

## Students' Perception on the Implementation of Online English Learning in the Covid-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

This study examines the perceptions of ninth-grade students in a junior high school in Banyuwangi, Indonesia, regarding the implementation of online English learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Involving 50 students selected through a lottery method, this research focuses on five aspects: technical issues, motivation, time management, social interaction, and teachers' support and access. The findings indicate that students faced challenges related to technical issues, such as poor internet connectivity and audio/video problems, which disrupted the learning process. Motivation and engagement varied among students, influenced by the absence of face-to-face interaction and distractions in the home environment. Time management was also a concern, with some students struggling to meet the demands of flexible online learning schedules. Limited social interaction and isolation were common experiences, affecting students' sense of connection and engagement. The lack of access and support from teachers further impacted students' perceptions of online learning. To sum up, this study underscores the importance of addressing technical challenges, enhancing motivation and engagement, improving time management skills, and fostering social interaction in online English learning. Therefore, further study is suggested to understand the long-term effects of online learning is crucial for identifying gaps and developing targeted interventions.

**Keywords:** perceptions, online English learning, challenges.

### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused major disruption in Indonesia's education sector. To prevent the virus's spread, Indonesian Ministry of Education issued Circular Letter Number 3 of 2020, making online learning mandatory. This shift to online instruction had a significant impact on students and teachers, requiring them to adapt quickly. Teachers were urged to deliver effective, creative, and innovative teaching while following government guidelines to control COVID-19.

During the pandemic, various digital platforms emerged to support online learning. Commonly used platforms included Google Classroom, Edmodo, Learning

House, Teacher Room, Your School, Smart Class, Zenius, Google Suite for Education, and Microsoft Office 365 for Education. Additionally, platforms like Whatsapp Group, Google Classroom, Edmodo, and Zoom were also utilized. However, the implementation of online learning faced numerous challenges, including differences in learning processes, methods, modes, and media compared to traditional face-to-face learning.

Studies on online learning during the pandemic have revealed interesting findings. The first set of constraints includes limited internet access, poor network connectivity, lack of necessary devices, inadequate learning facilities, and distance from internet access points. The second set of constraints relates to teachers' lack of readiness in using online learning tools and applications. The third set of constraints involves negative psychological effects on students, including unpreparedness, lack of enthusiasm, mood dependence, and difficulty focusing. The last set of constraints pertains to parents' challenges in adapting and supporting their children's home-based learning.

Transitioning from face-to-face to online learning creates new experiences for students, shaping their perceptions and influencing their attitudes and behavior. These perceptions can be either positive or negative, depending on individual observations. Some students may find online learning dull and uninteresting, as they only see and listen to the teacher through a screen. This differs from teachers' efforts to make learning engaging and enjoyable, aiming to ensure students' happiness and comfort during online classes. Thus, each student's perception varies based on their unique interpretations and perspectives.

Research on online learning during the pandemic remains significant in exploring students' responses and perceptions. Factors such as geographical diversity, financial capacity, family educational background, and technological skills can influence students' perception of online English learning. Moreover, online learning is essential in the digital age and plays a crucial role in facilitating education and keeping up with technological advancements. Therefore, studying students' perceptions and their impact on attitudes and behavior is valuable for enhancing educational quality. Based on the rationale, this study aims to explore the perceptions of ninth-grade students in one of junior high school in Banyuwangi Indonesia in order to provide valuable insights into the implementation of online English learning during the pandemic era.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Students' Perception of Online English Learning**

Studies on students' perception of online English learning during the pandemic reveal various positive perspectives. Marsudi (2020) found that students considered online learning useful, fun, and beneficial for increasing creativity, independent learning, and technological skills. Zulkarnaen (2020) reported that students

perceived online learning in English as impactful, citing benefits in accessing materials, submitting assignments, and interacting with teachers, which saved time and effort while improving language skills. Anggraini (2021) discovered that online English learning during the pandemic was perceived positively due to its flexibility, effectiveness, and ability to promote independent learning, time management, and a sense of responsibility in assignments. Students appreciated the accessibility of learning materials and video lessons provided by teachers. Despite potential challenges such as slow internet speed, most students did not consider it a significant issue. Overall, students had positive perceptions of online English learning during the pandemic.

Other studies have highlighted negative perceptions of online English learning. Nurhakiki and Sari (2021) found that students faced internal or external difficulties, such as lack of motivation, computer skills, and inflexibility, which could impact their performance in online learning. Similarly, Syam (2021) reported various problems faced by students during E-Learning in the pandemic, including decreased concentration and seriousness in learning, unstable internet access at home, inadequate device facilities, difficulty understanding teacher-provided materials and completing assignments, challenges in working on English group assignments online, and increased stress levels during online learning.

### **The Implementation of Online English Learning during the Pandemic**

Online learning is a method of education that takes place through the internet. As technology has improved and more people have access to the internet, online learning has grown significantly and become a practical alternative to in-person teaching (Nicholson, 2007). As highlighted by Arkorful and Abaidoo (2015), online learning has developed in different ways and now includes various formats, ranging from fully asynchronous virtual education involving discussions, to synchronous tutorials that offer personalized one-on-one mentoring. Synchronous online learning involves real-time interaction between teachers and students, similar to a traditional face-to-face classroom setting. This type of learning occurs through platforms like Zoom or Google Classroom (Google Meet), where teachers and students connect virtually. They can engage in activities such as live video lectures, discussions, and group work, allowing for immediate feedback and active participation. On the other hand, asynchronous online learning is a more flexible approach where teachers and students do not interact in real-time. Instead, teachers provide learning materials, such as text, videos, or assignments, through online platforms or applications. Students then access and study the materials at their own pace and independently. They may have the freedom to choose when and where they learn, without the constraints of a fixed schedule. In summary, synchronous online learning involves real-time interaction between teachers and students through internet platforms, while asynchronous online learning enables students to access learning materials

independently and study at their own pace. Both approaches have their merits and can be utilized in various educational settings.

Implementing online learning for the English subject during the COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge for teachers and students. Despite the limitations, they had to find ways to achieve learning goals and develop English communication skills without face-to-face interactions. The online English learning system emerged as the most reasonable and feasible solution in such emergency situations. To ensure effective delivery of materials and optimal learning outcomes, English teachers needed to be creative and utilize various platforms such as mobile phones, laptops, and social media. Therefore, before implementing the online teaching, teachers usually make necessary preparations such as creating lesson plans and ensuring the availability of materials, learning platforms, student participation, and a reliable internet connection (Wulandari, Tantra, & Sentosa, 2021).

In the online EFL classroom, teachers aimed to engage students by utilizing various multimedia resources like PowerPoint presentations, videos, and internet links with appealing visuals and animations (Yuen & Wong, 2003). They also employed applications like WhatsApp for assigning tasks, using features such as voice notes and video calls. Google Classroom was utilized to create a virtual class, distribute assignments, and have students complete tasks in English (Wahyuningsih & Kusumaningrum, 2022). YouTube served as a platform to enhance understanding through supplementary English materials in the form of educational videos with explanations (Wahyuningsih & Dewi, 2019). Finally, Zoom Meeting facilitated virtual communication through video conferences. These applications played a significant role in enhancing learning activities in the online classroom.

## Methods

The study aimed to describe the perceptions of ninth-grade students regarding the implementation of online English learning during the pandemic at a junior high school in Banyuwangi Indonesia. The research design chosen was descriptive, as it sought to explore and observe the existing situation. The study utilized a simple quantitative approach, as it employed predetermined instruments in the form of questionnaires to collect quantitative data. The nature of the study was primarily descriptive, with the inclusion of percentages to present the quantitative findings obtained from the questionnaire data collection tool. The total population consisted of 251 students, distributed across nine classes. These students were selected based on their involvement in the entire online learning process since the onset of the pandemic. Following Arikunto's suggestion (2006), the researcher opted to select a sample size of 20% from the entire population. Hence, 50 students were determined through a lottery method, where each member of the population was assigned a number, and the researcher randomly drew numbers from a box to choose the sample.

To gather the necessary data for this study, an online questionnaire was employed using the Google Form application. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents through sharing the link via their WhatsApp numbers. The questionnaire aimed to assess the students' perceptions regarding the implementation of online English learning during the pandemic. It consisted of five aspects related to technical issues, motivation, time management, social interaction, and teachers' support and access. These aspects were elaborated into fifteen statements, and the Likert Scale was used to measure the students' responses, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was written in Indonesian to minimize language barriers and ensure accurate responses.

## Findings

The researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis of the questionnaire responses, carefully examining and evaluating the findings for each statement. The analysis proceeded systematically, starting from the first statement and progressing through the subsequent statements in sequential order. The aim was to consider the varied perceptions expressed by the participants and gain a thorough understanding of their perspectives.

1. I often encounter technical difficulties in learning English online, such as poor internet connection, audio/video problems, or application interruptions

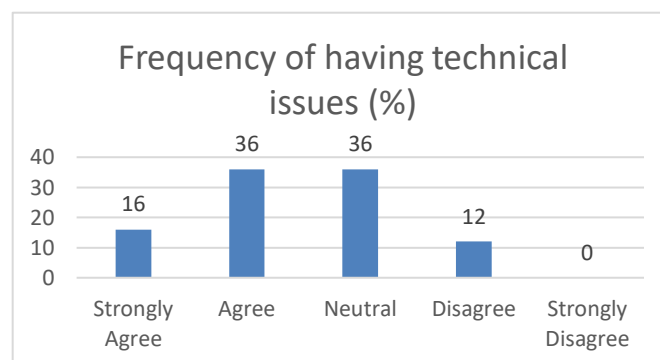


Figure 1. Frequency of Having Technical Issues

According to the analysis of the questionnaire results related to technical issues in online English learning during the pandemic, a significant proportion (52%) of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they frequently face technical difficulties. This implies that a considerable number of learners encounter challenges such as poor internet connectivity, audio/video problems, or interruptions in the applications during their online English learning sessions. A neutral response was provided by an equal percentage of learners (36%), indicating that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. However, a smaller proportion of learners (12%) disagreed, indicating that they do not usually face technical issues in their

online English learning sessions. This could be due to stable internet connections, reliable platforms, or proactive measures taken to minimize technical problems.

2. I feel motivated to actively engage and participate in online English learning.

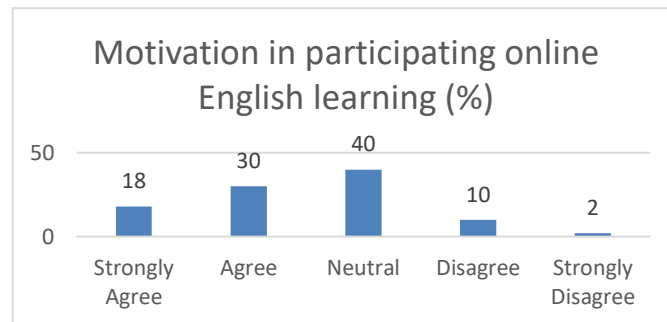
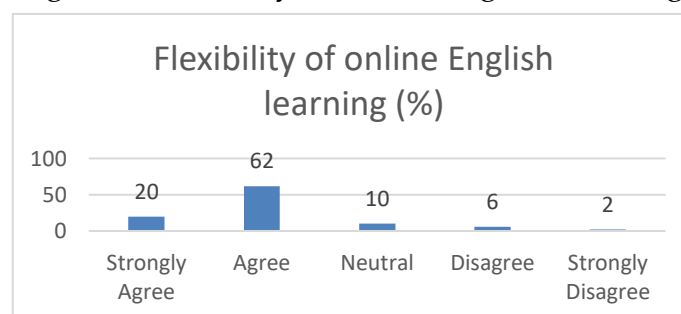


Figure 2. Motivation in Participating online English Learning

Based on the questionnaire results regarding students' motivation in online English learning during the pandemic, the analysis reveals that the largest proportion of respondents (40%) provided neutral responses, indicating a lack of strong agreement or disagreement with the statement. These individuals may have mixed feelings or a moderate level of motivation to actively engage in their online English learning. On the other hand, a significant portion (48%) either agreed (30%) or strongly agreed (18%) that they feel motivated to actively participate in online English learning, suggesting that a considerable number of participants have a certain level of motivation. Conversely, a minority of respondents (12%) disagreed (10%) or strongly disagreed (2%) with the statement, expressing a lack of motivation to actively engage in online English learning. These individuals may be facing challenges or experiencing a lack of motivation that hinders their full engagement in the online learning environment.

3. Online learning's flexibility in terms of scheduling requires me to have strong time management skills.

Figure 3. Flexibility of Online English Learning



The analysis of the questionnaire results reveals that a significant majority of participants (82%) agreed or strongly agreed that online learning's flexibility in terms of scheduling necessitates strong time management skills. This indicates the

recognition of the importance of effective time management in directing and maximizing the benefits of flexible online learning. A smaller percentage of respondents (10%) provided neutral responses, suggesting mixed experiences or an uncertain assessment of their time management skills in relation to the flexibility of online learning. On the other hand, a minority of respondents (8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, possibly perceiving the scheduling flexibility of online learning as less demanding or considering their existing time management skills sufficient for the flexibility provided.

4. Online learning limits my social interactions with other students in comparison to traditional classrooms.

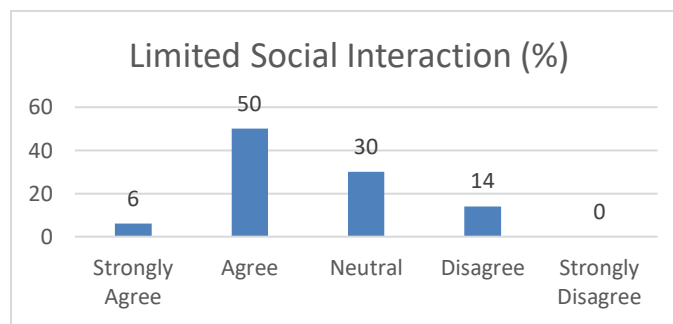
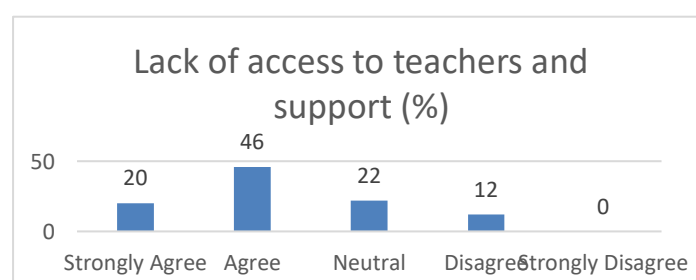


Figure 4. Limited Social Interaction

The analysis of the questionnaire results reveals that a majority of participants (56%) agree (50%) or strongly agree (6%) that online English learning during the pandemic limits their social interactions with other students compared to traditional classrooms. This indicates a perceived decrease in social interaction opportunities in the online learning environment. A significant portion of respondents (30%) provided neutral responses, suggesting mixed experiences or uncertainty regarding the level of social interaction in online English learning. On the other hand, a smaller percentage of participants (14%) disagreed (12%) or strongly disagreed (2%) with the statement, either finding ways to engage socially with peers in the online environment or perceiving no significant difference in social interactions compared to traditional classrooms. The data highlights the impact of online learning on social interaction, emphasizing the need to explore strategies to enhance social engagement and create a sense of community within the online learning environment.

5. I perceive a lack of immediate access to my teachers for clarifying doubts or seeking guidance during online English learning.



### Figure 5. Lack of Access of Teachers and Support

Based on the questionnaire results, a majority of respondents (66%) agreed or strongly agreed that they perceive a lack of immediate access to their teachers for clarifying doubts or seeking guidance during online English learning. This indicates that a significant portion of participants shares the perception of limited teacher access and support. Additionally, a notable percentage of respondents (22%) provided neutral responses, indicating a lack of strong opinion or limited challenges in accessing teacher support. Only 12% of respondents disagreed with the statement, suggesting positive experiences with teacher support or alternative means of accessing assistance. These findings highlight the importance of addressing the issue of limited teacher access and providing adequate support to enhance the online English learning experience during the pandemic.

## Discussions

The analysis of the first aspect, which focuses on technical issues, indicates that a considerable number of participants encountered common challenges during their online English learning sessions. These challenges included poor internet connectivity, audio/video problems, and platform glitches. Such issues can disrupt the learning process, diminish engagement, and hinder the overall effectiveness of online classes. These findings align with previous research conducted by Liu, Chen, and Pugh (2021), who found that some students faced difficulties accessing online courses, video instructions, and learning materials due to unreliable internet connections. Similarly, Mahyoob (2020) identified technical issues, such as access to online classes, downloading class materials, and audio/video playback, as the main problems affecting online EFL learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another study highlighted unstable internet connections as a specific technical issue that caused students to lose concentration (Rifiyanti, 2020). These findings reinforce the significance of technical challenges faced by students in online English learning during the pandemic and their impact on perceptions. To address these challenges, it is essential for educators and stakeholders in the education sector to provide technical support, offer recommendations for internet connectivity and audio/video setups, and ensure the stability of learning platforms (Mahyoob, 2020). By minimizing technical difficulties, online English learning can become more accessible and conducive to active and effective engagement.

The analysis of the second aspect, focusing on motivation and engagement in online English learning, reveals varying perceptions among students. While some students express motivation to participate actively, others hold neutral or negative views. The absence of face-to-face interaction, distractions in the home environment, and limited peer support are identified as potential factors contributing to challenges in maintaining self-discipline and motivation during online English learning. Therefore, some students find it difficult to stay motivated and engaged, which

influences their perceptions of online English learning. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that online learning can present challenges in terms of student engagement and motivation. Chiu, Jin Lin, and Lonka (2021) conducted a study highlighting that lack of motivation and self-discipline are significant barriers to effective online learning, particularly for students who are more accustomed to face-to-face instruction. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing and enhancing student motivation and engagement in online English learning, considering the unique challenges posed by the pandemic context.

The findings of this study concerning with time management indicate that a portion of students face difficulties in managing their time effectively when it comes to completing tasks and assignments in online learning. These findings align with previous research conducted by Mahyoob (2020) and Xia, Hu, Wu, Yang, and Lei (2022). Similar to Mahyoob's study, some students in this study experienced challenges such as procrastination, missed deadlines, and feelings of overwhelm. Additionally, only a minority of students felt confident in their ability to manage their time effectively. These findings suggest that students who lack strong time management skills may struggle to meet the demands of flexible online learning schedules.

The participants in this study had diverse experiences regarding the sense of isolation and limited social interaction in online English learning during the pandemic. The analysis revealed that a significant percentage of students agreed that online learning restricted their social interactions compared to traditional classrooms. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Mahyoob (2020), Wut and Zu (2021), Barrot, Llenares, and Del Rosario (2021), and others. These studies have highlighted the common challenge of limited social interaction in online English learning during the pandemic. Students faced difficulties in effectively interacting with teachers, establishing social presence, and forming social identities in the online learning environment. Consequently, students in online EFL learning during the pandemic encountered a lack of social interaction, which could lead to feelings of isolation and disconnection. The pandemic has also created barriers for students to engage with their peers and teachers, further limiting their social interactions.

The lack of access and support from teachers in online English learning during the pandemic is a significant concern for students, as indicated by this study's findings. Previous research by Barrot, Llenares, and del Rosario (2021) and Lemay, Bazalais, and Doleck (2021) also emphasizes the importance of effective communication channels, teacher responsiveness, and technological competence in facilitating online learning. These studies highlight that reliable and accessible communication channels with teachers, clear communication expectations, and prompt responses contribute to higher levels of engagement and perceived support

among students. Additionally, Li (2022) underscores the role of institutional support and technological training in enhancing access and support in online learning. Students will get benefit from prompt teacher responses which contribute to higher engagement and perceived support. Therefore, by addressing these aspects, teachers and school can create a more supportive and engaging online learning environment for students.

## Conclusion

This study explored students' perceptions of online English learning during the pandemic across multiple aspects. The findings revealed that technical issues, such as poor internet connectivity and platform glitches, hindered the learning process. Students had varied levels of motivation and engagement, influenced by the absence of face-to-face interaction and distractions at home. Time management proved challenging for some students, leading to procrastination and missed deadlines. Limited social interaction posed a significant difficulty, impacting students' sense of isolation and connection. Additionally, the lack of access and support from teachers hindered students' learning experiences. Addressing these challenges through technical support, fostering motivation and engagement, promoting effective time management, enhancing social interaction, and providing necessary support can contribute to more effective online English learning during the pandemic. After the two year experience of online learning, understanding the long-term effects is crucial for identifying potential gaps in language acquisition and developing targeted interventions to support students' language learning process.

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