artifacts in this study were pieces of products produced by users in their everyday lives related to the activities in learning, especially the use of websites in the learning process. The form artifacts in this study were online artifacts which were collected from the blogs of the participants of this study.

There should be 144 posts in total as the records of the participants when using the EL websites, but unfortunately, some respondents did not publish their works on their blogs, so there were only 125 blogs from 12 students. Due to limited research time, this research used two blogs for each website from different participants, so there were six blogs from two participants. The researcher checked on the chosen blogs and wrote the events that participants in their blogs wrote by employing field note form. The researcher used Indonesian to write the report to minimize the misinterpretation of what was expressed by participants in their blogs.

Trustworthiness has received extensive attention in the studies because it helps the researchers verify their study and is one of those shared reliabilities, albeit a subjective one, wherein readers and writers might find commonality in their constructive processes (Stahl & King (2020). Caldwell and Clapham (2013), as cited in Cadeau, et al. (2020), defined trustworthiness as the antecedent that accrued perceptual experiences that lead on one to trust another person, institution, or organization. On the other hand, trustworthiness is also defined as the action of behaving voluntarily in a way not to take advantage of the trustor's vulnerable position when faced with a self-serving decision that conflicts with the trustor's objective (Ozer & Zheng, 2018). Putting together the thoughts mentioned above, trustworthiness in this study is defined as the actions of authors to verify

their study by accruing the perceptual experiences to trust others. It is because those we trust will be trustworthy; those who are trustworthy, we trust (McLeod, 2015).

This research used triangulation to boost the data's credibility and validate the reliability of the information gathered. Triangulation refers to using multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999 as cited in Carter, et al. (2014). There are four types of triangulations, and those are methods, sources, analysis, and theory or perspective (Denzim, 1978 Patton, 2002 as cited in Odiri, 2019). This study used methods of triangulation whereas it checked out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods. This study used multiple sources of data and then compared and did cross-check them through online artifacts, interviews, and observations as numerous methods to certify imminent findings. Sources triangulation was also employed as well by conducting member checking, whereas the participants received the results of their interviews in written form and confirmed whether it was what they meant or not. In addition, this research also used transferability to explore to what extent the results of this research could be implemented in other participants and contexts. This research adopted the data analysis model by Miles et al. (2014) with its four stages: data collection, condensation, data display, and drawing or verifying conclusion.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The result from the questionnaire answered by participants of this research showed varied answers. Most of the respondents responded that they disagree with the statement that texts on the websites are too long and too difficult for them, with the percentage of the answers being 9.1% strongly disagree, and 63.6% disagree.

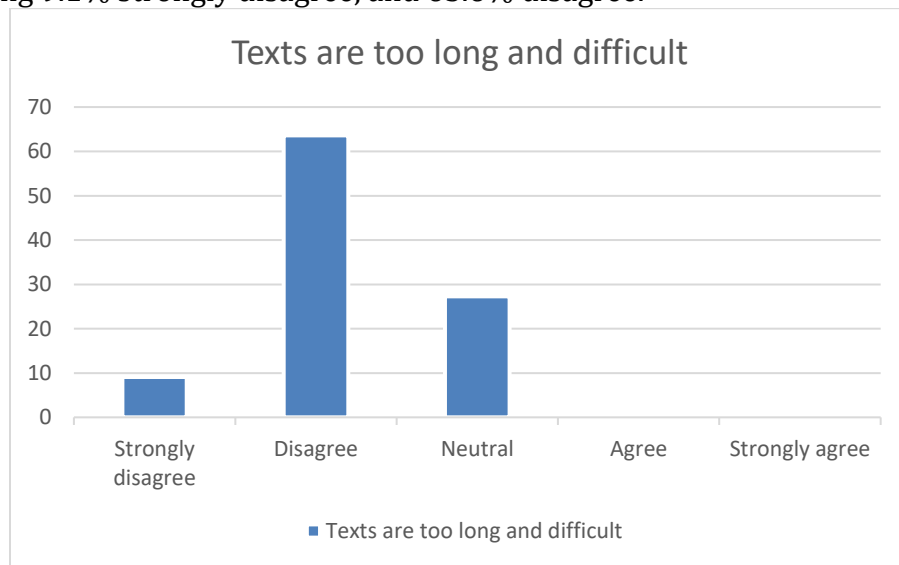


Figure 1 Level of difficulty of the texts

In addition, over 80% of the respondents answered disagreed to the statement that the exercises and practices on the websites are too difficult for them. Furthermore, all of the respondents (100%) mentioned that they could download the materials on the website. Another result showed that more than 70% of the respondents, 72.7% of the respondents, mentioned that they did not spend much money to buy the data so they could access the EL

websites. This is similar to the previous research by Mehdipour & Zerehkafi (2013) that students could get inexpensive opportunities from their mobile phones.

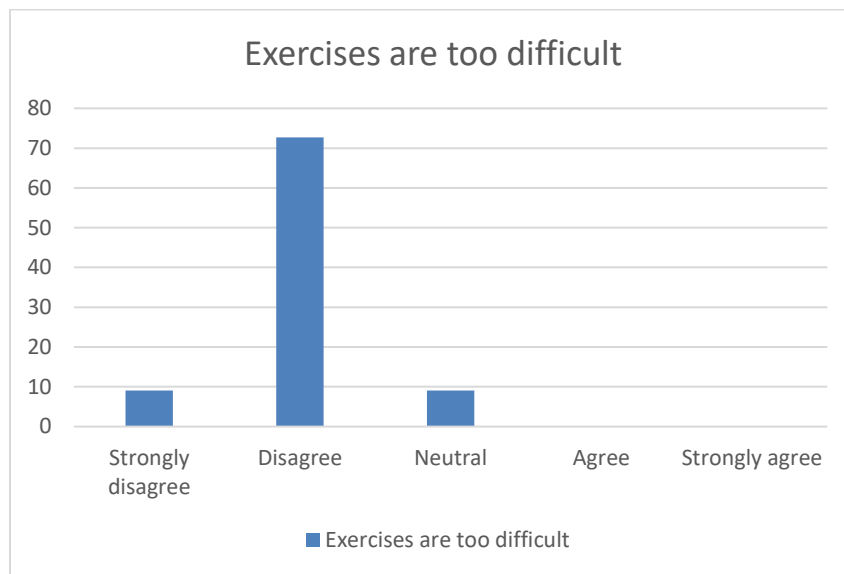


Figure 2 Level difficulty of the exercises

On the other hand, 9.1% of the respondents mentioned that they quickly get tired when learning using EL websites. This is different from what has been mentioned earlier by Mehdipour & Zerehkafi (2013) about the common challenges faced by users when assessing websites.

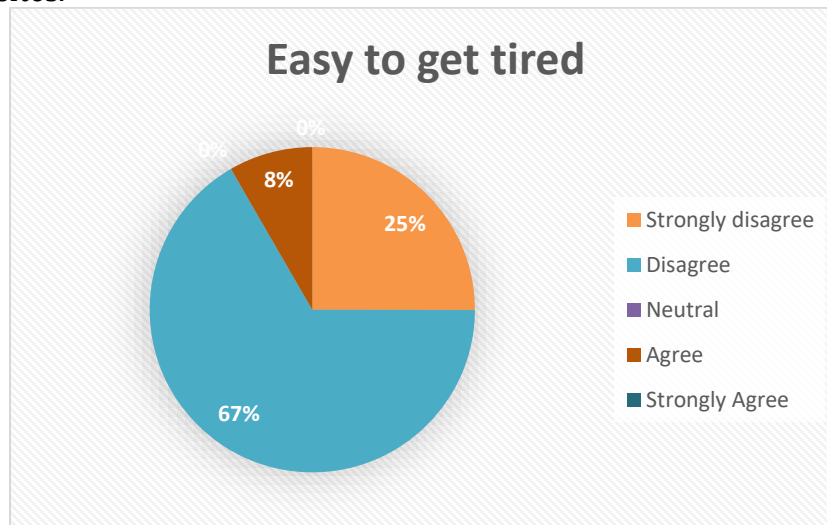


Figure 3 Students' feeling when assessing the websites

The other cluster of questionnaires showed that all respondents (63.6% agree and 36.4% strongly agree) mentioned that they used the EL websites to improve their listening abilities. Similar to the previous statement, the respondents also mentioned that they believed that employing the EL websites could improve their English abilities, not only speaking, but also the two other skills (reading and writing), with 27.3% strongly agree,

63.6% agree, and 9.1% neutral. This is in line with the previous research by Bashori (2018) that students showed positive responses using web-facilitated language learning.

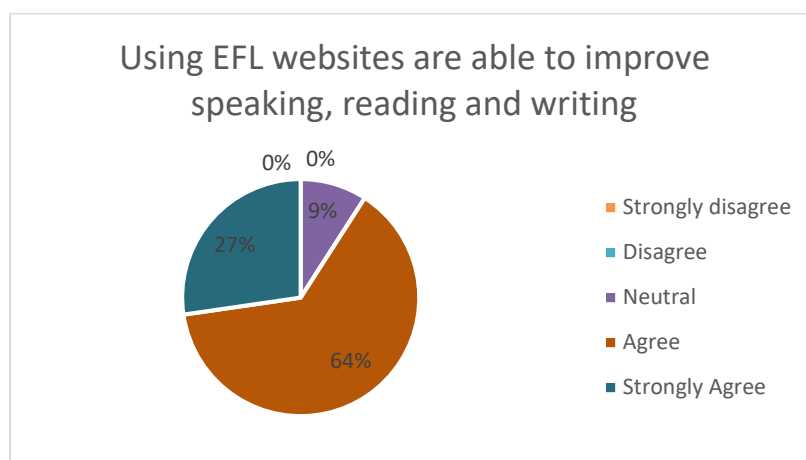


Figure 4 Impacts of accessing EL websites

After classifying and giving the code to the data from online artifacts collected from the online blog of the respondents, some data was found related to the questions of this research. Participant 3 assumed that reading is essential in the English learning process; therefore, she did it on the websites. Although she was pretty late to do the activities on the websites, she indeed did some activities on the websites and felt fun enough doing the exercises on the websites. Below is the excerpt from field note 1 (Catatan Lapangan 1 (CL 1)) taken from the blog of participant 3.

“Participant 3 has done the activities on the websites but because of her business, she regarded herself as a little late to write what she had studied on her blog. According to participant 3, reading is a very important part of English learning. Participant 3 did one level of reading on the BBC Learning English website, which has five activities: matching, reading text, practicing 1, practice 2, and discussion. In the discussion section, participant 3 answered the questions given on the website on her blog. In addition, participant 3 also felt that it was quite fun doing the activity on this unit.” (CL.01).

The data from participant 8, as recorded in the CL.02 mentioned that participant 8 used the website to learn about the present tense. From her note, it could be inferred that participant 8 explained the activities she did on the EL websites and gave examples of what she had learned from the websites. She also mentioned that she had some issues when using the websites. Below is the excerpt from field note 2 (CL 2) taken from participant 8’s field note.

“When doing one of the activities on the websites, participant 8 faced difficulties because of the questions from the quiz do not appear on the screen”. (CL 08)

A little bit different from the previous participants, the data from participant 1 showed that she learned about vocabulary, although it was a little bit difficult but she kept trying to do it. Below is the excerpt from field note 4 (CL 04) taken from participant 8’s field note.

“And this time, she learned about some vocabularies although it was a little bit difficult, participant 01 tried to do it” (CL 04)

In addition, the data also showed that there were some types of questions on the websites, such as True False. After learning from the websites, participant 01 expressed that she could do a discussion and answer the questions by practising the existing questions. It was also written on her blog that what she had done could improve her interest in learning English. Moreover, the other data from online artifacts showed the activities done by participant 02 with the websites. It was mentioned that she did the reading activity on the websites, especially matching words related to the reading passage she read. According to her note, participant 02 played the reading activities, especially in the section of the True-False game, choosing the right verbs and finding the synonym of the words. This is in line with previous research conducted by Vogel (2001) as cited in Shen et al. (2014) that websites help students to practice their language skills.

In the other data from the online artifact, it was mentioned by participant 05 that the quizzes on the English Club websites were too easy for her, however, she was not careful enough when answering the quizzes, so she got 9 from 10 on a quiz that she did. She also tried to implement what she learned from English Club Website, especially vocabulary, in her writing. It could be seen from her writing on her blog as follow.

“When I hear about organic food, I think organic food is healthier, like vegetables and fruits. In addition, agricultural organic only uses fertilizers around us, such as cow or goat manure fertilizer. Besides being better in growth, it also gets good and weighty growth results. Why is it more expensive? Because in my opinion, making or planting organic is very long and painstaking. So, it's no surprise that the price is twice as expensive as non-organic food production.” (CL-07)

Similar to participant 05, participant 06 also gave in the form of online artifacts by accessing and using the English Club website. She used Indonesian and English when writing about this on her blog. She mentioned that she learned about organic and non-organic food on her blog. Participant 06 not only read the articles on the English Club website, but she also did the comprehension quiz provided by the website. The comprehension test was 10 questions with three options for choices presented after reading the text. She got 9 from 10 questions in this section. In addition, she also wrote that it is fun to learn (English) with this website because it is accessible and many lessons learn.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data obtained through questionnaires and online artifacts from the students' blogs in this study, most students mentioned the technical challenges they faced. Participants mentioned that they felt easy to get tired when using websites as supplementary reading materials. In addition, participants also found that they could access the questions on their screen. The finding also showed that the language level used on the websites is higher for some participants, so they felt it was a little bit difficult for them. Beyond these facts, the data also showed benefits for the participants: they did not spend much money to access materials on the websites, could download the materials, and improved their skills.

Teachers need to support students when using websites as supplementary learning materials by facilitating them pre, during, and post the action of using the websites. Students would feel motivated when accessing the websites as supplementary learning materials by giving them support. Students could minimize the challenges or negative

impacts that might they encounter when accessing the websites by receiving guidance from their teachers. In addition, students could maximize the benefits of websites to improve their English skills. Considering this, researchers encourage conducting other studies as future research by involving a bigger population and longer periods to find more specific impacts on language skills. Not only that, it also suggests for further research to conduct pre-test and post-test before giving treatments to the students so the impacts could significantly describe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writers would like to say thank you to all the research participants who were involved and helped in this study. In addition, the writers would also like to thank the reviewers for their recommendations and feedback on this paper.

REFERENCES

- Aly, M.A. (2008). An evaluative study of some online websites for learning and teaching English as a foreign language.
- Boparai, J., Singh, S. and Kathuria, P., 2019. How to design and validate a questionnaire: A guide. *Current Clinical Pharmacology*, 13(4), pp.210-215. <https://doi.org/10.2174/1574884713666180807151328>
- Boulahnane, S., & Abramova, V. S. (2019). Exploring the potential of online English websites in teaching English to non-linguistic major students: BreakingNewsEnglish as example. *Register Journal*, 12(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v12i1.1-12>
- Cadeau, K. M., Gillig, S., & Doriscar, D. (2020). Organizational trustworthiness: Perceptions of the Students, Faculty, and Staff within a University. *Research in Higher Educational Journal*, 38, 1-22.
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 545-547. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547>
- Duff, P. A. (2014). Case study research on language learning and use. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 34, 233-255. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0267190514000051>
- Fauzi, A. Z., & Brilianti, D. F. (2021). Ekuliah website for teaching writing descriptive text during the covid-19 pandemic situation. *Academic Journal Perspective: Education, Language, and Literature*, 9(1), 58. <https://doi.org/10.33603/perspective.v9i1.5286>
- Habasisa, M. (2014). Using case study as a teaching and learning strategy in the teaching of economics: A literature review. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n23p999>
- Huong, L. P. H. & Hung, B. P. (2021). Mediation of digital tools in English learning. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 14(2), 512-528.
- Irfan, M., Kusumaningrum, B., Yulia, Y., & Widodo, S. A. (2020). Challenges during the pandemic: use of e-learning in mathematics learning in higher education. *Infinity Journal*, 9(2), 147. <https://doi.org/10.22460/infinity.v9i2.p147-158>
- Khairuddin, Z., Shukry, A.S., & Sani, N.A. (2014). Reading trends and perceptions towards Islamic English websites as teaching materials. *English Language Teaching*, 7, 124-133.

- Lavigne, A. (2019, October 20). Indonesian internet users based on age range. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@melvinvelia0702/indonesian-internet-user-based-on-age-range-12bfbfd6e3dd9>
- McLeod, C. (2021). *Trust* (E. N. Zalta, Ed.). Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy; Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/trust>
- Mehdipour, Y., & Zerehkafi, H. (2013). Mobile learning for education: Benefits and challenges. *International Journal of Computational Engineering Research*, 3(6), 93-101.
- Odori, A. V. (2019). Awareness and usage of data triangulation among university students in rivers state, Nigeria. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.02.02.62>
- Donohue, K., Katok, E., & Leider, S. (Eds.). (2018). *The handbook of behavioral operations*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119138341>
- Raja, R., & Nagasubramani, P. C. (2018). Impact of modern technology in education. *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research*, 3, 33-35. <https://doi.org/10.21839/jaar.2018.v3iS1.165>
- Rose, S., Spinks, N., & Canhoto, A. (2014). *Management research: Applying the principles* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315819198>
- Sadiku, L. M. (2015). The importance of four skills reading, speaking, writing, and listening in a lesson hour. *European Journal of Language and Literature*, 1(1), 29-31. <https://doi.org/10.26417/ejls.v1i1.p29-31>
- Sakarinto, W. (2021). Arah pengembangan Pendidikan tinggi vokasi di Indonesia. *Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Vokasi Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi*. Retrieved from <https://www.vokasi.kemdikbud.go.id/storage/document/July2021/xTNFJ7ifzGNjC80Fi9er.pdf>
- Shatri, K., Buza, K., & Bunjaku, F. (2021). Teachers' perception on the benefits of using online resources. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (ijET)*, 16(11), pp. 289-307. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v16i11.21407>
- Stahl, N, A. & King, J, R.. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education* 44 (1). 26-28.
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). Validity and reliability of the research instrument; How to test the validation of a questionnaire/survey in a research. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 5(3), 28-36. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3205040>
- Vanishree, A. (2016). Website: an effective tool for learning/teaching listening and speaking skills. *Academicia: an international multidisciplinary research journal*, 6(1), 89-109. <https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.Aspx?target=ijor:aca&volume=6&issue=1&article=008>
- Wardina, U & Jalinus, N. (2019). Kurikulum pendidikan vokasi pada era revolusi industri 4.0. *Jurnal Pendidikan*. 20 (1). 82.