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ELT IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: THE BOUNDARIES AND BEYOND

Exploring EFL Students' Perception of Using Zoom during Learning from Home Period
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Abstract

Online learning as a result of Learning from Home policy became a new alternative for many schools during Covid-19 pandemic. Zoom is one of popular applications to support online learning through video conference. This study aimed to explore EFL students' perception of using Zoom during Learning from Home period. This study used qualitative study with narrative inquiry design. The participants were junior high school students that were sampled purposively. The data were collected through online interview using Whatsapp voice call. They were validated by triangulation and analyzed by following the interactive model analysis. The result of the study revealed that EFL students with supporting online learning facilities showed their positive perception of using Zoom. They believed that Zoom help them get better understanding on English learning material, support interactive communication, improve students' active participation, and facilitate helpful features that support learning activities. Meanwhile, EFL students with poor online learning facilities showed their negative perception of using Zoom. They were left behind since they could not join the virtual class well due to poor internet access, inadequate devices, and unsupported environment at home. In this case, government should provide solution to support the new educational life by developing facilities for people, particularly in small and rural cities.

Keywords: *EFL; Learning from Home; Perception; Zoom.*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of alarming problems since 2020. World Health Organization defined COVID-19 as a communicable disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus, COVID-19 (WHO, 2020). Due to this massive outbreak, the world is coming together to combat the pandemic, collaborating governments and organizations from across industries, sectors, and individuals in various ways. One of which is physical distancing which totally affects many life sectors, especially education.

Indonesian Ministry of Education has issued Learning From Home (LFH) policy via the Decree of Ministry of Education number 36962/ MPK.A/ HK/ 2020 which clearly states that teaching

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learning process must be conducted at home through online platforms for indefinite time. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia instructed schools to hold online learning since March 17th, 2020 especially for COVID-19 affected areas (Mendikbud, 2020b). Soon, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia ordered all educational institutions to implement online learning from March 24th, 2020 due to the increasing victim of COVID-19, and preventing the spread to students, teachers, and all educational staffs (Mendikbud, 2020a). These policies lead students to run distance learning from home and teachers to work from home. Distance learning is implemented through online/ virtual learning because it is done using internet media that helps teachers and students to interact online (Baruah, 2018). It fully changes the learning method from face-to-face learning in classroom setting into online learning (Eko, Atmojo, & Nugroho, 2020). Online learning seems to be a solution to situations and circumstances that conventional class impossible (Wargadinata, et al., 2020). In other words, the global spread of COVID-19 pandemic causes conventional class suspensions contributing to the need of online learning (Moorhouse, 2020).

Instead of the Covid-19 pandemic, the emergency of the use of online platforms in teaching learning process is also initiated based on the fact that students nowadays are digital natives. They are getting accustomed to gadgets and surrounded by online platforms (Suadi, 2021). This fact has given us the chance to pave the way for digital learning (Dhawan, 2020).

Currently, online platforms become a new alternative for most schools with good internet access to conduct online learning. In this circumstance, both teaching learning activities and assessments are moving online through personal mobile phone, laptop, and other handheld devices. In this pandemic period, some online platforms are popular to use, such as Whatsapp, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Moodle, etc. Teachers sometimes need to check students' presence in online class and discuss many things directly by video conference. In other words, video conference provides face-to-face synchronous communication between teachers and students in real-time interaction (Amin, 2020). Many applications are available such as Skype, Zoom, Webex, Google Team, etc. With the suspension of face-to-face learning on campuses, many teachers and students began to use Zoom as an educational tool for delivering and receiving information and continuing educational communication and discussion (Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021). Cuaca Dharma, Asmarani, & Dewi (2017) stated that Zoom is considered to be better than Skype in the teaching learning activity because disconnection issues never happen in Zoom. Furthermore, the audio in Zoom's online video sharing is clearly heard by all participants. Zoom also offers Breakout Rooms. The instructor can use this function to divide the class into smaller groups. The instructor can go to each class to see how the presentation and students are doing. Next, co-annotate and remote control are also considered to be useful. By using remote control feature, the host is able to give the mouse access to the participants. The co-annotate feature gives the access to every participant to use arrow, line, pen, etc.

In the previous studies conducted by Suadi (2021), Archibald, et al. (2019), Rahayu (2020), and Ramsook & Thomas (2019), and other, the participants are all adults: university students. There was limited research that studied the similar topic with junior high school students in English class as participants especially in Indonesia. The various levels of participants with different background and context of English learning perhaps expose more complex findings and impacts related to the topic. Therefore, in this study, the writers are going to conduct a study with junior high school students as the participants in which English is a foreign language in Indonesia. This study aims to figure out EFL students' perception of using Zoom during Learning from Home Period following Theory of perception by Walgito (2020) including 3 components: affective, cognitive, and conative. The topic is considered to be essential since pandemic brings all level of education to online learning in which students must be familiar with.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study using a narrative inquiry method. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) as cited in (Clandinin, 2006) said that narrative inquiry tells the narrative experience including educational experience to comprehend phenomena from participants' viewpoints. The goal of this study is to find out what students perceive about the use of Zoom to enhance distance English learning during Learning from Home Period. Twenty-one students were recruited utilizing a purposive sampling strategy, in which respondents are purposefully picked to be studied (Creswell, 2012). They were students who voluntarily joined Zoom English class. Interview was employed. It focused on EFL students' opinion in using Zoom during Learning from Home period. The participants, one by one, were called through Whats App voice call recorded using smartphone and then transcribed and analyzed qualitatively.

Table 1. The instrument Grid of Interview

Indicators	Sub-indicators	Number of Questions Items
Affective	Students' impression or feeling in interpreting the use of Zoom video conference in supporting distance ELT.	3
	Students' interest and motivation in joining distance ELT via Zoom video conference.	2
	Students' attitude on the use of Zoom video conference in supporting distance ELT related to their English proficiency.	2
	Students' attitude on their engagement in distance ELT via Zoom video conference.	2
Cognitive	Students' attitude on their preference or ignorance on distance ELT via Zoom video conference.	4
	Students' opinion about the features of Zoom platform insupporting distance ELT.	2
Conative	Students' attitude and tendency to behave about the use of Zoom video conference in supporting distance ELT	2

The data was analyzed using the Interactive Model of data analysis with four basic stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Figure 1 depicts the research flow that was used.

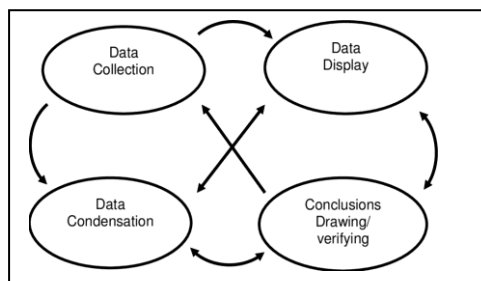


Figure 1. Interactive Model (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014)

The data collection process was done as explained in the previous section, and followed by data triangulation functions as the clarity of research data. Data condensation was the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that emerge in the full body of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, and documents. It was carried out by creating codes and categories to guide the data to research questions. Data was then displayed in narrative way. The data analysis was eventually ended by drawing and verifying the conclusions.

Result and Discussion

Result

The results of the study reveal EFL students' perception in using Zoom during Learning from Home Period. The transcript of interview presents data of each participants' opinion. Since the interviews were in Indonesian, all the direct quotations reported in this section were translated into English. The interview is based on three components of perception, they are affective, cognitive, and conative component (Walgito, 2010).

Most students engaged as the participants in this study show positive perception on Zoom video conference to support distance English Language Teaching. This is indicated by the data that has been done previously in each component of perception such as affective, cognitive, and conative. The following is an elaboration of the findings of each component of perception.

1. Affective Component

The first perception found is affective component. It is about one's feeling or impression in interpreting certain thing. It involves subjective emotional aspect from someone on certain things related to the feeling of like and dislike. In this case, this is the feeling of EFL eight graders in using Zoom during Learning from home period.

The result of interview revealed that most students showed positive feeling of using Zoom during Learning from home period as stated as follow:

“I am happy learning English via Zoom video conference because it makes me easy to ask to teacher if there is something I did not understand. I think I become more active in class.” (I/ICM/01)

ICM gives positive feeling on the use of Zoom video conference to support distance English language teaching. She felt that Zoom video conference helps her discuss and ask unclear learning material to teacher. The learning activity also makes her more active in class because she was given the chance to be active in virtual classroom like what she did in the conventional classroom.

In line with previous informants, ASR told her opinion as follow:

“I like Zoom meeting because I can understand the material better. It makes time well spent. I think it is fun. I am boring with the usual learning activities where teacher did not explain clearly, or using chat. It makes me dizzy.” (I/ASR/01)

ASR gives positive feeling on the use of Zoom video conference to support distance English language teaching. Like previous informants, she felt the learning activity helps her understand the learning material better. The meeting is so much beneficial and fun. She was usually boring with the monotonous learning activity using chatting platform that teacher did not explain the material clearly due to its one-way communication. It is similar with AL:

“I feel more motivated to join English learning because I can easily ask something and teacher directly respond to my questions. It is so much different with previous learning activity where teacher is too long to reply the chat, or even ignore it.” (I/AL/04)

AL stated that previously it was hard for her to get clear explanation from teacher. She had so many questions but there is no discussion session especially using virtual meeting. Discussing via chat is not quite effective. However, informant AC shows her negative feeling on the use of Zoom video conference to support English language teaching as stated below:

“May be I can enjoy learning English via Zoom meeting. Unfortunately, the poor internet connection really disturbed me, so I think I did not like it so far” (I/AC/01)

AC feels that she can actually enjoy the learning activity using Zoom video conference if the internet connection is good. Unfortunately, the situation is different. She has a problem with poor internet connection at home that affects the clearness both visual and audio while learning. It disturbs her focus, so she stated that she did not like the activity.

In addition, learning English using Zoom video conference also motivates students to be focus on learning activity as stated by AL below:

“I think I understand the material more than before. I can focus in learning too. Live meeting makes me not sleepy because there are friends there.” (I/AL/03)

AL stated that she is focused in learning activity using Zoom video conference. The live environment of virtual meeting keeps her focus and not sleepy because she meets teacher and friends virtually on screen. MP also said that she likes the classroom-like situation where she meets everyone on screen as stated as follow:

"I like the learning environment talking or chatting with friends. I feel not alone." (I/MP/03)

The statement is similar with what VHA said that Zoom meeting makes them focus on learning so that they can understand what teacher said and the learning material.

"I am too lazy to learn alone. I feel boring and sleepy. I often procrastinate doing assignments too. Through Zoom meeting, I am more motivated and confident to speak, focus, and I think it is interesting." (I/VHA/03)

VHA feels boring and sleepy when learning alone at home. She is also lazy doing assignments and always procrastinate it because she has less interest in learning alone. Moreover, Zoom video conference encourages her to speak English in virtual meeting and be focus on learning activity.

Different with other informants, AC feels lack of focus learning using Zoom video conference. She prefers learning alone. She is not quite confident especially when she cannot answer teacher's question. The statement is as follow:

"I feel lack of focus having English meeting via Zoom because I see friends on screen. I prefer learning alone. I also feel insecure when others answer questions and I did not." (I/AC/04)

AC also had less time to have virtual meeting because she has to do so many assignments from all subjects as stated below:

"I am actually interested in having English class via Zoom meeting, but for now there are too many assignments from all subjects that I have to do." (I/AC/02)

AC claimed that learning from home means millions assignments to do. Almost all teachers give students assignment in each meeting. She feels that she was quite busy doing them. In addition, students reveals that learning English using Zoom video conference gives the new experience in learning as stated by ASR and ICM:

"Now I know learning experience in a new way." (I/ASR/06)

"I like when teacher gives live quizzes. Having English class via Zoom also gives new insight as I experience using new online platforms for learning. Now I can operate laptop better, and be more confident in trying new features." (I/ICM/06)

ICM feels she experienced new online platform for learning using Zoom. The learning activity includes live quizzes, and this is new for her. She also experienced new skill as being able to be more technological literate. She is now more confident in using gadget and operating new features because she used to do it. AC supports what MP and ICM said as follows:

"It is my new experience. I practice it by myself. (I/MP/06)

"It makes me easier to understand what teacher said, and knows whether my understanding on certain point is true or wrong. Know I am able to mute the microphone or video, having chat, observe materials in screen, and see friends. Unfortunately, I cannot use remote control feature due to the poor internet connection." (I/AC/06)

MP, VHA, and AC got new experienced in using technology for learning. They now understand and are able to use Zoom features. AC is able to mute the microphone or video, chat, and so on even though she cannot use remote control due to the poor internet connection. She is also happy to see friends on screen and observe material while it is explained by teacher. Everyone agrees that Zoom meeting clarifies the learning material whether her understanding about it is true or wrong since she can ask questions or ask teacher to repeat explaining certain points that students were hard to understand, so it helps them understand more about what teacher explains. This is in line with what AL said as follow:

"Now I know the complete explanation from teacher, and know Zoom. I didn't know such platform before. I started to install on my smartphone and then operate the features well even errors happen in the first trial." (I/AL/06)

AL was also satisfied to know the detail explanation about learning material. She also experienced new learning platform, Zoom, for the first time. Similar with some other students she started to use Zoom from the very beginning by installing the application on her smartphone, learning how to use it with trial and error, until she accustom to use the features.

2. Cognitive Component

Cognitive component contains belief of someone on an object. The belief comes from something that has been patterned in the mind. It also comes from what has been seen and has been known. Therefore, it forms an idea, thought, or concept about characteristics of a thing. In this case, it will form an idea, thought, or concept about the use of Zoom during learning from home period.

All students said that the good or bad quality of Zoom video conference indeed affects their English learning as ICM said:

"The quality of display of course affects learning. Using smartphone the screen is small so the text or picture seems small too. Of course it disturbs the understanding on material. It looks better using computer. It is similar with the sound quality. When the sound is unclear, I am also hard to hear what teacher say." (I/ICM/07)

ICM stated that the quality of Zoom video conference affects the learning activity. First is the size of screen. According to her, she is more comfortable to use laptop instead of smartphone because the screen is bigger and it helps her see the font clearly. On the contrary, seeing material on small screen is less comfortable. Second is the audio clearness. When the audio is unclear, it of course disturbed what she heard and affect the learning activity at that time. It is similar with what AC said:

“The bad connection affects the quality of display and sound and make it delay, so I miss the clear explanation, the screen display was also delayed.” (I/AC/07)

AC is one of informants that had a problem with poor internet connection. She said that it leads to the bad quality of Zoom video conference both display and audio. The poor or unstable internet connection makes the teacher's voice is unclear and the display is delayed so that she cannot get the clear and full explanation about the material learned. AL agreed with AC and added the explanation:

“Well. The clear visual display and sound makes me easier to understand the material. When they are unclear, I catch the meaning only by guessing.” (I/AL/07)

According to AL, the unclear display and sound indeed affect what she catch from teacher's explanation. As a result, she can only guess what teacher said and makes sense by herself. However, when the quality of Zoom video conference is good, it helps students especially to understand the material better since they can easily heard what teacher said as VHA and ASR said:

“Of course because the good visual display and sound make me easier to understand the material.” (I/VHA/07)

“It affects a lot. When sound is unclear even the visual display is clear it distracts our understanding on the material explained.” (I/ASR/07)

Students feel that Zoom video conference is effective to communicate during learning from home. Some participants said:

“I can communicate easily with friends and teacher. I can ask something when I need it. I can also see friends condition.” (I/AC/10)

“When there is exercise questions I can easily ask in Zoom meeting and teacher can discuss the answer.” (I/ASR/08)

ICM and AC need teacher's fast response when asking questions. Zoom meeting provide a room where everyone can ask question and teacher directly answer. It is different with using chat where they have to wait the reply that mostly not as soon as the message sent.

Instead of giving good impact on communication, most students also said that Zoom video conference encourage them to be more active in learning during pandemic as stated below:

“Of course it helps me understand the material easily. I can ask directly. Usually I was passive. I only read material or do assignment and fill the presence list.” (I/AL/08)

AL admitted that she was previously passive during learning process. Using non-video conference meeting, AL only read learning material that teacher sent, do assignments, and fill the presence list. Using Zoom video conference, AL became more active during meeting. She asked to teacher directly. The unique fact is that AL was happy when she understands the material and can answer teacher's questions. It makes her more confident to be active during meeting.

1.3 Conative Component

Conative component is related to the tendency of further action. It indicates the intensity of attitude related to someone's tendency on certain things. The conative component reveals about someone's attitude and tendency to behave or react on certain object of the perception. In this case, this is about the EFL eight graders' tendency and further action to the use of Zoom during learning from home period.

Most students expect that Zoom video conference can be an alternative to use in English class during learning from home as it has the most similar pattern with the conventional learning activity in the classroom, especially the communication and discussion session (I/ICM/10), ASR said that she needs it since it helps her understand learning material better (I/ASR/10), and AC claimed that she wants it because of the better communication and she was easier to observe learning material while teacher explain it (I/AC/12). AL also stated that she need Zoom video conference because she can feel the real classroom situation by seeing friends as stated below:

"I hope it can be implemented permanently because I can feel the togetherness." (I/AL/10)

However, VHA have different opinion with other students. She does not want the Zoom video conference implemented permanently in English class due to the poor internet connection and high cost as stated below:

"I disagree if Zoom meeting is used permanently because many friends have problems with internet connection and cost." (I/VHA/10)

The findings show that students with good internet connection and adequate gadget support the use of Zoom video conference in English class. On contrast, background of students' inadequate facilities did not expect the same thing. This is also similar with their next opinion about using Zoom video conference in all subjects. All students except VHA have almost similar opinion.

"I hope it can be implemented in all subjects because I have no problem with the internet connection, gadget and cost." (I/ICM/11)

ICM is one of students with no facilities problem, so she enjoys the activity and hope it will be used during the learning from home. In addition, AC suggests that Zoom video conference can be implemented as long as the schedule is clear and teacher give less assignment as stated as follows:

"I agree to be implemented in all subjects but with the clear schedule and less assignments. Learning via Zoom meeting is almost similar with learning in the classroom at school. It is better than only using whatsapp because there is too many assignments and unclear explanation." (I/AC/11)

Similar with VHA's other opinion, she also disagree if Zoom video conference is implemented in all subjects. She truly has a problem with internet connection, gadget, and cost.

"I do not want it to be implemented in all subjects because it costs more money and battery." (I/VHA/11)

Discussion

In learning English, effective and direct communication is important since students can follow, imitate, have question and answer, and do exercise directly in every meeting. The findings of the study are in line with some previous study worked in the similar topic. Students assume that learning English through Zoom makes them easy to communicate with teachers, as most students agreed that they could communicate easily in an e-learning environment (Rahayu, 2020) since they have the real role model, teacher, who guide them in learning. It also sounds easier for students to understand the lesson than they have to follow one-way learning material individually. One-way communication or two-way indirect communications is something challenging in distance learning. In fact, Effective learning process happens when both teachers and students interact and actively participate in the learning activities (Abdillah & Darma, 2020). This is because students will learn how to think critically and improve their intellectual development when they are active in the classroom (Mustapha, 2011). In addition, relatively high level of online learner-teacher interaction in both cases happens when an online teacher presents content knowledge and also when the teacher asks students questions (Li, 2016).

A similar research came from Suadi (2021). He claimed that Zoom allows the users, in this context lecturers and learners, to be acting freely like they do in real traditional classrooms. It opens opportunity for students to give feedback directly to lecturer face to face. The lecturer also can organize the online class via Zoom as he/she wants synchronizing with the course material he delivers. Having lesson via Zoom is almost similar with the real face-to-face learning activity in classroom. In language learning, students need more than instruction and command from their teachers as in the traditional class. This is a challenge for the teachers to be able to motivate their students to be focus and serious in class (Ulfa & Bania, 2019) since success in learning English will depend on motivation. In other words, learning and motivation are closely related to each other and profoundly affect one another (Jefiza, 2019). Similar with communication in traditional face-to-face, students were able to have informal chatting before the lesson starts such as to greet each other (Rahayu., 2020). Teacher is still being the main guide for them to do step by step learning. Therefore, the good communication is an appropriate effort to support students' understanding on English material and participation in learning. Students' active engagement in classroom is important in order to achieve effective learning and plays an important role in the success online teaching and learning quality (Gray & Diloreto, 2016).

Online learning gives different perspective on students. For some of them it is fine to understand material without any help from teacher or friends, but the other students could not cope with the situation, especially they who study in small cities are not quite independent to learn and find resources by themselves. They need more clear explanation and interesting presentation especially the

pictures or videos. In other words, learning English through video conference gives the chance for students to enlarge both their language learning experience and their speaking proficiency by engaging in real communicative tasks (Alshahrani, 2016). Moreover, the communication via chat is sometimes not quite effective since it may take long time to have discussion due to the slow response or even misunderstand about the explanation. Online Zoom tutorial sessions provided good interactive help (Shadat, et al., 2017). In periods of crisis, the ability to maintain communication is critical to allow accurate and up to date information to be disseminated (Wotherspoon, Mannion, and Harlow, 2020).

Another findings of the study revealed that online learning though Zoom video conference create more formal classroom as traditional learning since students have to be ready for joining lesson by showing that they sit properly, well dressed, and prepare learning tools. This is in line with (Lowenthal & West, 2020) that Zoom can reduce feelings of social isolation and foster a sense of community among students. By having video conference meeting, the classroom situation is more live. Students can see friends and teacher on screen and paying attention on teacher explanation. Video conference also provides autonomy and drawing upon students' topic interests may lead to greater levels of FL motivation, engagement and achievement, while still meeting the objective of the lesson (Hu and McGeown, 2020).

Moreover, virtual meeting can also be used to determine and maintain emotional connection with students (Borup, West, & Graham, 2012). In addition, a study carried out by Fadila (2018) found that motivation affected directly to the students' willingness to communicate in English. Thus, these results of studies indicated that learners' language acquisition has positively correlated with the degree of motivation they had (Fadilah, 2018).

In the other side, students also gave opinion that the uses of Zoom is challenging. The students' perception is supported by the following previous studies. The features of Zoom may be difficult to access at first (Dharma, Asmarani, & Dewi, 2017). Students also mentioned the bad internet bandwidth gives effect such as unclear voice in online platforms, bad delivered materials, lack of direct lecturer-students interaction, noisy and wasting a lot of internet quota. Moreover, some others rated it is not affordable in terms of internet data consumption, low economy class factor, and bad signal of internet. Some of their participants had to deal with slow internet network, system failure (computers or Smartphones stopped working) and difficulty for locating other participants' posts. participants complained that they are constrained by unstable internet connection (Ramsook and Thomas, 2019). Hence, slow internet connection and system failure obstructed them to perform speed/responsive writing as their chats were pending (Rinekso & Muslim, 2020). The internet speed determines the smoothness of the learning process (Dharma et al., 2017). This also agrees with some other studies. First, Lowenthal et al. 2020; Ferns et al., 2020 in Alfadda & Mahdi (2021) stated that students using Zoom experienced difficulties such as unreliable internet connection, lack of quiet environment, and inadequate speakers or microphones. Second, Archibald, et al., (2019) claimed that

students faced difficulty during the meeting via Zoom due to unreliable Internet connection or use of outdated machines or mobile devices, resulting in dropped calls, lost call connection, or lag. For students who do not have access to education, this situation can open up a very serious and quite long-term set of problems. These findings could be used as an input for the provider of synchronous learning to enhance the features, so that they could be accessed and operated by using broader types of gadgets (Novawan et al., 2020).

Seeing from the two-side perspectives, the benefits of the use of Zoom in ELT is that it can help students to practice English, make teaching-learning process more effective, and facilitate the lecturer-students interaction and communication. However, there are some disadvantages of the use of Zoom. The dominant problems to apply them are bad internet connection, low economy class and lack of supporting facility for internet bandwidth, for instance free Wifi at campus and around.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the result of the study, it can be stated that students' perception in using Zoom is influenced by some factors: participants' own motivation, the originality and preparation of the teachers, as well as helpful gadgets, cost, and surroundings. Therefore, the government should provide solution to support the new educational life by developing facilities for people, particularly in small and rural cities, such as collaborating with internet providers to add signal towers or even providing free wifi access to students, or facilitating adequate devices for them who need it, so that online learning with various platforms can be effective and run well.

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