Abstract: The present study seeks to answer the problem regarding the appropriate media to teach speaking in synchronous virtual classroom when the students have technology issues. The formentioned technology issues are related to remote internet speed and connection, electronic devices, and technological literacy issues. Through purposive sampling technique, 30 EFL students who are selected as sample should proceed a set of speaking tests and questionnaire after being taught in synchronous virtual classroom for one semester using various remote Instructional media when Covid-19 pandemic as a hinder to face-to-face interaction. The result will contribute to teachers and other researchers for selecting the appropriate synchronous virtual classroom media as the solution to teach speaking to EFL students with technology issues.

Keywords: speaking, synchronous, technology issues, virtual

I. INTRODUCTION

Education system has been shifted from offline teaching to online teaching for these past three years due to Covid-19 pandemic. Online teaching means that the teaching process is performed virtually using electronic devices and network connection. The learning media used in online teaching as mentioned in several previous studies are such as social media, video conferencing application, e-learning and many online teaching platforms such as Zoom, Google Meeting, Google classroom, and WhatsApp [1]-[4]. The aforementioned learning media have been used in teaching language skills especially teaching speaking in virtual classroom.

Teaching speaking requires appropriate strategies and the success of teaching speaking indicates the success of language learning. This assumption is raised from the consideration that speaking skill is typically a sign of successful language [5]. However, the speaking classroom using online teaching system raises some issues especially regarding teaching speaking online during pandemic.

Prior to the discussion related with the issues of problems in teaching speaking virtually during pandemic, empirical studies showed that the problems in teaching language online during pandemic had been investigated since 2020. Identical issues were identified from several research, such as technical issue, academic issue, communication issue and the quality of the online learning itself [3], [6]-[7].

Meanwhile, the issues in teaching speaking virtually during pandemic concerning students' attitude, obstacles, motivation and participation during virtual speaking class were investigated by several researchers and drawn into some conclusions. First, the problems in technological advances and wi-fi connection led to students' neglected attitude toward learning speaking skills online [8]. Second, the obstacles that the students experience during the learning process, particularly when it comes to learning to communicate successfully during a pandemic [9]. This means that learning speaking in virtual classroom is a kind of hurdle among the students. Then, reference [9] also states that integrating social media and videoconferencing tools is critical in overcoming learners’ hurdles to speaking the target language during the outbreak.

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Empirical studies mostly highlighted the issues related with the problems or challenges occurred in both online language classroom and online speaking classroom. However, few explored the technological issues and how to cope with them. Then, the present study attempts to fill the gap. Hence, the present study attempts to address research questions as follows:

1. What are technological issues occurred among students in synchronous virtual speaking classroom during pandemic?
2. What are alternative media recommended to use in synchronous virtual speaking classroom during pandemic?
3. What are strategies contributed to students’ speaking practice in synchronous virtual classroom when technological issues appeared?

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive research method with quantitative approach. The study was conducted in one university located in Garut, West Java, Indonesia. The researchers selected thirty freshmen as sample using purposive sampling technique. The sample was divided into three categories such as high achievers, middle achievers, and low achievers. The categorization was obtained from the result of Speaking test administered to one hundred students. Then, the researchers took ten high achievers, ten middle achievers and ten low achievers to be respondents in this study and to be provided questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisting of twenty items inquired issues related with learning speaking in virtual classroom synchronously which had been held during pandemic in one university majoring English Education Program. The twenty items were divided into three parts: identification of technological issues during synchronous speaking class, identification of alternative media recommended to use during synchronous speaking class, and strategies contributed to assist students’ speaking practice in synchronous virtual classroom when technological issues appeared.

To address the research questions, the researchers applied quantitative analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis through Microsoft Excel assistance as a tool to analyze the research instrument. The researchers inputted all the data into an excel spreadsheet, then computed the mean scores and standard deviation to display the data in percentages.

III. RESULTS

The findings of the present study addressed the research questions concerning the technological issues identified during synchronous virtual speaking classroom and how to cope with them. In this section, the results are presented into three subsections: technological issues, recommended alternative media and strategies contributed to students’ speaking practice.

A. Technological Issues

The questionnaire data showed that the technological issues identified during synchronous virtual speaking classroom covered four factors such as internet access speed and network issue, internet quota issue, smartphone battery issue, and technological literacy and competence issue. The results of questionnaire data are displayed in the following figures:
Based on the figure 1 above, the number of percentages for item number 1 in the questionnaire was 77.3%. The percentage represented that the respondents approved that internet access speed and network issue as technological issue occurred during synchronous virtual speaking classroom. The internet access became the issue when the speed was slow due to network problem for instance. Meanwhile, the network connection became the issue when the connection was lost.

Based on the figure 2 above, the number of percentages for item number 2 in the questionnaire was 74%. The percentage represented that the respondents approved that internet quota issue as technological issue occurred during synchronous virtual speaking classroom. The internet quota became issue when the quota was limited or used up. This was indeed a problem since students required sufficient internet quota to participate in the synchronous virtual speaking classroom.

Based on the figure 3 above, the number of percentages for item number 3 in the questionnaire was 72%. The percentage represented that the respondents approved that smartphone battery issue as technological issue occurred during synchronous virtual speaking classroom. The smartphone battery became issue when the battery was low. This was indeed a problem since students required to utilize smartphone in the synchronous virtual speaking classroom.
Based on the figure 4 above, the number of percentages for item number 4 in the questionnaire was 54%. The percentage represented that the respondents neither approved nor disapproved that technological literacy and competence as technological issue occurred during synchronous virtual speaking classroom. The result of the questionnaire indicated neutral which means that not all respondents were technological illiterate. Therefore, the competence of technology was not identified as issue in the synchronous virtual speaking classroom.

**B. Recommended Alternative Media**

Regarding alternative media recommended to use during learning speaking in synchronous virtual classroom, the questionnaire data revealed two applications, namely WhatsApp and Zoom Meeting. However, each application played distinctive roles as utilized in synchronous virtual speaking classroom.

Based on the figure 5 above, the number of percentages for item number 10 in the questionnaire was 79.3%. The percentage represented that the respondents approved that WhatsApp could be an alternative media when there was internet connection issue occurred during synchronous virtual speaking classroom. As the dialogue practice in speaking class should be conducted via WhatsApp when technological issue occurred, the data indicated that the dialogue practice via WhatsApp could be conducted through WhatsApp Audio Call or WhatsApp Video Call as presented in the figure 6 below:

Figure 5 The data of students selected WhatsApp as alternative media when there is internet connection issue

Based on the figure 6 above, the number of percentages for item number 10 in the questionnaire was 64%. The percentage represented that the respondents approved the dialogue practice is better conducted via WhatsApp Audio Call or Video Call.
When the teaching of speaking was held synchronously via Zoom Meeting, the students occasionally experienced lost internet connection or technical trouble due to internet access speed. This was represented in the figure 7 below which revealed the number of percentages for item number 5 in the questionnaire data was 69.3%.

Figure 7 The data of students selected Zoom Meeting as the media where technological issues mostly occurred

The percentage shown in the figure 7 above represented that the respondents approved Zoom Meeting as the media where technological issues mostly encountered in the synchronous virtual speaking classroom. Meanwhile, WhatsApp was not approved as the media where technological issues mostly encountered in the synchronous virtual speaking classroom by the respondents. As shown in the figure 8 below that the number of percentages for item number 6 in the questionnaire was 56.7%. This indicated that the respondents did not frequently encounter technological issue during synchronous virtual speaking classroom via WhatsApp.

Figure 8 The data of students selected WhatsApp as the media where technological issues mostly occurred

Meanwhile, regarding the media which assisted the students more in understanding the speaking material and theories explained by the lecturers, the data revealed that there were no significant differences between WhatsApp and Zoom Meeting.

Figure 9 The data of students selected speaking material and theories are more understandable when being explained via Zoom Meeting
The number of percentages for item number 8 as displayed in the figure 9 was 69.3%. The percentage represented that speaking material and theories were more understandable when being explained by the lecturer via Zoom Meeting. This was approximately near the percentage for item number 9 as displayed in the figure 10 below:

Figure 10 The data of students selected speaking material and theories are more understandable when being explained via WhatsApp

Based on the figure 10 above, the number of percentages for item number 9 in the questionnaire was 66.7%. The percentage indicated that there was no significant difference in terms of making the students easily understand the material and theory of speaking whether using WhatsApp or Zoom Meeting.

C. Strategies Contributed to Students’ Speaking Practice

The questionnaire data revealed that there were four strategies used to assist students’ speaking practice in synchronous virtual classroom. First, the impromptu questions and answers among students contributed to make students practice speaking more.

Figure 11 The data of students selected impromptu questions and answers as the strategy contributing in students’ speaking practice

As presented in the figure 11 above, the percentage for item number 13 in the questionnaire was 86%. The percentage indicated that the respondents strongly approve impromptu questions and answers contributed to students’ speaking practice in synchronous virtual classroom.

Second, role play was regarded as the strategy contributing to make students practice more in speaking classroom. As presented in the figure 12 below, the percentage for item number 14 in the questionnaire was 89.3%. The percentage indicated that the respondents strongly approve role play as the strategy contributing in students’ speaking practice in synchronous virtual speaking classroom.
Third, imitating the way the lecturer spoke English in the speaking class was regarded as the strategy contributing in students’ speaking practice. As shown in the figure 13 below that the percentage for item number 20 in the questionnaire was 89.3%. This indicated that the respondents strongly approve that imitating the way the lecturer spoke English contributed to students’ speaking practice in the synchronous virtual speaking classroom.

Finally, providing feedback to the students could be the strategy for lecturer to assist students in practicing speaking English. As shown in the figure 14 below, the percentage for item number 15 in the questionnaire was 92%. This indicated that the respondents strongly approve lecturer’s feedback as providing big contribution for their speaking practice as it hit the highest percentage among all items in the questionnaire data.
IV. DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected through questionnaire, the results of the study revealed that during learning speaking in synchronous virtual classroom, the majority of students had technological issues such as internet access speed, network connection, internet quota, and the durability of smartphone battery. However technological literacy and competence were not regarded as significant issue to cope with in the synchronous virtual speaking classroom.

Regarding to what media the technological issues often occurred in, the majority of the respondents mentioned that the technological issues often occurred more in Zoom Meeting application. As an alternative media to choose when there is internet connection problem, the majority of respondents pointed WhatsApp as the appropriate media.

However, majority of respondents felt that both Zoom Meeting and WhatsApp could be used for the lecturer to explain the material in Speaking class. The respondents considered that when the lecturer sent the file via WhatsApp, the students could open the file to learn asynchronously outside the schedule and the voice note containing the lecturer's explanation could also be relistened later. Similarly, the majority of the respondents also considered dialogue practice could be conducted both in Zoom Meeting and Voice call or video call in WhatsApp.

Moving to the discussion of how the strategies used by the lecturer provided contribution toward the students' speaking practice, majority of the respondents considered speaking activity such as impromptu questions and answers given by the lecturer every meeting via Zoom Meeting and doing role play helped them practice their speaking. The majority of respondents also admitted to imitate the way the lecturer spoke English. Moreover, almost all the respondents claimed that feedback from the lecturer very important as it helped them correct their mistake and resulting in their speaking improved. Finally, only more than half of the respondents agreed to use English 100% in Speaking class. This indicated that the students would like to improve their speaking skill by practicing speaking using English without the interference of mother tongue.

V. CONCLUSION

Appropriate media to choose in online Speaking Class the lecturer can consider is video conferencing application combined with Messenger Application as an alternative when technology issues occurred. The examples of media can be used are such as Zoom Meeting and WhatsApp as figured out in this study. The strategies of teaching speaking which help the students practice their speaking are such as impromptu questions and answers to make them accustomed to speaking without any preparation in advance, doing role play and giving feedback.

The lecturer should provide a good example in speaking since the students imitate the way their lecturer speak English therefore in distance learning circumstances, synchronous mode is the best choice for teaching speaking in a way that the students can imitate the lecturer's speaking in real time as well as getting the lecturer's feedback for their speaking.

REFERENCES


