

EFL Students' Perception Towards Online Learning: What to Consider?

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: <i>Covid-19 pandemic, English as a foreign language, online learning, students' perception</i></p> <p>DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i1.1242</p> <p>How to cite: Saputra, E., Saputra, D.B., Handrianto, C., Agustinos, P. (2022). EFL Students' Perception Towards Online Learning: What to Consider?. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 7(1), 123-140</p>	<p><i>The outbreak of the deadly coronavirus at the end of 2019 (Covid-19) has pushed many education institutions to do a radical transformation by moving all forms of their services, particularly teaching from traditional face-to-face mode to completely online foreign language teaching. This research aims to investigate Indonesian students' perception of online learning and the three most challenging problems they encountered when enrolling in it under the context of English as Foreign Language students. Based on a review of the literature on online learning and students' perception, a questionnaire was constructed and distributed to 57 students that had enrolled in an online course via google form along with a question asking the three most challenging problems they encountered during the course. Analysis of the responses demonstrated that most of the students had a positive perception of online learning. The three most challenging problems the students encountered were signal (internet connection), money (financial ability), and comprehension (comprehending the course) respectively. The result indicates that online learning can be a reliable solution for the teaching and learning process during a pandemic. However, in applying it, the campus must consider an alternative solution for the students who live in the bad internet connection area. Supporting them with subsidies, or free internet packages can help them to keep studying during a hard time. Lastly, teachers must work hard to ensure that their teachings are understandable so that their students will not get lost during the learning process.</i></p>

1. Introduction

The outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID-19) at the end of 2019 has caused a major shift in the landscape of our lives. This deadly virus can infect humans through direct contact from person to person through droplets or aerosols containing the virus “inhaled or come directly into contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth” (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). Responding to this fact, many authorities around the world have implemented strict restrictions on human-to-human interaction to decrease the spread of this virus (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021) and strongly encouraged their citizens to get vaccinated once ready. In a more serious situation, some of them even called for nationwide closures which posed a significant impact on around 73.8% of the total learners (UNESCO, 2020). Teaching and learning processes were no longer allowed to be conducted on campuses.

Following this condition, educational institutions around the globe were forced to move their regular face-to-face teaching and learning process to online learning. They can use many online learning platforms available such as Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Learning Management System (LMS), or others (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). However, this transition of pedagogical approach is not smooth for not everybody is ready for it (Baber, 2020). One reason is that online learning will not be able to run unless it is supported by the provision of access to technology such as electronic devices and internet connection for both the students and the teachers. In addition, there are still many other factors that might influence the result of this mode of learning either from the students, teachers, or even the educational institution. Having the ability to create effective online learning is an imperative call for all campuses (Zhang et al., 2020), especially during this uncertain pandemic situation.

To achieve that, some studies have been conducted to shed light on the nature of online learning. Some researchers investigated the factors that might influence the student's perception of online learning. While interaction in the classroom, motivation of the students, course structure, instructor knowledge, and facilitation contributed positively to the perception, distraction, reduced focus, heavy workload (Hussein et al., 2020), technology and internet problems, and the lack of instructors' and colleagues' supports were the most recurrent negative aspects (Baber, 2020). Other researchers focus more on students' perception of online learning after they have engaged in it due to the pandemic situation.

One side found that the students had a positive perception of online learning (Lemay et al., 2021; Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Pratama & Surahman, 2020; Shawaqfeh et al., 2020). Mostly, that positive perceptions came from the familiarity of the students with online learning and prior experience. On the other side, students had a negative perception of this new remote learning method (Abbasi et al., 2020; Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Bahruddin & Febriani, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). In general, the research tacitly implied that the inability of the students to adapt to this online learning was one major reason why they perceived it negatively. This can be linked to the learning environment that they had at home or their ability in using the technology (Barrot et al., 2021).

In terms of the Indonesian context, some studies under the covid-19 pandemic context have also been conducted although the number is still considered very limited. Laili & Nashir (2021) surveyed 103 students from five different study programs regarding their perception of the intensive English course that was provided online. They found that students had positive and

negative perceptions of online learning. Setyawan et al. (2020) investigated the perception of 66 students consisting of freshmen, sophomores, and junior students using a questionnaire focusing more on enthusiasm and perception of assignments. The result showed that the majority of the students were less enthusiastic and thought that it was heavy and stressful. Last, Nugroho et al. (2020) assessed the perception of 100 students who enrolled in an online translation course in terms of attitude and knowledge. The result showed that although the students had a positive perception of the online platform (Omega T and Google Classroom), 80% of the students were not in favor of lectures that were provided through online mode.

Most of the previous research mentioned above was more on aspects of attitude and knowledge (e.g., (Nugroho et al., 2020)), platform preference (e.g., Amin & Sundari, 2020), and cognitive and feeling (e.g., Purwadi et al., 2021). Some others have tried to capture the perception but from a too broad point of view (e.g., Laili & Nashir, 2021; Setyawan et al., 2020; Syauqi et al., 2020)). There has never been any research that studies perception from aspects of accessibility, comprehension, and interaction, especially in a foreign Language Context. These three aspects are very important and mentioned as the factors that influenced the students' perception towards online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic situation (e.g., (Abrami et al., 2011; Alqudah et al., 2020; Baber, 2020; Bączek et al., 2021; Bahruddin & Febriani, 2020; Hussein et al., 2020; Sawarkar et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020)). Using these three aspects as the focus of investigation means we investigate students' perceptions from a different point of view and might discover a new perspective regarding students' experience of online learning mode. Furthermore, we also included an open question regarding the top three difficulties or challenges that students faced during learning online. This was meant to enrich the information regarding the students' perception since our initial proposal to conduct an interview was impossible during the lockdown time when Covid-19 was newly found.

By conducting this research, at least two benefits can be achieved. First, we could get new knowledge about the students' perception of online learning that might provide a more explanation of the student's experience studying online during the covid-19 Pandemic, particularly the foreign language learner context. Second, since this pandemic might or might not be over soon as covid-19 virus keeps mutating (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021), online learning might still be the only way for education to survive; whether full-online or blended mode; along with a super-tight health procedure of offline learning that some institutions have already started. student's perceptions and challenges that they encountered during the online learning process might give us, the authorities, or anybody in charge of the survival of education a clue on what to do to improve the quality of this digitally-driven teaching mode in the long run.

2. Literature Review

Many researchers have already proposed various definitions of online learning. According to (Singh & Thurman (2019) at least 19 terminologies have been used in referring to the concept of online learning. Most of them entail the involvement of telecommunication technology; the internet and electronic devices such as a computer in assisting the teaching and learning process. In other words, this teaching technique does not have a teacher-students direct interaction (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020) but is facilitated by the use of technology (Wang et al.,

2020) that provides an internet connection or networks (Abbasi et al., 2020). Both the teacher and students are in such a digital room in which the teaching instruction is given by the teacher and the learning materials can be accessed by the students. The actual classroom is moved into a virtual one where everybody is physically separated but virtually gathered in a digital class. No more persons can be found in the real classroom (Unger & Meiran, 2020).

Furthermore, this online learning can also be classified into two categories based on the time delivery. When the teacher and the students can have online learning interaction within a particular time or in real-time such as in video conferences, this type is labeled as synchronous (Singh & Thurman, 2019). However, when the interaction does not happen at the same time such as using a discussion board, or recorded video of learning materials, this type is categorized as asynchronous mode (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Both are not available unless supported by an internet connection.

Many positive aspects are offered by the implementation of an online learning model in accommodating students. This digital learning mode is cost and time effective as the students do not need to spend money on transportation costs and can even study from their beds; covid-19 prevention as limiting the need to wander outside, and family convenience as can still have time with family while having classes (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Hussein et al., 2020). In addition, this virtual learning mode also allows the students to have a more flexible learning schedule (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). Thus, regardless of the fact that it is imposed by many governments to curb the number of the virus spread, online learning itself is chosen by students to substitute their traditional classroom meetings (Muthuprasad et al., 2021).

Apart from the positive aspects, this electronic device-assisted education also has some negative sides. They range from a heavy learning workload given by the teacher (Hussein et al., 2020), unavailability of internet services for houses relatively far from the city (Bahruddin & Febriani, 2020), to the incompatibility nature of certain courses that need practice and direct face to face interaction such as clinical practice (Bahruddin & Febriani, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, sometimes the problems come from the learners as individuals starting from a feeling of anxiety (Unger & Meiran, 2020), lack of motivation, and negative emotion (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Gonzalez-Ramirez et al., 2021) and limited opportunity to connect with the teachers and learning peers (Bahruddin & Febriani, 2020; Gonzalez-Ramirez et al., 2021). One of the reasons can be due to the lack of experience in having this digitally driven learning method as found in the study (Unger & Meiran, 2020) where the level of students' anxiety decreased after being given a distance online learning practice for three weeks. If this applied to anxiety, this might also apply to other challenges.

Furthermore, some research is conducted to investigate the factors that influence the way students perceive online learning. They found that there was a strong correlation between prior online learning experience with students' current perception of online learning (Qazi et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020) These two research reveals that when students had had previous online learning experience, they tended to have a positive perception. In the same vein, more senior students showed a more positive attitude toward online learning although they have heavier workloads (Gonzalez-Ramirez et al., 2021; Shawaqfeh et al., 2020). Then, the socioeconomic background of the students was found to play a significant role in determining how they think about online learning. A study conducted by Qazi et al., (2020) revealed that students with a good economic condition such as those who lived in cities were found to be

more satisfied with online learning mode than those who lived with unstable monetary support or lived in rural areas. Nevertheless, this economic factor can also influence the learning outcome (Areepattamannil et al., 2011). It is very understandable since learning in online mode needs to be supported by at least electronic devices, such as a handphone or laptop, and an internet connection. They cannot possess it unless having good financial support. Once the students are in the possession of learning devices and an internet connection, they will have easy access to learning. This state does contribute to the positive perception of online learning (Poláková & Klímová, 2021). After that, the possibility of having an interaction also plays a significant role in determining the students' perception (Alqudah et al., 2020; Baber, 2020; Um & Jang, 2021). In addition, Abrami et al., (2011) mentioned three essential interactions that should be concern which were a teacher to students, students to students, and students to content or material. The last one is the students' ability in regulating themselves in learning or self-regulated learning according to Tichavsky et al. (2015) the goal of online learning is to teach the students to be self-directed learners. When they do not have self-regulated learning skills, they tend to fail the course and have a negative perception of it. Last, (Sawarkar et al., 2020) found that the reason why the students had a positive perception of online learning courses was due to the experience of easy access when using this digital base course.

With the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic, transforming traditional classrooms to digital-based learning seems to be a possible alternative solution for preserving the breadth of education. We can see this by comparing some research that revealed how students preferred face-to-face to online learning (see Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Gonzalez-Ramirez et al., 2021; Sawarkar et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) with research asking the participants if the online learning can be a solution for learning method during pandemic (see Muthuprasad et al., 2021). The respondents believed that the digital classroom mode can substitute the traditional face-to-face interaction that should be forbidden during the pandemic. Although some weaknesses are found in online learning, the strengths are also worth gaining attention.

To the best of our knowledge and what we have explained above, the number of research investigating the students' perception of online learning under the pandemic circumstance was still very limited. On the other hand, under this pandemic situation, online learning mode seems to be the only way for our education to survive and continue the process. More research regarding the impact of online learning on students in this special situation is necessary as it will provide more knowledge on how to design a better online class in the future. This research intended to answer two questions:

1. How was the EFL students' perception of online learning?
2. What were the three most challenging problems that the students encountered during online learning?

3. Research Methodology

In this research, the researchers adopted the exploratory sequential mixed method design. It means the researchers employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses to investigate the research questions in a subsequent way (Creswell, 2014) . In the quantitative items, the researchers constructed a questionnaire containing 10 questions. The questions were meant to investigate the student's perceptions of online learning in terms of accessibility,

comprehension, and interaction. In the qualitative items, the researchers included one open-ended question asking about the three biggest challenges that the students encountered during online learning. The researchers then classified the answers into the three most mentioned by the students.

3.1 Participants

University of Professor Dr. Hazairin, S.H. has never conducted any online learning before. The outbreak of covid 19 forced this institution to migrate to online learning using several platforms such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, Zoom, Whatsapp or its own Learning Management System (LMS) called *Spada* E-Learning. Two English teachers agreed to participate in this research. The table below displays in brief how they ran their classes. Although they utilized different platforms, both of them taught their students online in quite similar nature.

Table 1. Teaching Scenario

No	Teacher	Class	Number of Students	Platform	Description
1	B	Economic and Business	27	LMS	Recorded himself explaining his PowerPoint material videos supported by the university studio team. The videos were uploaded to LMS which can be watched by the students.
2	E	Geography	30	X-Recorder Google Classroom	Made some videos using his handphone-free apps; X recorder; with his voice explaining the power point materials and uploaded it to his classes on Google Classroom.

In obtaining the participants, we used the convenience sampling technique. This is because of the restrictions during the pandemic situation. The participants in this study were 57 students consisting of 23 females and 34 males of the university of Prof. Dr. Hazairin, S.H. Bengkulu, Indonesia 2019/2020 Academic Year. The participants' ages were between 18 and 25 years old and enrolled in the third semester. A questionnaire consisting of 10 question items was distributed to the participants. In our case, the respondents used to be 60. However, after we had checked the respondents' details, three participants sent double responses. The double responses were discarded resulting in only 57 valid respondents.

3.2 Instruments

The data were obtained using a questionnaire with 6 Likert's scale (see Appendix 1). For the perception section, the Likert's scale ranges from 6 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree) and for the behavior, section is from 6 (Always) to 1 (Never). We intentionally avoided option "neutral" with a belief that one cannot both like and dislike something. They would slightly like or slightly dislike something. Hence, we replaced the "neutral" option with "slightly agree" and "slightly disagree" for the first section and "seldom" and "sometimes" for the second one. Furthermore, having 6 Likert's scale can also increase the questionnaire's validity and reliability (Chang, 1994; Chomeya, 2010). This can improve the quality of this research.

Then, the questionnaire was constructed by referencing previous research that investigated what the participants thought about the positive and negative experiences of online learning (see Abrami et al., 2011; Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Sawarkar et al., 2020). Finally, we arrived at three aspects which were accessibility, comprehension, and interaction.

The accessibility section has three questions orienting to the students' experience when they logged into the online learning platforms. The comprehension section consisting of four questions accounted for their ability to comprehend all the learning materials and activities. The last three questions were to gain information about their interaction with their classmates and teacher. In total, there were 10 questions. We also added an open question asking about three challenges that they encountered to gain more information. We piloted the questionnaire to 12 students before conducting the actual research. Both of the processes were done via Google Forms. The data were collected between the 29th of June and 21st of July 2020. For validating our instrument, we ran the validity and reliability test together with gender influence tests using SPSS 25.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

In this research, the researchers distributed a survey consisting of ten questions. The entire questions were meant to investigate the students' perceptions in terms of accessibility, comprehension, and interaction that they experienced when enrolling in an online learning classroom. We performed validity and reliability analyses to ensure that our questionnaire was valid and reliable using Mann-Whitney U test to investigate if there was gender influence. The total score of each respondent counts for their perception category as we did not directly count the mean score of each participant's perception but used grouped-data frequency distribution by grouping the total score of each respondent into a six-range-score category as we had six Likert's scale (Coladarci et al., 2010), p.18). Then, we counted the frequency of each category based on each participant's total score. Last, we also counted the total of each answer to the open question. Finally, the interpretations were made based on the result of each analysis.

Table 2. Range Score Category

Range For Total Score	Category
55-60	Strongly Agree
46-54	Agree
37-45	Slightly Agree
28-36	Slightly Disagree
19-27	Disagree
10-18	Strongly Disagree

4. Findings

4.1. Validity and Reliability Test

The validity test was conducted to investigate the items' ability to discriminate against each participant based on their answers referring to the Likert' scale criteria used. In other words, those with high scores shall be the ones with positive perceptions and vice versa. The

reliability can be understood from the definition of Mackey and Gass (2005) as “consistency of a score” or how the items can give the same score if the same person fills the questionnaire again (cited in Larson-Hall, 2009, p. 170). While point-biserial correlation (r_{pb}) was calculated to investigate the items’ validity, its reliability was determined by the value of Cronbach’s alpha (α). It was found that the r_{pb} for each item was bigger than the r_{table} (.254) indicating that the items were valid. As for the Cronbach alpha, it was .086 showing that the items were reliable (see Larson-Hall, 2009, p.171; Sujarweni, 2014). Therefore, we can conclude that the questionnaire used was valid and reliable.

Table 3. Items’ Validity

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
Total	Pearson	.80	.773	.80	.81	.78	.86	.66	.58	.82	.60	1
	Correlation	.77	.77	.74	.71	.69	.77	.55	.55	.77	.77	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57

Note. $R_{pb} > r_{table}$

Table 4. Reliability Test Result

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
.915	10

Note. $\alpha > 0.6$

4.2. Gender Influence Test

By using Mann-Whitney U test, the mean rank of the male participants ($n=34$, $M_{RANK}=31.46$) was compared to the mean rank of the female participants ($n=23$, $M_{RANK}=25.37$). No significant difference was found ($p=0.17 > 0.05$) which indicates that the participants’ gender did not influence their answers.

Table 5. Mean Rank

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Total	Male	34	31.46	1069.50
	Female	23	25.37	583.50
	Total	57		

Table 6. Mann-Whitney U Test Result

	Total
Mann-Whitney U	307.500
Wilcoxon W	583.500
Z	-1.360
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.174

4.3. Students' Perception

The figure below provides information on the student' perception of online learning. In general, the students with positive perceptions were more than the ones who did not. This can be seen from the calculation of Strongly Agree, Agree, and Slightly Agree which was 63% compared to the negative ones which were only 57%. However, if we pay attention more to each category, we find that the respondents were spread around slightly agree and slightly disagree as a top first and second category with 38% and 27% respectively followed by AGREE with 20% of the total respondents. Therefore, even though the perception was mostly positive, the position was not on a clear zone; instead, very close to the negative zone.

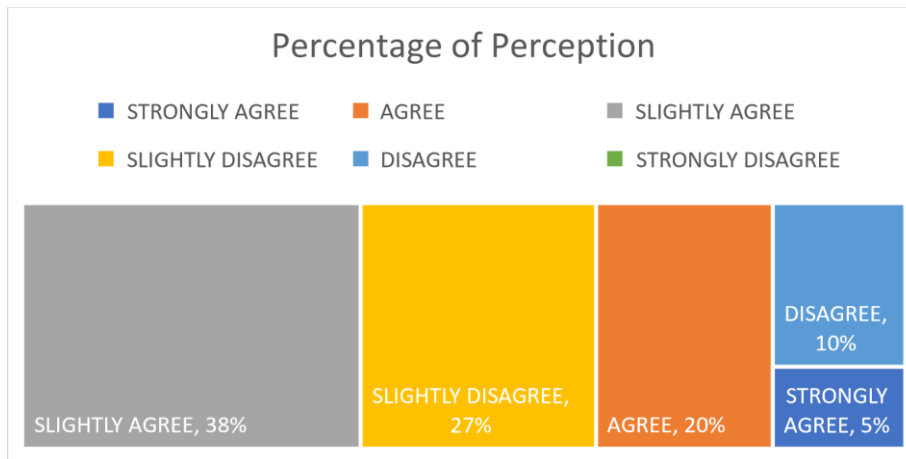


Figure 1: Students' Perception in General

In addition, from table 9, it can be seen that item number 4 (Q4) and 7 (Q7) were the two items with the lowest modes which were 3. It indicates that the respondents who answered the questionnaire items more *slightly disagree* as their answers. This can account for 27% of the *slightly disagree* category of the total perception of the respondents.

Table 7. Means and Modes of Each Question

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
N Valid	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57
Mean	4.02	3.88	3.96	3.82	3.98	4.11	3.56	3.95	3.74	4.02
Mode	5	5	4 ^a	3^a	4	5	3	4	4	4

4.4 The Challenges Encountered by Students

The figure below shows the result of the three biggest challenges they encountered during online learning. The Internet signal was found to be a problem that they faced the most (mentioned by 48 students) followed by money (mentioned by 29 students) and comprehension (mentioned by 20 students). Although they also mentioned other challenges such as device, self, and interaction problems, those appeared to be minor.

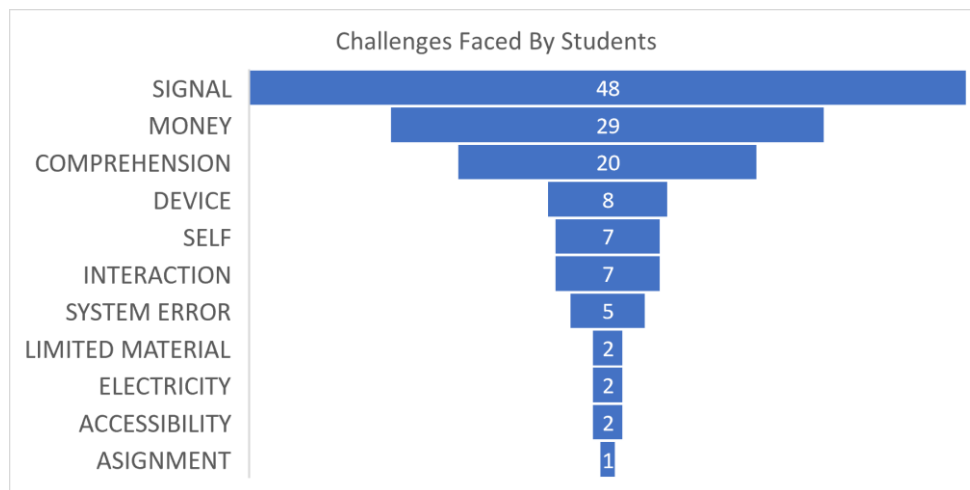


Figure 2. Three Challenges Mentioned by The Participants

For the signal challenge, some students added that they lived in areas with a very poor internet connection. Two factors applied; either because they lived in an area where the internet connection was already poor or because they used cheap internet providers with poor connection services. That can be observed in the excerpt below.

- "The (internet) signal is not good as (I live in) village" (Female; Participant 27)
- "The (internet) access is very difficult due to signal (problem)" (Female; Participant 42)
- "Frequently having connection problem since we (who live in a renting room) can only afford low-quality internet provider" (Male; Participant 7)

For the money one, most of the students mentioned that it was difficult to consistently have or buy an internet packages. Therefore, they bought either limited internet package or resorted to free Wi-Fi access that can usually be found in coffee shops, neighbors, or friends' houses.

- "(I have) a limited internet quota (package)" (Male; Participants 49)
- "I do not have quota (internet package) so I need to find free Wi-Fi spots" (Male Participant; 17)
- "Budget (for buying) quota" (Male; Participant 29).

Hence, most of the students encountered the financial problem in participating the online grammar learning.

In the third position, the data shows that comprehension was part of the problem. Some students mention that they failed to understand the learning video given by their lecturers. Some others even said that the portion of the video learning given was not sufficient in that they failed to comprehend. Here is the excerpt of the student's answers.

- "The course was difficult to comprehend" (Male; Participant 18)
- "(I do) not really understand the topic" (Male; Participant 24)
- "The portion of materials (learning video) given is so limited" (Female; Participant 45)

Thus, during online learning, some participants faced challenges in comprehending the learning video.

5. Discussion

The original purpose of this research was to investigate the EFL students' perception of online learning that they had experienced during the pandemic of covid-19 teaching and learning adjustment mode. For the first question how was the students' perception of online learning the answer is that the majority of respondents show that they had a positive perception of online learning, indicated by 63% of them were on strongly agree, agree, and slightly agree position. On the contrary, less than 50 of the total population perceived online learning negatively. To further understand this result, an analysis of the respondents' answers was requisite.

Previous studies regarding the student's perception of online learning always come to two different positions. Some of them had similar findings to this research (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Poláková & Klímová, 2021; Pratama & Surahman, 2020; Sawarkar et al., 2020; Shawaqfeh et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Three possible reasons can be put forward as a possible explanation why the respondents had positive perceptions more than negative ones. First, if we pay attention to the participants involved, we will find that a great number of the participants from the three research (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Shawaqfeh et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020) had had prior online learning experience. Related to Zhang et al. (2020)'s findings that perception is not something stagnant but flexible and dynamic of which can move from negative to positive, this experience allowed them to adapt to the problems that they had experienced before. As the result, they did not reencounter the problems while the study was being conducted and resulting in giving more positive responses to the questionnaire. Secondly, the participants of that research did not experience any problems in terms of learning device possession and internet access (Poláková & Klímová, 2021) and infrastructure, and student-teacher online interaction and had prior online learning experience (Shawaqfeh et al., 2020). Having no problems in those aspects might be the reason for their positive perception as well. Lastly, the participants might have a sense of pleasure in doing the online learning. In this case, the students might have an inherent feeling of enjoying the process of learning eventhough the mode was not really similar to what they used to have. This sensation of feeling has been proven to be one reason why students want to migrate to online learning (Cicha et al., 2021) Therefore, we would say that the participants in this research in general did not encounter such problems even though it was their first time enrolling in online learning course.

On the contrary, other research had different results (Abbasi et al., 2020; Bahruddin & Febriani, 2020; Unger & Meiran, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Most of the students in that research responded that they had a negative perception on online learning. For the first and second research, it could be due to the nature of the course where practical learning activities were very impossible to be replaced by online mode since the participants were medical college students. For the second one, the students might feel so exhausted for having more than one platform for their distance learning activity such as WhatsApp for knowing the teachers' instruction, Instagram for uploading assignments, and online links for joining the quizzes. They needed to get used to all of the online learning modes used simultaneously. As for the third to the last, the respondents were in favor with face to face compared to online

learning due to similar reason which is the “nature of the course” and bad internet coverage. Since this research was conducted on English Grammar online courses or language learning, the nature of the learning process is very different in that an intense learning process in a laboratory is not necessarily needed and can be replaced by independent activities after mastering the theory.

The finding regarding the respondents’ distribution majorly around slightly agree and slightly disagree has nothing much to say. However, if we proceed more to the questionnaire items where Q₄ and Q₇ had the lowest mode, our finding seems to show that those two groups of respondents seriously had an issue in these two questions which were about course comprehension. These apparent findings can be attributed to two major reasons. First, it could be due to the student’s lack of individual skills in online learning. The ability to learn independently or famously known as self-regulated learning is necessary for an online learning setting (Almahasees et al., 2021; Anthonysamy et al., 2020; Kuama, 2016). In other words, if the students fail to manage themselves in mastering the course contents, they will likely fail in comprehending the materials, let alone get good scores, and vice versa. Learning online is completely different from face-to-face. The medium for interaction between the students and the teacher is limited by the technology that they use; they cannot communicate with their teacher regarding to the part of the course that they did not understand unless it was online. This somehow also leads to a condition where the students had a problem in absorbing the knowledge or experienced a “decrease in cognitive engagement” (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). Second, having no prior experience in online learning might also be the case. They might not yet know how to use the learning features on the e-learning platform such as working with the quizzes, checking and submitting the assignments, or communicating with their teacher or peers. Wang et al. (2020) found that there was a positive correlation between student’s prior online learning experience with perception of satisfaction. In addition, e-learning training is important to be given to students without any experience (Ibrahim et al., 2021). The more experience the students are the more positive their attitude towards online learning (Shawaqfeh et al., 2020).

For the last research question what were the three most challenging problems that the students encountered during online learning, the signal/internet connection is mentioned the most followed by money, and comprehension. It indicates that majority of the participants had a problem with the internet connection 48 out of 57 (84%) followed by money with 29 out of 57 (50,8%). This finding is consistent with previous studies (Bahruddin & Febriani, 2020; Gillis & Krull, 2020; Muthuprasad et al., 2021) where internet connection is one of the major problems especially for those who live in areas with barely internet infrastructure. What is new from this study is that the connection problems sometimes do not only because of infrastructure but also because of the financial ability when the students can afford only cheap providers but with poor internet service. This may harm the learning process that depends on internet connection. Without connection, the students would not be able to access the material or supporting materials helping them to understand parts they had not comprehended yet. This is in line with two previous studies that found socioeconomic background play a significant role in academic achievement (Areepattamannil et al., 2011) and those with low socioeconomic background tended to dislike online learning mode (Qazi et al., 2020). In contrast, Hussein et al. (2020) found that students did not have internet

connection as their major problem. Since this study was conducted in UAE; 98% of households have an internet connection (Knoema, 2018).

6. Conclusion

The outbreak of Corona Virus in 2019 has given a drastic change in the layout of our education system. Not only schools popular with its better educational services and technology but also schools with moderate to poor services. They have also been forced to emigrate from offline to full-online teaching and learning process regardless of their readiness. On a whim, it is worth to investigate how the teachers and students deal with this pedagogical approach, but knowing how the students perceive this distance learning is essential of which we have provided in this research paper.

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of the students showed a positive perception towards online class that they experienced during the pandemic situation. It means as EFL learners, majority of the participants can cope with this online learning mode. Furthermore, it also indicates that online learning mode can facilitate the students to study when direct interaction is strictly forbidden to curb the possibility of disease spread. However, it reveals that this digital mode of learning also had the students encounter some challenges that need a serious attention. Accessibility and comprehensibility were really two serious issues that the students encountered when studying in digital learning classes. When the pandemic is over, we might still use this mode of learning probably combined with traditional face-to-face learning method. Therefore, knowing the students' perception and challenges that they encounter should be our major concern in designing a better online learning activity in the future.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

Table 8. *Questionnaire items*

No	Statement of Perceptions	Scale				
Questionnaire Items	Accessibility					
	Strongly Agree (6)	Agree (5)	Slightly Agree (4)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Saya dapat dengan mudah masuk ke aplikasi pembelajaran online yang digunakan (I can easily log into/access the online learning platform)					
2	Saya dapat dengan mudah mengakses aplikasi pembelajaran online yang digunakan kapan saja saya mau (I can easily access the online learning application anytime that I want)					
3	Saya dapat dengan mudah mengakses video materi pembelajaran yang disediakan (I can easily access the learning material videos provided in the on learning online platform)					
Comprehension						
4	Saya dapat memahami materi yang terdapat di video-video pembelajaran yang disajikan (I can understand the learning material contents in the learning videos provided)					
5	Saya dapat dengan mudah mengerjakan quiz-quiz yang terdapat pada aplikasi pembelajaran online (I can easily work on all the quizzes provided on the online learning platform)					
6	Saya dapat mengikuti penjelasan mengenai materi pada video pembelajaran yang disajikan (I					

	can comprehend the materials taught in the online learning videos provided)
7	Jika diminta saya dapat memaparkan kembali materi dari video pembelajaran yang telah saya tonton dengan bahasa saya sendiri (If I am being asked, I can re-explain, using my own language, the materials the learning material in the videos that I have watched)
Interaction	
8	Saya dapat dengan mudah mengajukan pertanyaan kepada dosen pengampuh mata kuliah melalui fitur aplikasi pembelajaran online yang digunakan (I can easily ask (some) questions to my teacher through online platform features.
9	saya dapat dengan mudah merespon pertanyaan yang diberikan dosen pengampu melalui fitur aplikasi pembelajaran online yang digunakan (I can easily respond to the questions given by my teacher through the online learning platform features)
10	Saya dapat dengan mudah berinteraksi dengan teman sekelas yang lain melalui fitur fasilitas chatting yang di sajikan (I can easily interact with my classmates through chatting features on the online learning platform.
