



### IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE LEARNING FOR ENGLISH CLASS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: LEARNERS' PERCEPTION

Eny Dwi Marcela<sup>1</sup>, Tommy Hastomo<sup>2</sup>, Siswo Edi Wibowo<sup>3</sup>, Adenan Damiri<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung

<sup>1</sup>dwimarcela@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>tommy.hastomo@stkipgribl.ac.id,

<sup>3</sup>sediw27@gmail.com, <sup>4</sup>adenan\_damiri@stkipgribl.ac.id

**How to cite (in APA Style):** Marcela, E.D. & Hastomo T., Wibowo, S.E., Damiri, A. (2021). Implementation of Online Learning for English Class during Covid-19 Pandemic: Learners' Perception. *LENTERA: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, 14 (2), pp. 465-478.

**Abstract:** This study aims to identify the learner's perception regarding online learning implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collection was done through a survey questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and close-ended questions, and continued by interview activities. The participants in this study amounted to 28 students of 3rd semester of STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung. Data collection techniques in this study used questionnaires with Likert scale and interview. Results from this research showed that students have a positive attitude toward the online learning experience in general. The implementation of online learning during a pandemic is considered an effective and cheap way of accessing knowledge. However, most students showed frustration due to bad internet access, which affects their learning success. Students also felt the need for improvement in terms of interaction and engagement between students and teachers.

**Keywords:** Online Learning, EFL

### INTRODUCTION

Mastering English in EFL country is not the same as the process of mastering it in an environment where English is used as mother tongue or as second language. It is because according to Sutrisna, Ratminingsih, & Artini (2018), in EFL setting such as in Indonesia, most of the people do not have enough chance to pick up and acquire English as the target language. The people here will be fully provided chances to acquire and pick up English as their mean of communication. Therefore, in EFL setting, the opportunities of mastering English is not as many as desired by the students. This situation then get worsened as the unpredictable COVID-19 epidemic has spread around the globe, it leads us to the periods of social distancing that keep students away from classroom communication. Due to the social distancing periods during the pandemic, many of the EFL students were afraid that they will be unable to learn and master English. It was because they

believed that English should be practiced face to face with the lecturers in order to master the language. In this case, the English lecturers in EFL countries were urged to create online teaching and learning resources and began to consider the most suitable technologies to teach their EFL courses.

Covid-19 is the most significant health crisis outbreak in today's modern era.

According to Sadikin & Hamidah (2020), the Covid-19 episode is a type of attack with a very high and fast spread rate. Many countries have decided to close schools, colleges and universities. According to Anugrahana, (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic impacts many parties; this condition has penetrated the world of education, the central government to the regional level has provided policies to dismiss all educational institutions. Various effective prevention and mitigation efforts for Covid-19 have carried out in Indonesia, including implementing work from home activities followed by adjustments to the work system. Therefore, all public services related to the scope of goods, services and administration carried out online. Purwanto et al. (2020) supported it, which stated that the corona pandemic has now begun to penetrate the world of education. The central and regional governments have provided policies to close all educational institutions. This also applies to the education sector, namely disabling teaching and learning activities in schools to carry out sterilization and self-quarantine for teachers and students. It has an impact on replacing learning activities carried out online (online).

Online learning is a type of distant learning where students and teachers do not meet in a traditional classroom setting, and the internet becomes its main media (Stern, 2018; Jamil & Hamre, 2018). It is a process of teaching delivery to provide access to learning despite geographic proximity, time, or other possible reasons (Blake, 2011; Tarone, 2015). In a pandemic situation, traditional learning can expose students and teachers to the risk of serious health issues. Therefore, carrying out online learning mode is the safest choice. Online learning comprised two main elements, learning, and technology, where learning is the cognitive process to achieve information and knowledge while technology acts as a medium to enable the learning process (Aparicio, Bação & Oliveira, 2016). Online learning can be delivered synchronously and asynchronously. Synchronous mode is when all distant participants are present at a specific organized time using web conferencing or video conferencing technology. While the asynchronous mode is delivered in a more flexible way where participants have the choice to access course materials anytime on their own need through electronic mails, message board forums, video, and audio recordings, and others (Alan et al., 2012).

Online learning is a low cost and convenient for learners to access it anywhere and anytime. Through online activities, learners have the autonomy to learn at their needs and wants (Hurlbut, 2018). It also provides up-to-date information and can be integrated with other elements to reinforce learners' comprehension such as audio and video explanation, group chats and forum, discussion board and quizzes (Cantoni, Cellario & Porta, 2004). Holmes and

Gardner (2006) noted that e-learning offers a new experience for learners in learning by its variety of interactions with the education community and exposes learners to cultural diversity and globalization in education by eliminating time and space boundaries.

Students are direct subjects experiencing the implementation of technology in distant learning, which makes it important to identify their perception regarding the process. Online learning supports students in learning individually and collaboratively by utilizing various kinds of online learning platforms and learning methods. Furthermore, online learning promotes independent learning and reduces dependencies of students toward teachers' assistance (Kumi-Yeboah, Dogbey, & Yuan, 2017). Positive responses were found in Cakrawati (2017) where the majority of respondents in the research showed satisfaction regarding the effectiveness of online learning process. Despite the complaints due to slow internet connection, participants described that Edmodo or Quipper's use as a media of online English learning to be effective and helpful. Many studies have identified positive attitude toward the benefit and effectiveness of online learning compared to traditional learning (Alsaaty, Ella, Abrahams & Alshameri, 2016; Brown, 2016; Pai, 2013). Students perceived an increased motivation toward online learning and that online learning helped them understand course materials easily (Saifuddin, 2018). A study among students with visual impairment identified positive responses in the use of various online learning applications. Students appreciate the opportunity to learn using digital platforms in understanding the course material which they found to be interesting (Hamid, 2020).

Research regarding online education has been conducted to identify views from different perspectives. Toquero (2020) conducted a study to investigate the challenges and opportunities during COVID-19 in the Philippines context. It was argued that very few studies had been done regarding the effect of the Pandemic on education as studies concerning health have taken up attention. This research recommended improvement of educational modes of delivery; higher education should integrate the curricula into compatible versions with the technological advances. Chances are widely open to welcome digitized education. However, Students' perspectives on 'online learning' amid COVID-19 have been investigated (Adnan & Anwar, 2020) to find out that online education was a problem for under-developed areas in Pakistan as many students did not get access to cyber technology. According to Ismawati & Prasetyo (2021), the termination of face-to-face learning activities is transfer to online-based learning by utilizing technology connected to the internet. Various media that can use to support the implementation of online learning, for example, virtual classes using Google Classroom, Edmodo, and Schoology services (Enriquez, 2014; Sicat, 2015), instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp (So, 2016), and through social media such as Facebook and Instagram (Kumar & Nanda, 2018).

Therefore it was high time that the implementation of online education

during COVID-19 be conducted to get informed of the real challenges and opportunities which may differ from one area to another throughout Indonesia (Aji et al., 2020) in which it was argued that blended learning (mixed modes of online and offline) was used in some schools before the pandemic. At that time, e-learning was still considered to be peripheral (Pham & Ho, 2020) and used only to accommodate assignments and some additional quizzes. However, the pandemic has turned things otherwise. Nowadays, education has to be carried out online or virtually (Alam et al., 2021). Thus, the current study filled up the research gap(s) before and during the pandemic, most importantly since Indonesia's education has not been equally dispersed. As many researches was done on investigating the effectiveness of online learning, however a further study on the effectiveness of e-learning carried out during a pandemic is very rarely found, especially in English as Foreign Language (EFL) context in Indonesia; there is no enough information confirming students' perception towards the use of online learning in English classroom during COVID 19 pandemic.

The level of satisfaction in online learning was found to be crucially determined by the amount and quality of interaction between teachers and learners (Fedynich, Bradley & Bradley, 2015). The research revealed that students are mostly satisfied with the course materials' clarity and organization but perceived that there needs to be more variety in terms of instructional design. Some learners stated their frustration for not getting immediate response to the course's questions (Fletcher & Bullock, 2015). Sari (2020) informs that the implementation of online learning during COVID-19 pandemic faces some obstacles such as slow internet connection, the enourmous amount of tasks students received, limited interaction between teachers and students, and limited materials received compared to offline teaching. The availability of internet connection in rural areas, limited teaching media accessibility, and technology compatibility in accessing course materials are identified as the main influencing factors. These in EFL context determine the efficacy of online learning (Nur Agung, Surtikanti, & Op, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to identify the learner's perception regarding online learning implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic on learning English at STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung.

## **METHOD**

The core focus on this research is to look into language learners' perspectives on the implementation of online learning in EFL classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research used descriptive qualitative method which aimed to gain a rich and deeper analysis of respondents' perceptions. Questionnaires were used to collect respondents' perceptions regarding the implementation of online learning. This is in line with Dey (2005: 31), which states that the core of qualitative analysis lies in these related processes of describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how our concepts interconnect.

The data collection technique used questionnaires and interview to 28 students in the 3rd semester of STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung. The instrument for the data collection was well prepared. Related to the research problems, the researchers used a questionnaire test as an instrument. The test used must be appropriate in terms of the object, the dependable in the evidence provides, and applicable to the particular situation. The questionnaire consists of close ended and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions are presented in 5 points Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Close-ended questionnaires are used to determine the percentage from each item measured that will later be interpreted descriptively. Open-ended questions were used to identify students' perceptions regarding effectiveness and obstacles during online learning process. The questionnaires discuss three major aspects; students' participation, instructional design and delivery, and teachers' role and involvement. The questionnaire items were adapted and revised from Fedynich, L., Bradley, K. S., & Bradley, J., (2015).

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This case study was conducted from September to November 2021, and 28 students participated in this research. They are third-semester students of the English Department at STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung. After completing the survey, 14 items of the close-ended questionnaires were divided into three major categories such as instructional design and delivery, teachers' role and involvement, students' participation, and accessibility. Results below are presented into different themes.

### *Instructional Design and Delivery*

Table 1 shows result of the questionnaire data collected from the participants regarding instructional design and delivery of materials in online learning.

**Table 1. Instructional Design and Delivery**

Item	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
3	Online courses provide clear instructions to promote students' comprehensions	3.6%	32.1%	50%	14.3%	-
5	Online learning utilizes a wide range of learning sources to support learning (link to websites, articles, videos, etc.)	-	3.6%	21.4%	60.7%	14.3%
9	Online learning provide students with activities to develop critical thinking	3.6%	28.6%	42.9%	25%	-

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10	Online learning provides clear instructions to task submission	7.1%	7.1%	53.6%	32.1%	-
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***Teachers' Role and Involvement***

**Table 2. Teachers' Role and Involvement**

Item	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	Online learning provides for teachers' formative assesment and feedback	3.6%	10.7%	50%	32.1%	3.6%
6	During online learning, students are able to ask questions and receive explanatory feedback from teachers	3.6%	17.9%	28.6%	46.4%	3.6%
7	Online learning platform provides clear contact information of instructors or institution for students who need support	3.6%	14.3%	35.7%	39.3%	7.1%
8	During online learning, students and teachers interact and communicate effectively	7.1%	39.3%	32.1%	21.4%	-

***Students' Participation***

The result from four questionnaire items that are categorized into the aspect of students' participation can be classified as follows

**Table 3. Students' Participation**

Item	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Online learning promotes students' motivation in learning	7.4%	70.4%	22.2%	-	-
2	During online learning, students have the opportunity to interact with each other	7.1%	50%	28.6%	14.3%	-
11	Online learning promotes students' active engagement in group tasks and discussions	3.6%	28.6%	35.7%	28.6%	3.6%
12	Online learning courses delivery are interesting and engaging	-	14.3%	64.3%	21.4%	-

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13	Online learning promotes autonomous learning environment	3.6%	3.6%	32.1%	57.1%	3.6%
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### *Accessibility*

Open ended question results inferred that generally students are satisfied with the implementation of online learning during pandemic because it is a way to protect everyone from COVID-19 virus. Accessibility to course material is satisfactory, students are provided with clear instructions to access materials or to submit assignments. Teachers put extra effort in providing sufficient materials to support students comprehension by adding more details in printed materials, making audio or video explanation and doing video conference with all students.

### **DISCUSSION**

Using technology to convey education's purpose is not a new thing. Universities need to reflect from this pandemic and started to invest in its human resources and technologies. Online learning can be made fun and effective only if every elements in distant learning are maximized. Findings from this study indicated a positive attitude toward online learning in general due to its practicality and flexibility. Students through open-ended question mostly showed satisfaction regarding material delivery and instructional delivery. Feedback and formative assesment are adequately given throughout the course by utilizing features of online learning such as video conferencing, discussion board, chat forum, and electronic mails. This study see some aspects in online learning carried out by EFL lecturers in English language education study program such as parts of instructional design and delivery, teachers' roles and involvement, students' participation, and accessibility. The elaboration of these part can be presented one by one according with the research findings.

#### *Instructional design and delivery*

Most of the students have 'a neutral perception of whether online courses are presented with clear instructions that can support students' comprehension while 32,1% disagree. Through open-ended question, students mentioned that learning online does not always work well. Students perceive that there is always lack of explanation and instruction from instructors which create confusion during learning. Students are given lots of assignments and independent reading tasks with minimum explanation which resulting in low level of comprehension. It is in line with Gao et al. (2016) who inform that online learning gives chances for teachers to provide many kinds of learning tasks. It can create bad atmosphere for students and also fell bored with the tasks. In this study, some students also mentioned that sometimes students could misunderstand the information given by instructors because of limited interaction.

On the other hand, positive responses were found for item 5 where 60,7% students agree and 14,3% strongly agree that through learning online, students can access a wide range of learning sources such as websites, articles, videos, and audios. The students mentioned that online learning benefits are they have unlimited access to relevant learning materials from websites, academic articles, blogs, Youtube, and audio recording. Students are gradually developing their skill of utilizing technology and searching for information on the internet through online learning. 28,6% of students disagree that online learning activities enhance students' critical thinking. On the other hand, with only a bit different in numbers, 25% of students actually agree that critical thinking ability can be improved through learning online. This might be due to the absence of direct interaction between students and teachers as facilitators. In order to construct critical thinking ability, teachers need to plan stimulating activities to support students' comprehension. In online learning, many obstacles are found such as weak internet connection and shortage of internet bundles might cause students to focus less. Meanwhile, some students mentioned that teachers often only delivered little explanation during the course or provided them with independent reading tasks followed by assignments. Learners have different preference in terms of learning style.

During online learning, students are required to submit assignment and projects online. Students mostly agree that teachers gave clear instruction about submitting tasks (14,3%) while 50% of them are neutral. Students mentioned that they were not worried about submitting task because they are quite familiar in using electronic mails and other online learning platforms. However, students complained about not having enough internet credit to access materials and submit assignments. University is providing them internet credit throughout online learning but it is not enough because they have many courses in a week.

#### *Teachers' roles and involvement*

10,7% perceive that formative assesment and feedback are not effectively given in online learning mode. Meanwhile, 32.1% participants actually agree that teachers' provide sufficient assesment and feedback during online learning. Author assumes that this might be due to variety of teachers' style in teaching. Some teachers are very attentive and would take the effort to provide learners with feedback that they need. In an offline setting, it is much easier for teachers to provide immediate assesment and feedback on students' performances. Activities in classroom are directly monitored and teachers have the opportunity to engage with students. However in learning online, interaction is very limited which might cause teachers to focus more on explaining materials and put less time in providing formative assesment.

46,4% participants mostly showed satisfaction in terms of getting teachers' explanatory feedback when students are giving questions during online learning. Although students mostly complained about weak internet connection that often



disturb learning process, students are still able to ask questions and receive answers from teachers. Many features in online learning platform that allow teachers and students to engage in direct interaction such as video conference, chat room or discussion board.

35,7% participants were on neutral agreement when asked whether online learning platform provides them with clear contact information of instructors or institution. Providing contact information is important so that students who need technical help can reach out and get support they need. 39.3% of students agree that they are given clear information on who to contact when support is needed. During online learning, students and teachers use various online applications to stay in contact such as WhatsApp, google classroom, electronic mail, Zoom , Google Meet and others. The applications are generally easy to operate and beneficial to use in learning online. Besides, the university has developed a website based online learning platform for teachers and students to use called Virtual Classroom. Upon registering, students can see all contact of lectures from the website.

Among twenty-eight participants, 39,3% of them are against the statement that students and teachers interact effectively during online learning. 32,1% are on neutral agreement about the following statement. Interaction is an important determiner of online learning experience success. Through open ended question from the questionnaire, weak internet connection is one of the factor that causes ineffectivity of communication during learning process. Students perceive that it is less effective to communicate with teachers during online learning which cause reduced motivation and comprehension.

#### *Students' participation*

Students perceive that online learning demotivates their motivation in learning. From the questionnaire result it can be obtained that 70,4% disagree. This data is also supported with students' description through open ended questions that although learning online is beneficial in terms of time and location, they can hardly concentrate throughout the course. This result is in line with Fedynich, Bradley & Bradley (2015) where majority of students in the survey perceived that it takes high level of self motivation to be successful in online course. Without persistence self motivation, students will be demotivated in learning and reduce their participation in classroom learning.

Another disagreement were found regarding lack of interaction between students during online learning. 50% disagree and 7.1% strongly disagree that online learning provides the opportunity for students to interact with each other. Rojabi (2020) found the same response where students in the survey described that the possibility of misunderstanding between students during online learning is high due to the limited interaction and low connection to internet. The challenge particularly occurred when students are given group project and have to work online. The unstable internet connection and lack of direct interaction can create possible

misunderstanding. 28,6% students showed disagreement that online learning promotes active engagement between students in group tasks and discussion. Students perceive that doing group tasks is difficult because they can not gather in the same place. Discussion needs to be carried out online through group chats, video conference or discussion boards. Lack of interaction and limited coordination among students followed with bad internet connection causes reduced engagement. Moreover, students are less active during online group presentation and discussion. This is due to the lack of face-to-face interaction like in an offline classroom setting. The same situation was also found in Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) where students identified the need for physical presence that can support their emotional bond between students and teachers. It was found that students are less motivated during online discussion and learning. The absence of physical presence causes the to feel lazy and less focus during learning thus, the online learning is not optimized.

Students also perceived that online learning is not quite interesting and engaging showed by questionnaire result where 14.3% disagree and 64.3% are neutral. The change of learning circumstances in students life might cause them to lose interest in learning online. Some students mentioned the need of interacting directly with their friends and teachers as a social human being. Direct eye contact, physical interaction and social support in a traditional classroom setting are some important factors that influencing students' engagement. Not being able to experience the dynamic of authentic classroom experience influence students' motivation. Some students mentioned that they felt unmotivated and lazy to study from home everyday.

Online learning provides opportunity for students to practice independent learning. 32.1% students have neutral agreement whether online learning promotes autonomous learning while 57.1% agree. Students during online learning use the opportunity of engaging technology and their learning needs independently. Depending on their learning style preference and psychological factors, learners may reach autonomy in learning online.

### *Accessibility*

Moreover, online learning is considered practical and beneficial for its flexibility in terms of time. Students admitted that they do not need to dress neatly for college, they save more money they used to pay for transport fees and that online learning can be done anywhere. However, students are facing problems of internet availability because not every places in their region can support them with good internet access. For some other students, internet data bundles are not affordable and not enough to access abundant of materials from teachers. Students mentioned that they often had to purchase internet data multiple times in a month which is quite costly. Despite the flexibility, the cost of online learning is highly determined from the availability of the internet data purchase.

Challenge of learning online are not only found in internet connection.

90,4% participants used their mobile phones throughout online learning. Students are required to download abundant of learning materials everyday from each different subjects such as PDF or word document materials, lecture audio, videos and handouts. Meanwhile after each learning activity, students are often asked to submit assignments as well. All these activities using mobile phones require the utilization of various mobile phone applications. Some students reported that their phones are going slow or not working due to excessive data memory used. Laptops are only owned by some students because not all students can afford them. This phenomena puts some students in disadvantage because they can not experience learning as it should.

Findings from the survey indicated that generally students felt the lack of interaction and engagement during online learning process. When learning online, teachers need to ensure that course materials are delivered successfully while having students engaged with the process of learning. Kearsley (2000) stated that teachers carry the role to ensure students are engaged in a high degree of participation and interaction. But often in the online learning environment, students felt greater isolation between other learners, reduced motivation and satisfaction, and poor academic performance due to teachers' failure to understand the dynamics of online learning environment. Therefore, teachers need to encourage a greater classroom interaction by refocusing their teaching strategy throughout the course. At the beginning of the course, teachers might deliver a big portion of class input and lead by example. However, as the term goes by, teachers need to consider switching role from being a core "provider" to be a "facilitator" and produce lesser classroom input.

This strategy should be followed by fostering a friendly classroom discussion, giving immediate feedback, and encouraging more active participation from the students. Through the findings of this study, it can be inferred that internet availability and accessibility hold a crucial role to ensure the success of online learning. Students reported difficulties in communicating with other members of the class due to bad internet connection. Thus, researchers provide some implications for further online teaching process for universities to consider. Students should be supported with technical aspects of online learning as clearly as possible. Instructors along with institution should prepare for supplementary plan whenever students report challenges or problems during learning. Students should also be provided with free internet data bundles to ensure all students get the same opportunity to access course materials. Lastly, instructors should gradually evaluating their teaching strategy in order to develop an effective online learning environment.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study discovered learners' perception of learning using the online media during COVID 19 pandemic. Findings indicated general satisfactory

among learners regarding instructional design and delivery of online learning including the provision of materials, supporting learning materials and instructions to tasks submission. Students felt the need for improvement in designing activities to engage their critical thinking. To create a meaningful classroom interaction, teachers must ensure all students get the opportunities to ask questions and receive immediate feedback.

Formative assessment must also be provided timely through each courses. Teachers along with policy makers of the institution have to reshape the dynamic of online learning delivery in order to create greater participation and engagement between students, not only in independent tasks but also tasks that involve group work. Online learning delivery can be made interesting to boost students' motivation during their effort of learning autonomously from home. Lastly, accessibility to internet connection as the main medium to online learning holds important to bridge students and teachers in learning. In the least developed region, low internet connection heavily affecting online learning process. Therefore, university need to provide students with support to get access to internet through subsidized internet data.

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