Arabic as Foreign Language Learning in Pandemic COVID-19 as Perceived by Students and Teachers

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Abstract---Teaching and learning process using mobile applications becomes one of the alternative tools to substitute face-to-face learning during Pandemic COVID-19. The lecture process during the period has been experienced since March 2020 until the end of the even semester of the academic year 2019/2020. There were various obstacles felt by lecturers and students in the courses. Under normal conditions, learning Arabic as a foreign language is still faced with various problems. Since there are no specific studies in this issue that have been conducted by experts for the Indonesian context, we are interested to identify the perception of students and lecturers on the quality of the Arabic teaching and learning process. This research

uses qualitative method where the sources of data are students and lecturers of Arabic language education study program Faculty of Islamic Studies, Muhammadiyah University of West Sumatra. The data collection was taken from an interview by phone. The finding showed that the student's and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of the online learning process are negative. Then, students' and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of online Arabic learning outcomes are negative.

***Keywords*---**Arabic foreign language, COVID-19, language education, language learning, language skills, linguistic aspects, linguistic skills, mobile application.

Introduction

Education in Indonesia underwent various drastic changes caused by the emergence of a coronavirus or the COVID-19 pandemic that has been endemic since March. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia issues several policies in implementing education through the Ministry of Education and Culture Circular Letter No. 4 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Education Policy during Emergency COVID-19 which states that starting from March 16, 2020, all forms of learning activities in all educational institutions in Indonesia are closed or diverted into learning from home, including at Higher Education. So that all educational institutions in Indonesia and even throughout the world (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020) began to implement online learning systems during the pandemic. This learning system utilizes computer technology and mobile gadgets with a variety of platforms that support the implementation of the teaching and learning process (Ritonga et al., 2020). Applications such as Zoom, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, etc. are some of the most widely used applications.

According to Siahaan, the use of computer and network technology in the learning process makes students learn anywhere and anytime. The learning process will be more interesting, easier to understand, and more efficient (Siahaan, 2018). A different opinion was expressed by Swan who stressed that online learning can also make students feel alienated (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Before the COVID-19 outbreak, Indonesia's education minister, Nadiem Makarim, had carried out a revolution in the field of education by launching an independent campus or learning independence. This policy leads to the implementation of online learning through platforms provided for education. When the COVID-19 outbreak occurred, inevitably all educational institutions had to implement the imperfect policy. Because there is no ready prepared for the utilization of network technology in the world of education which raises various problems that cannot be avoided. This can be seen from the various difficulties in implementing online learning processes during a pandemic encountered by both students and educators. Problems such as not all educators understand the network system well, the limitations of the availability of students' internet networks to follow the learning process, and other infrastructure limitations that have not yet maximally utilized network technology are some of the problems that arise in the implementation of online learning.

Regarding online learning, Hikmat conducted a study on the effectiveness of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic using the Zoom and WhatsApp applications. The research was conducted on 100 students consisting of students attending theoretical lectures, practicum, a mixture of theory and practicum, and on-job-training students (Hikmat et al., 2020). The results indicate that online learning using zoom and WhatsApp is only effective when learning is theoretical, whereas, for practicums and on-job-training, online learning is less effective (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). In comparison with the research above, this study also discusses online learning. However, this research focuses on students' perceptions of online learning, and the effect of learning Arabic by using online methods.

Anhusadar researched to determine the perceptions of Early Childhood Islamic Education (Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini–PIAUD,) students towards online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In his research, Anhusadar analyzed 60 semesters of 4 PIAUD students at IAIN Kendari. The study applied a descriptive survey method. Data collected through interviews and questionnaires. The study found that out of 60 students only 1 student stated that they truly understood lecture material through online learning. In other words, 84% of students prefer classical learning to online learning (Anhusadar, 2020). This study also looked at student perceptions. However, in this study, the research was conducted on 30 students and 6 Arabic lecturers. In addition, the difference between this research and the above research is in the applied research method.

Pakpahan & Fitriani (2020) researched to analyze the use of information technology in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at Bina Sarana Informatics University, the research data was collected through observation, literature study, and interviews. The results showed that the use of information technology has a very important role in the implementation of online learning amid the coronavirus pandemic19. The learning process can run well through information technology that has developed rapidly. Several platforms are used, among others, e-learning, Google Classroom, Whatsapp, Zoom, and other applications. In addition, the availability of the internet network also has a positive impact on connecting lecturers and students in the learning process.

From the studies mentioned above, no studies have been found that lead to an analysis of the quality of the process and the quality of learning outcomes conducted online. Therefore, this aspect will be used as arable in this research by linking it to Arabic learning. The quality of the learning process as agreed by the experts can be seen from the presentation of the material (Chalmers, 2008), the use of appropriate methods and media (UNESCO, 2018), communication is not only one-way, the realization of student motivation, good learning management, before closing the process, there is feedback and conclusion, and there are assessments.

The quality of Arabic learning results can be found from the achievement of students on four Arabic language skills (Thu'aimah, 2008). From the *istima'* aspect, students can identify images, words, sentences and re-pronounce them as they hear (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2016; Calafato & Tang, 2019). While the *maharah*

kalam aspect of Arabic learning results can be said to be quality when students can answer orally what is asked (Nurhidayati et al., 2020; Wekke, 2015), having the ability to recite what they have heard, students can express sentences in different patterns. The quality of arabic learning results can also be seen from the *maharah qiro'ah* (Aprianto et al., 2020), which is when students can read Arabic sentences, able to answer questions according to the content of existing reading discourse, can criticize the reading text (Emam et al., 2014; Ritonga et al., 2020). As for the quality of the results of learning Arabic from the aspect of *kitabah* ability is when students can write the letters they hear (Rahma et al., 2017; Ritonga et al., 2020) are adept at writing and combining existing words, have the ability to make sentences and paragraphs (Muzaffar, 2017).

The quality of learning using online applications in several universities has shown effective results (Nguyen, 2015), as well as learning at the Universitas Terbuka (Hanafi et al., 2008), learning at Binus University (Adrianto et al., 2017; El Omari, 2015). However, it must be recognized that some higher education institutions have not utilized online media before the Pandemic COVID-19 period. The emergence of Pandemic COVID-19 makes many institutions difficult to ensure the continuity of learning. One of the alternative applications can be done by using online applications (Ritonga et al., 2020; Mårtensson et al., 2012).

Indicators of the quality of the learning process and Arabic learning outcomes as described above and their relation to online learning are interesting things that can be investigated in depth about how student's and lecturers' perceptions of the problem. This study is interesting because of the statements of previous researchers about the problems encountered in online learning (Fojtík, 2018), (Windiarti et al., 2019). The weakness in implementing online learning is the reduced interaction between lecturers and students in the process (Gillett-Swan, 2017; Maluch et al., 2015), which makes it difficult for students to understand the material delivered through online learning, especially in foreign language learning that requires more intense direct interaction between students and lecturers to achieve learning objectives.

Having seen various problems that occur in the implementation of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, this research determines the students' perceptions of the online lecture system during the Pandemic COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of learning Arabic online. Some of the research described above has succeeded in discovering how learning outside of COVID-19 and during COVID-19, but the aspect that has not been disclosed is how students and lecturers perceive the quality of the process and the quality of results, therefore this study focuses on both aspects.

Methods

A qualitative study was used to describe data in the form of words and sentences. The data source of this research is students and lecturers of Arabic education study programs, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Muhammadiyah University, West Sumatra. The selection of informants is based on the idea that they know a lot about the reality of Arabic learning based on knowledge and experience. The sampling technique in this study is total sampling, meaning is that the number of

populations equals the number of samples (Taherdoost, 2016; Diab, 2006), this is because the small population does not prevent researchers from finding data from them. Therefore, the research sample can be described in Table 1.

Table 1
Research samples

No	Category	Total
1	Lecturers	6
2	Students	30
	Total	36

From the number of samples mentioned above, data were obtained through telephone interviews. Researchers conducted structured interviews, i.e. researchers arranged some questions that were interrelated with the research theme. Then the researchers called the informants to get data about their perceptions of the quality of online learning during COVID-19. This data collection technique was used because of conditions that did not allow researchers to meet with them. Data obtained through interviews are then analyzed according to a qualitative approach that begins with coding that includes defining. The data is then processed and visualized to see the relationship of each word to the statement that will be raised.

To ensure the validity of the data obtained, researchers verify through private chat with WhatsApp or by calling an informant. The content of the material analyzed in the study and the expected target of the latest findings are as in Figure 1.
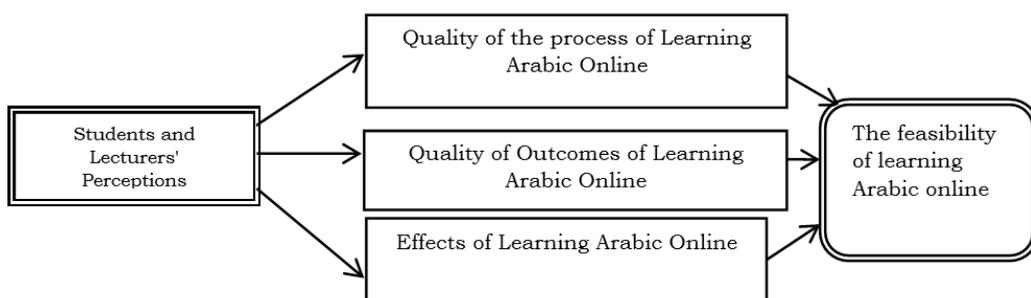

Figure 1. Material research

Results and Discussions

As explained above, this research aims to express descriptively the quality of the process and results of Arabic learning conducted online, and the effect of online Arabic learning following the perceptions of students and lecturers.

Students and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of the Arabic learning process

Following the results of interviews with students and lecturers of Arabic education conducted through mobile phones, it is known that the data related to students 'and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of the process of Arabic online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Students and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of the learning process

No.	Aspects	Informants	Responses
1	Opening	Students	• There is no explanation of the learning objectives. • Lecturers start lectures sometimes after a few minutes.
		Lectures	• In learning that uses the Zoom and Google Classroom applications learning objectives are still explained. • Learning that uses Edmodo and WhatsApp applications directly on the material. • The use of the Zoom and Google Classroom application must be maximized by considering the condition of the internet network in the area where students live.
2	Presentation	Students	• Presentation of unstructured material. • Students do not understand the material. • To understand the material, students search for important terms on the internet.
		Lectures	• There is no satisfaction in delivering the material. • Presentation of the material seemed just to fill lecture hours. • Learning using Zoom and Google Classroom applications makes many students who do not participate due to internet network reasons and limited internet data.
3	Method and media	Students	• The method used is monotonous and does not vary if conducting lectures through the WhatsApp application. • Discussions and interactions are not well developed. • The media used is not like when face to face learning
		Lectures	• The method used depends on the application used, as well as the media used depends on the platform used.

			• Lecturers use the method following the application used, while the use of standard methods in language learning is hardly functional.
4	Learning and communication management	Students	• Attendance is done following the Google Form format on each lecture. • Communication is not built especially when learning through WhatsApp and Edmodo
		Lectures	• Attendance filled in by students then moved to siakad.umsb. • Communication with students runs as it is. • Learning management is not as good as face-to-face, due to various factors such as students who are not on time to attend lectures. Communication often goes in only one direction. • Students are reminded one day before learning for the lecture tomorrow, whether by Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Classroom, or Edmodo with the intention that all goes well, in reality not all students follow the information disseminated so that when learning takes place the management of learning does not can be implemented well.
5	Closing	Students	• Feedback is rarely done. • Conclusions are often absent. • Many students do not attend lectures until the end.
		Lectures	• The assessment is given in the form of giving assignments to students related to the material discussed. • Learning that involves students as a whole rarely last until the end, so learning is sometimes closed without the conclusion of the material presented, but even so, we still leave a message about what students will do about the learning material that has been discussed. • The learning process is closed unlike when face-to-face learning, and if learning is carried out through WhatsApp and Edmodo it is sometimes only carried out until attendance is taken. While through Zoom and Google Classroom, sometimes it comes to conclusions, although many students have already left.

From the data above, it can be seen that student's and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of the Arabic learning process can be seen from their opinions on the process of starting learning, presenting material, using learning methods and

media, communication patterns between students and lecturers, closing learning. The data above is then visualized as in Figure 2.
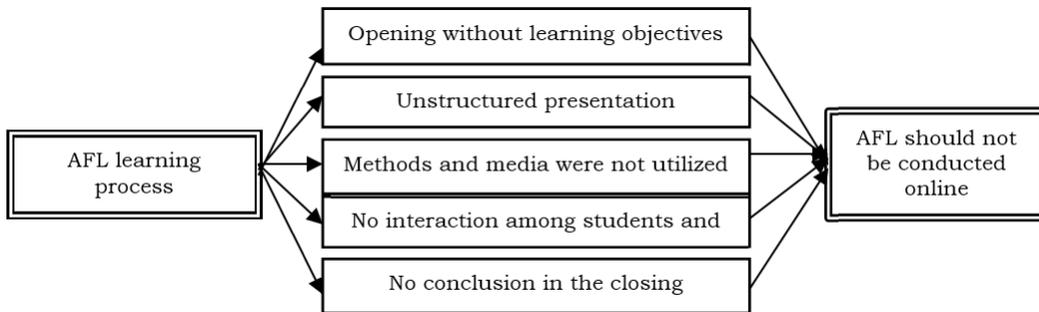

Figure 2. Students and lecturers' perceptions of process quality

Figure 2 above can be interpreted that student's and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of the process of Arabic online learning are very low and do not indicate the occurrence of the learning process. This statement is based on student's and lecturers' responses to questions related to learning process indicators said to be quality processes. When they were asked the process of starting learning, the response obtained was that learning began without explaining what goals students wanted to achieve it was not uncommon for students to take part in learning after a few minutes. Meanwhile, according to the lecturers, if the platforms used are Zoom and Google Classroom, the learning objectives would still be explained. However, many students were late to join the platform according to the schedule and they did not get to see the explanation of the objectives. This data indicates that the quality of the process of Arabic online learning process is low. This statement is based on the theory of learning and the results of previous research which confirms that quality learning one of which can be seen from the process of opening/starting lessons (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2016; Uvalić-Trumbić & Daniel, 2018).

The negative responses from students and lecturers to the quality of the process of Arabic online learning can also be seen in the presentation of learning material. Students feel that Arabic online material is useless. On the other hand, lecturers also believe that they did not get the satisfaction in presenting material during online lectures, either through Zoom, Google Classroom, Edmodo, or WhatsApp group. The statements of the students and lecturers as above show that that the quality of the process of Arabic online learning is low. Because learning can be said to be of high quality if students understand the learning material (Dunlosky et al., 2013), and the teacher is satisfied with the material presented can be understood by students (Karanezi & Rapti, 2015). The students' lack of understanding of the material presented during the learning process as the result of the interviews is caused by various factors e.g. lack of explanation from the

lecturers if the lecturing is done through Edmodo or WhatsApp group (Ritonga et al., 2020; Karam et al., 2017). In lecturing by using Zoom and Google Classroom, the students sometimes could not hear the voice of the lectures, because the audio is unclear and often interrupted before the material is finished explained. On the other hand, lecturers are also not satisfied because they believe that the material that has been presented is not fully responded to by students, even during lecturing through Zoom and Google Classroom, many students left the platform before the lecture is finished.

Student and lecturer responses to the quality of the learning process are also seen from the aspect of using online learning methods and media. According to students, the learning methods used by lecturers are not varied, they are more instructed to conduct discussions, while much content is not yet understood by students. The learning media is also limited to the types of platforms used in online learning. Lecturers don't even provide media such as face-to-face learning. Meanwhile, according to the lecturer, the use of learning methods and media with the existing platforms was carried out according to their ability to utilize the platform.

The statement of students and lecturers as stated above shows that the online learning process has low quality because learning methods and media cannot be utilized properly, while the learning method is one aspect of the learning system that can realize a high-quality learning process (Bidabadi et al., 2016; Aladdin, 2010). This data also shows the unpreparedness of lecturers to utilize various facilities available online to improve the quality of learning. According to Ritonga et al, technological development can be utilized both as a source of learning, learning methods, and learning media (Ritonga et al., 2016; 2020). The Arabs themselves have used many technological devices in teaching Arabic in Arabic-speaking countries (Hamed, 2012; Mahmoodi & Moazam, 2014).

In the process of learning Arabic online, it is also known that students feel that the communication patterns are one-way, especially when the platforms used are WhatsApp and Edmodo. According to some students, the questions they wrote on the Edmodo platform seemed to be slow in response, while if through WhatsApp group the learning material sent by the lecturer was often choked by other messages, so it had to be searched up again to find out the main message content. Student statements as above are in line with data obtained from lecturers. They argued that communication in online learning was less communicative due to various factors such as the delay in students participating in learning, instructions from lecturers, and many student questions that were missed, so it was not uncommon for students to ask directly through private chat. In this condition, of course, only students who have a live chat can understand the important aspects they ask.

The statement from the students and lecturers above shows that both students and lecturers feel that effective communication is not realized in online Arabic learning. The reality of ineffective communication between lecturers and students in learning shows that the quality of the learning process is very low. The results of this study are in line with the conclusions expressed by Gillett-Swan about a sense of alienation in online learning (Gillett-Swan, 2017; Bakry & Alsamadani, 2015). These results then contradict Basilaia's conclusion which confirms that online platforms can realize interactive learning (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). The difference between these results is inseparable from the condition of the object under study, especially the ability of the research object to utilize online platforms for learning.

Then in closing the lecture also seen the low quality of the online Arabic learning process. This statement is following the results of interviews with students and lecturers in the Arabic education study program which states that: first, there is no feedback; second, students don't ask for content that they don't understand; and third, there is no assessment at the end of the process. This reality is caused by learning that involves students as a whole rarely lasts until the end, so learning is sometimes closed without the conclusion of the material presented. Even so, lecturers still left messages as a follow-up to the learning process.

Students and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of online Arabic learning outcomes

Relating to the quality of Arabic learning outcomes through learning during it can be seen how students and lecturers' responses to questions raised by telephone related their views on Arabic learning outcomes from aspects of listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills. Lecturer and student responses related to Arabic language skills through online learning can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3
Students and lecturers' perceptions of the quality of Arabic learning outcomes

No.	Aspects	Informants	Responses
1	Listening skill	Students	Learning through Zoom or Google Classroom can be heard very clearly. However, sometimes the internet network can be interrupted or weakened. WhatsApp and Edmodo are more difficult to understand, especially those related to *ashwat* terms.
		Lecturers	In learning in the classroom alone students find it difficult to understand and practice the sounds of letters according to native speakers, especially through internet applications.
2	Speaking skill	Students	Difficult to follow online learning, especially in improving speaking skills.

		Lecturers	Speaking skills can be trained by using various online flat forms, even by listening to Arabic Arabic youtube can help improve speaking skills. However, if by relying on formal learning using online platforms it is impossible to achieve speaking skills.
3	Reading skill	Students	Reading Arabic is a requirement with linguistic skills such as *nahwu, sharaf*, so by learning online reading skills are difficult to achieve.
		Lecturers	Many students do not have enough knowledge about Arabic grammar. When Arabic grammar is taught online, it is difficult to get an understanding, because it requires by giving examples, while online learning by giving examples of sentence patterns is very minimal.
4	Writing skill	Students	In online Arabic learning, it is difficult to write down what is heard and break it down into sentences.
		Lecturers	Teaching writing skills is difficult to do with online learning because students must be directed to how to write correctly, but at least they can be trained to rewrite what they hear online.

The views of students and lecturers as expressed in table 3 above can be visualized as in Figure 3.
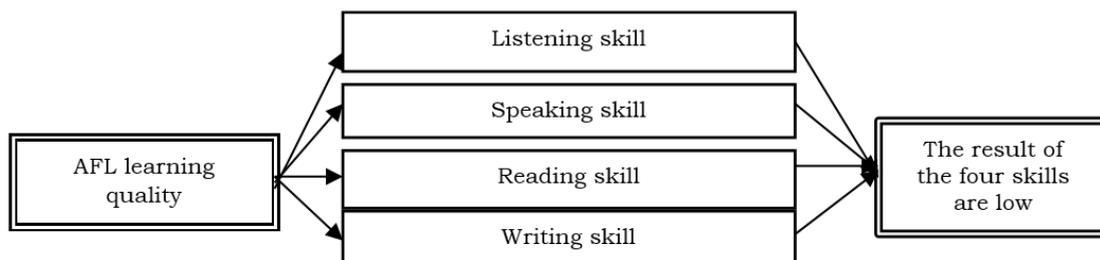

Figure 3. Student and lecturer responses to the quality of AFL results

The results of the study as contained in Table 3 and Figure 3 above becoming indicators for researchers to emphasize that the quality of Arabic learning outcomes obtained through online learning is very low. Following the results of interviews with students who said that learning Arabic through Zoom Meeting and Google Classroom, the lecturer's voice was sometimes quite clear but on many occasions, the voice was unclear and intermittent, in addition to the learning process that relied more on Edmodo and WhatsApp group platforms make students not get maximum listening skills learning because with both of

these platforms learning takes place only in the form of discussion. This student's view is also following the lecturer statement which confirms that learning of listening skills through the use of online platforms actually supports the realization of listening skills, only when using Zoom and Google Classroom network limitations become a barrier

The results of the above study differ from the conclusions of Abdullahi et al who concluded that students achieve high results in learning Arabic by using the web (Abdullahi et al., 2018). The results of this study also contradict the conclusions of Sari & Hasibuan who said that social media can improve students' skills (Sari & Hasibuan, 2019; Djumabaeva & Kengboyeva, 2021). While the results of this study indicate that students and lecturers' responses to learning Arabic as a whole show low Arabic listening skills.

The low learning outcomes of Arabic through online learning can also be seen from the aspects of speaking, reading and writing abilities. From the results of interviews with students and lecturers it is known that speaking skills are difficult to improve through online AFL learning. However, the availability of various sites related to how to speak Arabic allows students to use it outside the learning process to improve their ability to speak Arabic. As for aspects of reading skills and Arabic writing skills, the various links available are not enough to support the improvement of students' skills in reading and writing Arabic. Because to be able to read Arabic requires knowledge of linguistic aspects such as *nahwu*, *sharaf* and even balaghah (Elnaggar, 2019; 2020; Grzega, 2021). Also, if linked reading skills with the ability to analyze texts and express the meaning contained in them which also requires wealth in terms of vocabulary.

Writing ability is also difficult to obtain through online Arabic learning, because writing ability is related to students' competence in expressing their thoughts in written form that requires imaginative abilities. For this reason, Arabic writing skills for non-Arabic learners requires hands-on training so that they are accustomed to writing what they have heard.

From the results of the above analysis it can be emphasized that the views of students and lecturers on the quality of the results of Arabic learning conducted online during COVID-19 are very low. Their response to the quality of language skills both in aspects of listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills seen a negative response which shows that their views on the quality of learning outcomes is very low.

Effects of online Arabic learning according to students and lecturers' perceptions

Regarding the effects of online Arabic learning the analysis is based on the perception data of students and lecturers on the quality of the process and the quality of Arabic learning outcomes. From these data it can be revealed that: first, online learning of Arabic is not yet time to do, this is based on the statement of students who say if online learning is continuously applied it is likely they would prefer to return to the boarding school, because there they think in addition learning in the classroom goes well they are also required to use Arabic in a boarding school environment. Some of the students also expressed that their desire was very high to return to campus and study as usual, discuss with friends, they miss the atmosphere of the study room, miss their friends and lecturers. This statement shows that the teacher's position has not been replaced by various platforms available in the digital age.

Second, various complaints made by students and lecturers about online learning also indicate that the effect of online Arabic learning in the future is very low. According to them online learning requires quite high costs, if each lecturer requires learning to be carried out using zoom and google classroom then at least students need 15 GB in a week, ironically again internet network connectivity in the area where students live is not yet available, so that many students who cannot take classes if using the Zoom platform and Google Classroom. This is different from the use of WhatsApp and Edmodo, although they cannot attend the lectures on time when the material is still available, as they are distributed on the platform. However, learning using WhatsApp and Edmodo learning material is rarely understood, due to one-way communication patterns. Third, online Arabic learning can take place only 1-3 meetings out of the 14 planned meetings, and that according to the lecturer can only be held to train students' listening and speaking abilities. The learning of Arabic related to learning Arabic reading and writing skills is not possible to be held online. The three points above can be made clear that the effect of learning Arabic in accordance with the perceptions of students is as in Figure 4.
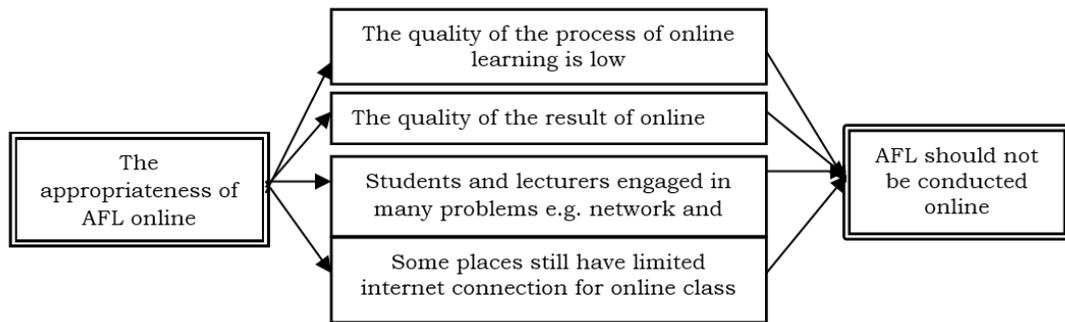
Figure 4. The effects of AFL learning online

From the above figure, it can be interpreted that the learning of Arabic as a time is not yet ready to take place, the limited knowledge of students and lecturers on the use of various platforms that support Arabic learning become one of the basic rejection of online Arabic learning, from the results of interviews with students it is known that there are still many have not been able to operate gadgets with Arabic features. For listening and speaking skills, learning during the period is possible to continue, but still in a limited number of meetings, because what is heard by students is not necessarily as intended by the speaker, therefore direct guidance both listening and speaking is still needed.

Conclusion

The findings prove that online learning is seen the aspects of the process and aspects of learning outcomes are very low. The differences of these findings with some conclusions of previous studies could be due to material objects and online learning can be suitable for subjects other than Arabic. Based on the findings of this study, online Arabic language learning is not fully recommended because students and lecturers still want the learning process to take place face-to-face.

Acknowledgments

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