

English Teachers' Perception on the Quality of Online Learning during Covid-19

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Abstract

The outbreak of Covid-19 has brought forth a plethora of research exploring teachers' and students' perceptions and expectations on online learning. While it is ambivalent whether schools should be opened in the next academic year, it becomes pertinent to learn the opinion of teachers and to explore the degree of adaptation towards implementing online learning. This article reports a case study examining Indonesian English teachers' perception of the quality of their online courses during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data collected for this study are survey responses from 100 English teachers of primary, secondary, and higher education from 12 cities in Indonesia. The data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. The findings revealed that the teachers generally perceived their online learning as moderately effective. The evaluation was based on the eight general standards of online course evaluation from Quality Matters. The standards evaluating the course overview, learning objectives, course technology, learner support, and accessibility were perceived to be effective. Assessment and interaction were perceived to be moderately effective, and instructional materials as ineffective. As this study investigates the quality of online learning based on the teachers' perspective, it did not reflect the quality of the teaching-learning process as a whole.

Keywords: Covid-19, teaching evaluation, online learning, teacher perception

1. INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 marked the onset of the covid-19 pandemic and the unprecedented shift of traditional classroom learning to online (home) learning. All teaching and learning activities in formal and informal educational institutions from the early level of Nursery to higher education were challenged to conduct lessons effectively without being physically present in a classroom. Unfortunately, not all schools in Indonesia were prepared for such disruption. Many schools, teachers, and students did not have the luxury of conducting and

participating in online learning activities due to limited access to facilities and infrastructure. In many cases, teachers and students outside Java do not have the proper knowledge and tools to utilize the technology required for conducting online learning. These include the absence of owning a computer or a mobile device and poor (or lack of) Internet access (Alifia et al., 2020; Azzahra, 2020; Fachriansyah, 2020; Gupta & Khairina, 2020).

At this new normal setting of virtual teaching and learning, it becomes significant to learn and explore the degree of adaptation towards implementing the new learning mode. Studies on the English teaching and learning phenomenon during the Covid-19 pandemic reported findings on various issues and focus. Some studies focused on scrutinizing the language used surrounding the context of Covid-19. For instance, Astia & Yuniarti (2020) investigated English adjectives using a corpus-based analysis, while Ismiyati et al. (2021) conducted a critical analysis of articles about Covid-19 published in an online news portal.

Another research focus that was primarily investigated is the EFL teachers' and students' perceptions towards the implementation of online learning. The perception includes challenges and opportunities of online learning. Studies on the teachers' perception of online learning challenges revealed four main obstacles in implementing online English learning: poor internet connection, limited data plan, teachers' lack of ICT skills, and limited teaching time. Teachers were reported to be more comfortable with the traditional face-to-face teaching method, as they can interact directly with the students without any technical interference (Hermansyah & Aridah, 2021; Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Correspondingly, Sugianto & Ulfah (2021) also revealed that internet access is one of the challenges reported by most teachers in their study. Other challenges include the students' level of proficiency and attitude, which were critical in acquiring a target language. Rahayu & Wirza (2020) further noted that lesson design, lesson delivery, assessment, and feedback made online instruction difficult for some teachers.

Aside from the challenges, studies investigating the perception of EFL teachers and students showed that the implementation of online learning also brings benefits and opportunities. For one thing, the virtual learning environment decreased expenses on travel and commuting since learning activities and materials can be accessed from anywhere and anytime (Pustika, 2020). Furthermore, it was also revealed that online learning encouraged autonomous learning (Nadeak, 2020) and could increase rapport between the teacher and students (Sugianto & Ulfah, 2021).

While more studies were dedicated to investigating the challenges and benefits of online learning as perceived by teachers, learners, and parents, few studies report on the effectiveness of the online teaching and learning process in the EFL context. Thus, this study seeks to evaluate the quality of online learning against a standardized measure for evaluating an online course. The evaluation will be based on the EFL teachers' perception towards implementing online learning. Perception in this study is defined as the thoughts or mental images of a concept that are shaped by one's background knowledge and life experiences (McDonald, 2012). Hence, this study will scrutinize the EFL teachers' opinions on the quality of the online course based on their teaching-learning experience with the students. To address the objective, the current research enquires on the following research question: How effective is the quality of online learning in the ELT context in Indonesia?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Online learning is a learning mode that is dependent on the use of the Internet as the primary means of communication (Bakia et al., 2012). In online learning, classes are usually administered via a Learning Management System (LMS) and may be delivered asynchronously, synchronously, or in hybrid mode, which includes both asynchronous and synchronous (Hrastinski, 2008). In asynchronous mode, interaction is mainly held through the LMS or social media platforms. Students access materials and complete assignments online at their convenience so long as expected deadlines are met. Interaction between the teacher and students involves discussion boards, group forums, or chatrooms. Synchronous learning, on the other hand, happens in real-time. Real-time means that the teacher holds a virtual meeting with the students at a specific class schedule. Students are usually required to log in and be present during the live session, which can be held through a live chat, video conferencing, or live-streamed lectures that must be viewed in real-time.

2.1. Implementation of Online Learning in Indonesia

Online learning is not a completely new concept to the Indonesian education system. Before the pandemic, early studies have reported on the implementation of e-learning in the higher education institutions in Indonesia (Darmayanti, et al., 2007; Rachmawati, 2016). The e-learning was implemented either as a support tool for face-to-face meetings, or as the main medium of interaction in a distance learning program, or as a blended learning program in which interactions between teacher and students are divided into online and offline (face-to-face) classrooms. The extent of the development of e-learning in Indonesia, however, was almost exclusive to the higher education institutions. The lower levels such as the elementary and secondary schools rarely involved teachers and students in an online learning environment, much less the early levels of nursery and kindergarten. Studies further revealed that although the system is common at the tertiary level, the quality of the implementation needs further evaluation in terms of delivery, planning, and management (Darmayanti et.al., 2007; Sari, 2012; Revalina, 2017; Sari, et.al., 2016)

In the recent time, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, research exploring teachers' and students' perception and expectation on online learning in the elementary and secondary levels, has been on surge (Allo, 2020; Churiyah et.al., 2020; Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020; Febrianto et.al., 2020; Hidayati & Saputra, 2020; Mailizaret.al., 2020; Nadeak, 2020; Putri et.al., 2020; Rahayu & Wirza, 2020; Rasmitadila et.al., 2020; Setiawan & Munajah, 2020; Siswati, et.al, 2020). Most studies concur that access to computers and the Internet contribute to the biggest challenge in the implementation of online learning in Indonesia.

At the primary levels, studies on the implementation of online learning revealed that the new mode of learning is not an effective instruction for young learners (Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020; Putri et.al., 2020; Rasmitadila et.al., 2020). For the most part, dynamic classroom interaction has been reduced to limited virtual on-screen communication. It creates not only frustration on the parents, who almost always need to assist their children, but also tediousness on the side of the learners. Learners became less enthusiastic and less motivated to participate in classes.

Similar challenges were also reported in studies investigating the implementation of online learning in the secondary levels (Mailizar et.al., 2020; Rahayu & Wirza, 2020). The studies report that most teachers did not think that the online learning is an effective mode of instruction as it brings more inconveniences in the teaching and learning process. The inconveniences include the lack of communication and interaction quality between teachers and students, poor ICT skills, low motivation, and limited support from parents.

Studies on teachers' and students' perceptions on the implementation of online learning in the tertiary level yielded somewhat similar results. Concerns on bulk assignments, lack of motivation and ICT skills, and the lecturers' ineffective instructions were conveyed in the studies (Allo, 2020; Churiyah et.al., 2020; Febrianto et.al., 2020; Hidayati & Saputra, 2020; Setiawan & Munajah, 2020; Siswati et.al, 2020). Nevertheless, it was also reported that during the online learning, students seemed to feel more comfortable asking questions and express opinions in a lecture forum that is held online (Nadeak, 2020). In addition, the flexibility of online learning fosters independent learning and removes inhibitions of time and distance. Although, it was difficult to ensure that students pay attention to lectures (Hidayati & Saputra, 2020).

2.2. Evaluation of Online Learning

To evaluate the quality of an online learning, a set of standards was developed by various organizations and institutions. One of the widely adopted standard that serves as a measure of online course quality was the rubric offered by the Quality Matters (QM) institute. The rubric addresses the key elements of an online course including the availability of course syllabus, content resources (including textbooks), assessment plan, papers-projects-quizzes, class activities and interaction, the online classroom (LMS), teaching guides, discussions and interactions, and individual work and reflections (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010).

The standard was initially developed in 2009 with the aim to provide tools for evaluating and confirming the quality of online courses (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010). In 2019, a fifth edition of the rubric containing eight general standards for K-12 reviews was published and is now offered commercially to certify online courses. The QM rubric is acknowledged to be in line with other online education accreditation standards from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (Legon, 2006). Table 1 summarizes the QM standards that are adopted as a framework for this study.

Table 1. QM standards for online course evaluation for K12

No.	General Standard
1	Course overview and introduction
2	Learning objectives (competencies)
3	Assessment and measurement
4	Instructional materials
5	Learning activities and learner interaction
6	Course Technology
7	Learner and instructor support
8	Accessibility and usability

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted using the descriptive quantitative and qualitative method to obtain the teachers' perceptions on the quality of their online learning implementation during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data was collected using an online form designer and results were calculated using the descriptive statistic method. The respondents of this survey were 100 EFL teachers of various educational institutions and levels from Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi, Bandung, Medan, Bangka, Jambi, Tanjung Pinang, Pangkal Pinang, and Salatiga. These respondents conducted online learning to keep learning continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

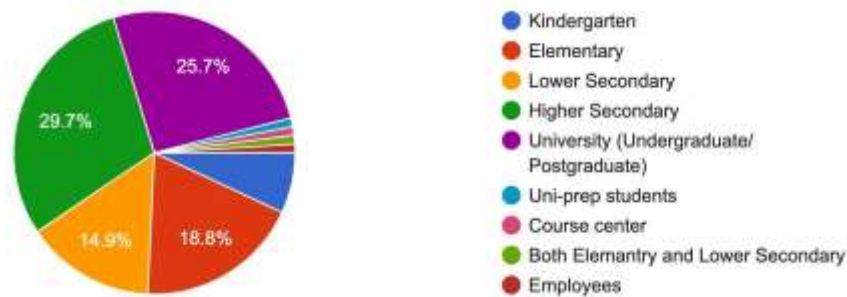


Image 1. Level of students being taught

The survey includes 23 statements of 4-points Likert scale asking for the respondents' agreement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) and 6 open ended questions. The 23 statements were categorized according to the 8 general standard of evaluating an online course which was adopted from the fifth edition K-12 general standards from Quality Matters (2019).

Table 2. Classification of Statements

QM Standard	Number of statements
Course overview and introduction	2 statements
Learning objectives	1 statement
Assessment and measurement	3 statements
Instructional materials	1 statement
Learning activities & interaction	4 statements
Course technology	3 statements
Learner support	3 statements
Accessibility and usability	5 statements

Aside from the 23 statements, 6 open-ended questions were asked in the questionnaire to strengthen the participants responses to the study and to obtain a more comprehensive understanding towards the participants' experiences on implementing the online instruction in their classrooms.

To check the internal consistency of the statements and the measuring scale used in the research, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the Likert scale survey statements.

Table 3. Reliability of the instrument

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.828	23

According to Sekaran & Bougie (2016), a moderate reliability of the scale measured is ranged between ± 0.41 and ± 0.70 , while high internal consistency is shown by a value greater than ± 0.70 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). As can be seen in Table 3, the Cronbach's alpha value of the instrument is a little over 0.80. This means that the instrument holds good internal consistency and can be followed up for further analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data of this research was analyzed both quantitatively using descriptive statistic method and qualitatively by corresponding the survey responses with the participants' statements in the open-ended questions and findings from previous studies. To interpret the teachers' perception on the quality of their online learning, the responses in the survey were translated into numbers: strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1. The "strongly agree" and "agree" were later grouped to form one positive response of agreement. Similarly, "disagree" and "strongly disagree" were grouped to form a unified response of disagreement. The data was then classified into three categories: effective, moderate, and ineffective (Table 4). An effective category means that the respondents perceived the standard to have been delivered effectively. Moderate means that the standard was perceived to be moderately effective while ineffective means that the standard has not been delivered effectively.

Table 4. Data classification

Frequency Range	Classification
57 – 68	ineffective
69 – 80	moderate
81 – 92	effective

The range for the classification was obtained by sorting the data from the frequency distribution (Table 5). The minimum data value 57 was drawn from the list as the lowest value for the ineffective category. The difference between the upper and lower boundaries (class width) was later calculated by subtracting the minimum data value from the maximum value ($92-57=36$) then divided by the number of categories ($36/3=12$). The lower limit of the next category was obtained by adding the class width to the minimum data value ($12+57=69$ and $12+69=81$).

Table 5. Frequency distribution table

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	57	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	58	2	2.0	2.0	3.0
	59	1	1.0	1.0	4.0
	60	1	1.0	1.0	5.0
	61	2	2.0	2.0	7.0
	62	2	2.0	2.0	9.0
	63	2	2.0	2.0	11.0
	64	8	8.0	8.0	19.0
	65	3	3.0	3.0	22.0
	66	2	2.0	2.0	24.0
	67	3	3.0	3.0	27.0
	68	6	6.0	6.0	33.0
	69	2	2.0	2.0	35.0
	70	4	4.0	4.0	39.0
	71	7	7.0	7.0	46.0
	72	3	3.0	3.0	49.0
	73	2	2.0	2.0	51.0
	74	8	8.0	8.0	59.0
	75	5	5.0	5.0	64.0
	76	1	1.0	1.0	65.0
	77	4	4.0	4.0	69.0
	78	3	3.0	3.0	72.0
	79	2	2.0	2.0	74.0
	80	6	6.0	6.0	80.0
	81	3	3.0	3.0	83.0
	82	3	3.0	3.0	86.0
	83	4	4.0	4.0	90.0
	84	2	2.0	2.0	92.0
	85	3	3.0	3.0	95.0
	87	2	2.0	2.0	97.0
	88	1	1.0	1.0	98.0
	89	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	92	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 6. Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
72.99	64.454	8.028	23

Based on the statistical analysis, it can be asserted from the mean value in Table 6 that the EFL teachers' perception on the quality of their online learning is moderately effective

($M=72.99$, $SD=8.028$). To gain further understanding of the evaluation, an analysis of each standard will be elaborated below following the survey response classification in Table 7.

Table 7. Survey response classification

QM Standard	Item	Frequency	Average Frequency	Category
1. Course overview and introduction	1	87	80.5	effective
	4	74		
2. Learning objectives	2	90	90	effective
	7	87		
3. Assessment and measurement	22	72	77.3	moderate
	23	73		
4. Instructional materials	3	62	62	ineffective
	9	87		
5. Learning activities & interaction	10	74	78	moderate
	12	67		
	17	84		
6. Course technology	13	87	84.67	effective
	20	89		
	21	78		
7. Learner support	14	79	87.5	effective
	15	81		
	16	91		
	18	99		
8. Accessibility and usability	5	97	92	effective
	6	97		
	7	87		
	11	96		
	19	83		

4.1. Course Overview and Introduction

As can be observed from Table 7, the EFL teachers' perception on the quality of the course overview and introduction has the average frequency of 80.5. The score is enough to categorize it as 'effective' ($f=81-92$). This means that the teachers believed to have well communicated the content, requirements, and expectations of the course to the students at the beginning of the online learning. Albeit no previous research could corroborate this finding, it corresponds with the notion that a course overview and introduction is a crucial aspect of an online course (Altman & Cashin, 2003). It serves as a 'virtual handshake' between the teacher and students which can be referred to throughout the course of online learning (Davis, 1993).

4.2. Learning Objectives

In addition to an effective course overview and introduction, this study found that the EFL teachers perceived the learning objectives of the course to be effective ($f=90$). They were believed to be measurable and aligned with the curriculum. During the online learning, the teachers claimed that their students were able to demonstrate and perform well on the

expected tasks outcome. This finding is in line with Rianto (2020) which reported the students' positive views on the online activities in their blended EFL courses. The students admitted that the learning objectives were clearly stated and helped them follow the lessons accordingly. Rosayanti & Hardiana (2021) further confirmed that despite the new experience of online learning, the students were able to meet the learning objectives and pass the minimum score determined by the school.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the QM specific review standards for assessing the course learning objectives are not only that they are measurable and clearly stated, but also conveyed through adequate and understandable instructions. Reports from previous studies on the clarity of instruction during online learning, unfortunately, revealed that the online instructions provided by the teachers were unclear and difficult to understand (Allo, 2020; Manurung, 2020; Rasmitadila, 2020). In light of these findings, Sun & Chen (2016) argued that an effective online instruction is contingent on a well-designed course content, interaction between the teacher and students, creation of a sense of online learning community and the integration of technology.

4.3. Assessment and Measurement

This study found that the assessment and measurement standard was perceived to be moderately effective ($f=77.3$). Despite the fact that students' achievement was not affected by the online teaching learning experience, as was mentioned in section 4.2, some teachers considered assessment to be the most crucial aspect of online learning that was difficult to manage. For example, during an examination or quiz, it was difficult for the teachers to invigilate the students as they could only be supervised from one end using a camera. This finding is in line with several previous studies which highlighted the challenges of conducting assessment and providing feedback during the online learning. Concerns on plagiarism, cheating, and having the test done by someone else were among those that were reported by previous studies (Hidayati & Saputra, 2020; Munir et.al., 2021; Putri et.al., 2020; Rahayu & Wirza, 2020; Rianto, 2020). These findings concur that the online assessment could not measure the students' true abilities and potential. With regard to feedback provision, Rahmawati et.al. (2021) attested that the teachers' feedback during online learning could not foster critical thinking as students relied heavily on the instructor's guidance. The complexity of online assessment corresponds with Swan et.al. (2008) which stated that online learning does not only change how we teach and learn, but also how to conduct effective assessment.

4.4. Instructional Materials

The standard on Instructional Materials in this study was found to be ineffective ($f=62$). This standard reviewed the quality of instructional materials which include course materials such as texts, audio & video materials, as well as online resources. Effective instructional materials should have sufficient depth and breadth for the students to understand the subject and can be easily accessed and used by the students. Especially on the teaching of the four skills: Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening, the teachers stated that developing materials for an online learning took a lot of time as they needed to, first, be familiar with the new tools and method to create content for the students. For Reading and

Writing, the teacher reported that it was challenging to prepare materials that could gauge the students' interests and motivation. In addition, not all students could access the online materials due to poor internet connection. For example, audio playing in Listening was held back due to difficulties in streaming the audio.

Previous studies from the perspectives of students revealed similar findings. Students complained about the many assignments that were given to them, despite very minimal explanation from the teacher (Allo, 2020; Churiyah et.al., 2020; Siswati et.al., 2020). Nadeak (2020) further revealed that many students encountered difficulties in understanding reading materials that were provided online. These findings were in line with Roddy et.al. (2017) which conveyed that developing online course materials is a complex process which requires careful planning and optimal use of technology. Teachers need to consider not only the method of lesson delivery and modes of assessment, but also the students' individual differences.

4.5. Learning Activities and Interaction

With the average frequency of 78, it can be inferred that the teachers perceived the learning activities and interaction of their online course as moderately effective. Since direct interaction was not possible, the teachers felt that students had difficulties understanding instructions and getting their messages across. This was due to technical issues such as weak signal, network disruption, and inaccessible apps. Moreover, the limitations in direct interaction affected students who were academically weak or physically challenged as it was difficult to check how much they understood the lesson. Similarly, Nadeak (2020) reported that it was difficult for the instructors to confirm that students were paying attention. Triana and Nugroho (2021) further revealed that the level of interactivity in an online learning depended on the learning platform that was used. Learning activities could foster interaction more effectively in classes where the teacher met students via Zoom or Google Meet than WhatsApp. Students were reported to be more engaged and participative when the teacher was present in a synchronous meeting. Cheung (2021) attested that teaching in synchronous online mode provided opportunities for the teacher to make use of other engaging apps which can gauge students understanding as well as their participation.

4.6. Course Technology

It was revealed that the standard for course technology was perceived to be effective, as indicated in Table 6 with the average frequency of 84.67. While the lack of infrastructure and access to the Internet remain, the teachers believed that by using various digital teaching tools and interactive resources, students were more engaged in the lessons. Image 1 illustrates the number of apps that were used by the teachers. The most popular apps include the course management apps such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, Microsoft Teams; presentation and file sharing apps such as Google Drive, Padlet, YouTube; as well as interactive quiz apps such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Mentimeter. It can be seen that the teachers made use of various tools to help them prepare the course, deliver materials, and engage with their students. This finding is corroborated by Rosayanti & Hardiana (2021) which revealed that teachers prefer to utilize more than one platform to facilitate language

learning. It is important to note that careful selection of the digital tools that are used for online learning should be well thought of before the implementation. Munir et.al. (2021) reported the students' views on the use of WhatsApp during Covid-19. While most students agreed that the platform was adequate for file sharing and group discussions, they did not think that it is good enough for evaluation and assessment due to concerns that have been stated in section 4.3 regarding the standard of assessment and measurement.

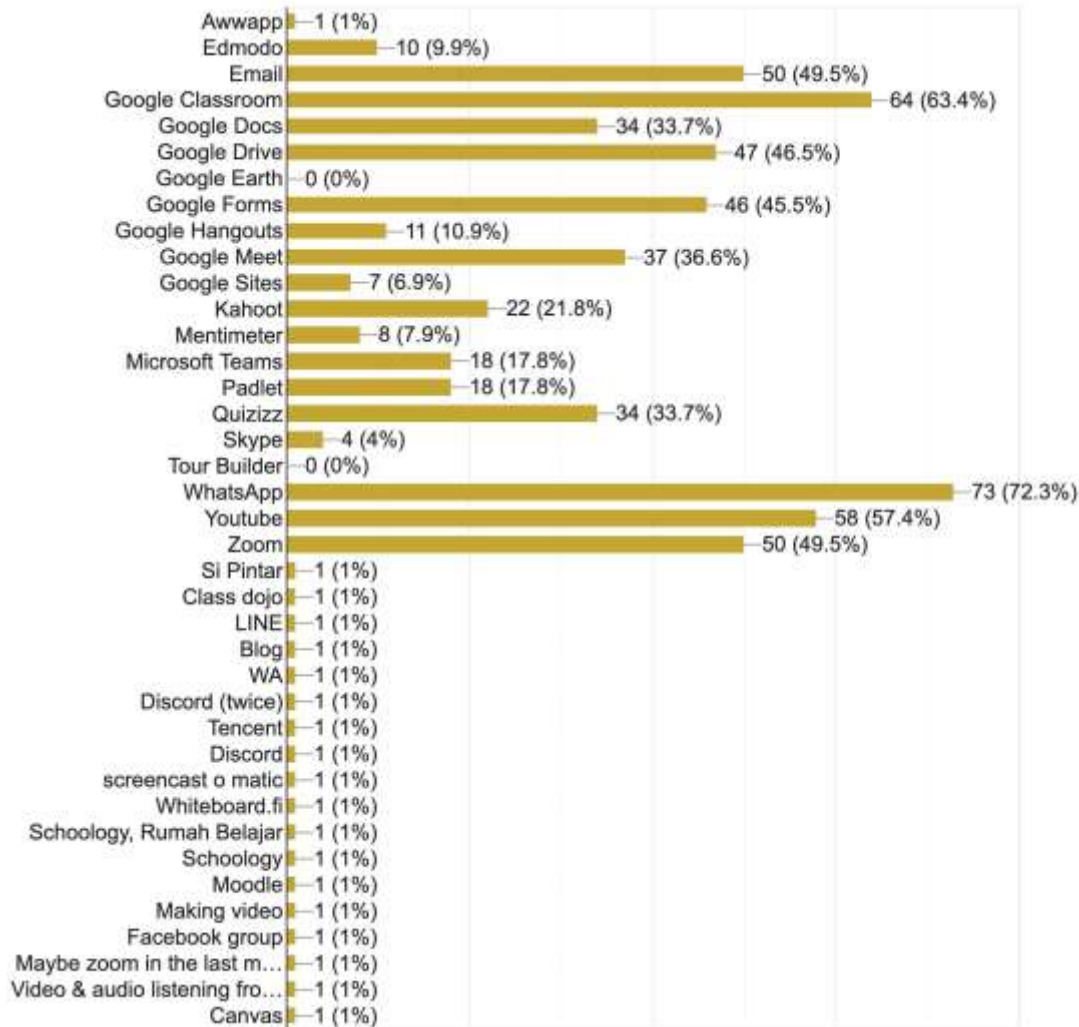


Image 2. Digital Teaching Tools Utilized during Online Learning

4.7. Learner Support

Upon reviewing the standard for learner support, this study finds that it is perceived to be effective, as shown by the frequency distribution of 87.5. The teachers believed that ample support had been provided to their students. The support includes technical support which were often provided in the form of step-by-step instructions on how to use a certain app, academic support which refers to the resources and feedback for the lessons, and school support which was provided in the form of policies and services to accommodate students' problems and needs during the online learning such as the school-fee reduction. Fauzan &

Nadia (2021) reported similar findings of learner support in their studies. In the event where students did not have access to computers nor internet, the English teachers allowed students to collect printed/written assignments directly.

4.8. Accessibility and Usability

Regarding the standard of accessibility and usability, the online learning was evaluated in light of its facilitation of accessible resources and tools that are easy to use. In this study, the teachers believed that this standard is effective ($f=92$) and has been successfully delivered because of the utilization of LMS pages and other social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube, as well as other multimedia content that meets the needs of diverse learners and can be accessed easily. However, previous studies report that the accessibility and usability of online instructions have not been equally attained. Febrianto et.al (2020) reported that in rural communities, schools were not ready to implement the online learning this conventional method of learning were maintained. Alifia, et.al. (2020) further noted that in the remote teaching practice, access to the Internet was the deciding factor to whether or not learning could take place.

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how teachers perceived the effectiveness of their online instructions. The findings of this study revealed that most teachers who were involved in this research perceived their teaching instructions as moderately effective. Despite the inadequacies of infrastructure, the teachers embraced technology and were able to accommodate learners with support and encourage learners to achieve the lesson objectives effectively. Challenges on the implementation of online learning were similar to the previous studies in that teachers had difficulties in creating engaging activities and providing effective assessment during the online learning. Hence, developing suitable content that can be delivered effectively, especially in an English language classroom where interaction plays significant role, is hard to achieve. Although providing balanced lesson of the four skills is difficult to meet, teaching the four skills is still possible. Activities used to teach the four skills must be simplified, relevant, and accessible to the students.

While this study provides a glimpse into the evaluation of an online instruction, future research could provide a more in-depth analysis of the quality of online learning from different perspectives. An ideal teaching evaluation would include not only self-assessment from the teacher, but also require critical analysis based on the experience of the students, peer teachers, and school administrators.

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