

## **Online Learning: Students' Perspective of Advantages and Challenges during C-19 Pandemic**

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### **Abstract:**

This study aims to get students' perspectives towards advantages and challenges of online classes at Institute Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogo. The researcher explores both benefits and challenges of online classes from students' perspective. It is also explained some suggestions of improving online classes in teaching and learning process. The researcher uses mixed method approach, it can be concluded that students face some challenges with online learning, they prefer offline classes to online classes. The disadvantages they face in online learning are more than advantages based on the students' perspective. The most challenges students meet in the online learning such as the bad internet connection, less interaction, poor motivation, less participation and less understanding. Although, they also get the good side of this online classes such as easy to access, convenient and easy to be reviewed for examination.

**Keywords:** *Online learning, advantages, challenges*

### **Introduction**

Technology gives high impact in every aspect of our life, included in language learning process especially in English language. Start from previous years, using technology in language teaching-learning process has grown and developed well. So, many researchers and theorist study using computers as tools to assist in language learning which is called CALL (Daud & Farah, 2013). According Beatty (2003) CALL changed nature and the process of learners in utilizing computer and internet resources, and consequently in enhancing their competence. The CALL process was the first step in utilizing technology beside traditional classroom learning (Farrah, 2006). It was to prompt and facilitate the language learning development. Nowadays, the use of technology has extended to reach a new term which is called online learning. According to Arroyo, Berrocoso, Cevallos and Videla (2020), said that pandemic covid, technology-mediated learning has a significant impact on educational process.

Before covid-19 outbreak, many educational institutions, schools and universities were using partially online classes just to help the process of language learning (Farrah & Al Bakri, 2020, Abu Safiyeh & Farrah, 2020). However, in pandemic situations, fully online classes have applied in all of educational institutions, schools and universities as transformation into digital or modern teaching learning process. It has been conducted at IAIN Ponorogo too. All the students took fully online classes using both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Some media used for synchronous learning are zoom meeting, google meet and Jitsi Application, while for asynchronous learning, the students used e-learning, included for taking attendance, quiz and submitting the assignment. Accordingly, there is a need to conduct a study to explore the advantages and challenges of online learning.

According to Richard and Haya (2009), technological devices become among the essential tools in the teaching learning process. Learners can use the internet to share and access information. Similarly, Oblinger and Hawkins (2005) pointed out that technology facilitated

the transmission process towards fully-online courses. Likewise, the European Commission (2001 as cited in Arkorful, Abaidoo, 2014) described e-Learning as utilizing new technologies and the Internet to improve quality of learning by providing accessibility to facilities and services and promoting exchanges and collaboration. Moreover, Singh and Thurman (2019) clarified that learners experience synchronous and asynchronous online learning environments and utilize varied technological devices along with internet access. Learners can access information anywhere and interact with faculty members and other students. According to Carey (2020 as cited in Dahwan, 2020), the crucial issue is responding to the pandemic and most importantly providing quality online education and the mechanism of transmission from traditional learning to online learning.

Some years, many researchers discussed the advantages and challenges of online learning. Brewer et al. (2001) stated that technology plays a significant role in the teaching learning process. However, there is necessity for suitable integration of technological tools. They warned that if such learning technologies used wrongly, they are likely undermining the rule technology and thus the failure of the learning process. According to Hasboula (2009), online learning has a potential to improve access to education and training as well as the quality of teaching and learning. He emphasized the role of technology in improving the teaching and learning process and pointed out that such online educational programs should be available to students at a reasonable cost. Likewise, Fedynoch as cited in Zboun, & Farrah (2021) noted the potential advantages of online learning and the challenges.

The term “E-learning” was devised in 1998 by Jay Cross; Electronic learning or E-Learning is a popular way of developing education by technological breakthroughs. In general, the term Elearning is synonymous with online learning. E-Learning becomes a new paradigm and a modern philosophy in teaching with a mission to serve as a development platform for the present-day society based on knowledge. E-Learning has defined in many different ways. For example, Garrison in Ja’ashan (2020) defines E-Learning as “electronically mediated asynchronous and synchronous communication to construct and confirm the knowledge”. Palloff and Pratt (1999) connect a whole new set of physical, emotional and psychological issues in their definition "Electronic learning or E-learning is a general term used to refer to computer-based learning" (pp.15-6). Congruz-Bacescu, (2013) defines "E-learning concisely as the use of internet technologies to provide a broad range of solutions that enhances performance and knowledge. E-learning also means any act or virtual process used to obtain data, information, skills or expertise. In a broad sense, E-learning means all learning situations where there is significant use of informatics and communication resources "(pp. 573-578). Elearning could include a varied kind of systems, from students use e-mail or access course work on line. In Fang’s (2007) study on what Singaporean polytechnic students find useful, enjoyable and effective in their e-learning experience, the study found that "Younger Singaporeans who had been exposed to widespread use of computers in school, at home and in society did enjoy Cyber Culture among other activities.

Kasworm in Ayu M. (2020) agreed that e-learning allows flexibly in learning and accessing materials according to students’ needs and provides more interactive materials that allow easy access to information and feedback from students. Presently, some universities have integrated e-learning in their teaching to accommodate the diverse need in learning (Turney *et. al*, 2009). In 2020, many researchers have questioned the validity and the obstacles of fully-fledged online classes and the following are some related studies that discussed the same issue: Adnan and

Anwar (2020) examined the attitudes of Pakistani higher education students towards online learning amid (COVID-19). They found that online learning cannot yields the intended results in countries like Pakistan because students and instructors do not have proper access to the internet and they lack both adequate training and the financial resources. Likewise, Aminullah et al. (2019) observed that though some teachers held positive attitudes towards ICT, others still faced many problems such as lack of support from institution, lack of ICT equipment, and also lack of adequate training.

Likewise, Baber (2020) examined students 'attitudes towards online learning during Covid19 pandemic in India and South Korea. He found that students held positive perception towards online learning aspects such as interaction, motivation, course structure, instructor knowledge, and facilitation. Accordingly, they perceived they were satisfied with the learning outcome. In a study conducted in Palestine, Farrah and AlBakry (2020) explored the attitudes of EFL students in six Palestinian universities towards online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers reported that students found some benefits for online learning and they pointed out some challenges that encountered the students during the transmission process towards online learning. Finally, they offered some suggestions to improve the implementation of online learning in the educational process such as improving the technological infrastructure and providing both instructors and students with the necessary that facilitate the learning teaching process in the online environment. Similarly, Itmeizeh, & Farrah. (2021) examined the extent to which the online applications utilized in Palestine Ahliya University and Hebron University in Palestine met IHEP benchmarks (Teaching Process, Student Support, Evaluation and Assessment, Faculty Support) for online learning.

Moreover, they examined the attitudes of EFL instructors' and students towards online education and the challenges that both of them may face. Findings revealed that EFL learners' and instructors expressed their concerns towards the availability of student support and faculty support.

This study will explore the benefits and challenges of online learning from the perspectives of first year students at IAIN Ponorogo. Moreover, students will provide suggestions of how to overcome the main difficulties of online classes. So, it will present a detailed image of students within the online learning environment, prompt deep understanding of how student's look or see the fully online learning according to their present experience. Also, it will offer some recommendations to have effective online classes that can improve and overcome the challenges of online learning. So, this study will be very beneficial for instructors, students, as well as the educational institutions and universities; as it sheds light on one of the most important factors of the educational learning system which is the student. The research questions in this research are: (1) What are the Advantages and challenges of online classes applied in IAIN Ponorogo? (2) What recommendation from student's perspective to overcome the challenges of online learning?

## **Methodology**

In this paper, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative research method. This study was conducted in the first semester of academic year 2021/2022. The researcher shared the questionnaires to 90 pupils from 3 English classes to get better result of the students' perspective in online learning and the possibility to improve it at IAIN Ponorogo. From all the distributed questionnaires, there are 90 pupils voluntarily agreed to fill in the posted online

questionnaire. All the pupils are the first-year students who are experiencing full online class in the first academic year 2021/2022.

The researcher chose using this questionnaire because it helps to collect information with reliable and quick method from multiple respondents in efficient and timely manner. It purposed to gain relevant information related students' perspective of online learning. The questionnaire combined 5-point Likert scale and open-ended questions. The instrument content was developed and used to dig up the advantages and disadvantages of online learning from students' perspective. The questionnaire has two sections, the first section is to get better students' learning method and find the students perception about challenges and advantages of online learning. The respondents are offered some questions by choosing the rate among several options from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). In the second section, there were four open-ended questions.

To help researcher complete the data during lecturing, the researcher chose online tools by using students' classroom app. After doing validation of the questionnaire, then the researcher collected eligible data from collected questionnaire. After that, the researcher analyzed the data statistically using SPSS. The reliability of questionnaire was examined and found that the Crombach Alpha Coefficient of questionnaire was 0.841, it was more than ( $r = 0.70$ ), indicating an acceptable degree of internal consistency. This means that the questionnaire was a reliable instrument for the purpose of the current research.

## Results and Discussions

The researcher used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 25) to analyze the data and students' perspective about benefits of online learning. The mean and standard deviation (SDs) were calculated using 5-point Likert scale items. The results of the study revealed that most participants *strongly agreed* on one Item. This Item shows that most of the students *strongly agreed* that the students prefer offline (face to face) classes to online classes. The mean of this item was 4.28 (see Table1).

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I prefer offline (face to face) classes to online classes	90	4.28	.794
Valid N (listwise)	90		

Note. If the mean is more than 4.21, this means that participant strongly agree.

As table 1 shown, most students *strongly agreed* that they prefer to conduct offline classes at IAIN Ponorogo rather than to conduct online classes ( $M=4.28$ ). Most of the participants have rated the following eight items with *agree* (see table 2). The means of these items were in range 3.41 – 4.20. Item 3, Item 4, Item 5, and Item 6 were items related to disadvantages of online classrooms. For example, most of the students *agreed* that Interaction with lectures in online classes is less than interaction in face-to-face classes with a mean of 4.09. Also, they believe that lectures talk most of the time in the online classes with a mean of 4.08. Most of them *agreed* that the internet connection is weak for online classes (see in table 2) with mean 3.57. Most of the students get bored in the online classes with a mean of 4.11 and std 0.678. Moreover, most of the students agreed on 3 items which are about the advantages of face-toface classes. Most of the students recommend traditional classes and participate in it more than

online classes with a mean of 4.10 and 4.18. Also, they are easier to get understanding and more motivated in the face-to-face classes with a mean 3.72 and 4.08.

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I participate more in offline classes	90	4.18	.801
I would recommend face to face classes	90	4.10	.654
Interaction with lectures in online classes is less than offline classes	90	4.09	.647
The Internet connection is week	90	3.57	.735
I get bored in online class	90	4.11	.678
Lectures talk most of the time in the online classes	90	4.08	.674
Explanation in offline classes is easier to understand than online classes	90	3.72	.704
I got more motivated when meet my friends in offline classes	90	4.08	.738
Valid N (listwise)	90		

Note. If the mean is in range 3.41 – 4.20, this means that participant agree.

Table 2 shows that most of the students have preferences for face-to-face classes as they interact more and they were able to understand the material easier and more motivated. However, they do not like the online classes as lectures talk most of the time and less interaction which makes them bored. Besides that, they agree that the internet connection is weak or poor. Therefore, they recommend the traditional classroom. Moreover, there are 8 items that were rated with *neutral* as shown in Table 3.

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I participate more in online classes	90	2.84	.911
I feel relaxed in online classes	90	3.33	.972
Online classes make me less anxious	90	3.27	.934
I prefer submitting my assignment via online	90	3.16	.911
The quality of online learning at IAIN Ponorogo is good	90	3.34	1.051
Online learning is easy to access	90	3.34	.950
The online classes help me following and reviewing the course easily	90	3.30	.930
I don't find difficulty in using Gmeet, Zoom, E-learning or other apps	90	3.31	1.056
Valid N (listwise)	90		

Note. If the mean is in range 2.61 – 3.40, this means that participant is neutral.

Table 3 shows the participants were neither *agree* nor *disagree* with items about the advantages of online classroom like *I participate more in online classes*, *I feel relaxed in the online classes*, *online classes make me less anxious*, and many other advantages of the online classroom like reviewing, or easiness in submitting assignments. So, they didn't see using online classes or

technology tools as a benefit either as an obstacle too. Finally, it seems that most of the students were not satisfied with the online learning experience as shown in Table 4.

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Online classes satisfy my learning needs	90	2.13	.902
I would recommend online learning	90	2.24	1.009
I have good internet connection	90	2.33	.948
Online classes make me more competitive	90	2.12	1.004
The students learn and get the same learning of online and offline classes	90	2.23	.960
Valid N (listwise)	90		

Note. If the mean is less than 2.60, this means that participant disagree.

Table 4 shows most of the students *do not* recommend the online classes (M=2.24). Most of them are not satisfied with learning through online classes. Also, they *disagreed* that they get the same learning from online classes and face to face classes (M=2.23). However, most of the students *disagreed* on item that they have good internet connection and online class satisfy their learning need (M=2.33 and M=2.13).

#### *The results of the open- ended questions*

The researchers asked for more elaboration about the advantages and disadvantages of online classes, 90% of the students whether they recommend or do not recommend online classes, they have *agreed* that online learning gave the good side such as saves time, effort and easy to be accessed and reached. A26 said "Online learning saved my time and my effort too. Also, it saves my money for transportation". However, A12 said "There are no positives other than saving time and money". Also, 85% of the students agreed that it is better to use the online class for reviewing the material. Some of them mentioned other factors like; I feel more comfortable, relaxed and less shy but they are just two students. Also, A27 and A28 agreed that they participate in online more without hesitation. Also, A3 said, "It is good to get higher grades". Most of the students have agreed on three negatives' factors in the online classes and they are as the following: (1) 80% of the students refer to the interaction problem between students and lectures; they said "The interaction between students and lectures are less than the interaction in the traditional classroom." (2) 50% agreed on the poor internet connection which makes online learning very hard for most of the students. Also, they refer to some issues like the limited number of electronic devices in each home. (3) 75% of the students feel less motivated in the online classes. Moreover, most of the students give the same solutions to make online classes more effective as they mentioned increasing the internet speed. Also, they mentioned some ideas to make the students be motivated and participate in the class. A30, A56 and A70 said that instructors should encourage and motivate the students by making slides, PowerPoint's, let them watch films and do some interesting activities".

In the last open-ended question, the researchers asked the student that if we resolve all of the obstacles from having good internet connection, what type of learning would you choose? 18 students from 90 participants chose online classes. However, 72 students chose face to face classes. So, the results showed that most of the students still prefer the traditional classes (face

to face classroom) but they think it is good this time because it will protect them from Coronavirus nothing more. This study attempted to gain students' perceptions of first academic year 2021/2022 at IAIN Ponorogo towards advantages and disadvantages of online classes. It aimed to show the most efficient methods of learning from their perspective. For the purpose of this study, 90 students from three different English class have participated in this research. The researchers answered the following research questions according to the students' perspectives. *What are the major benefits and challenges of fully online classes according to IAIN Ponorogo students?* As the finding showed, most of the students do not recommend online classes. Also, they focus on showing the negative side of it more than showing its benefits. For the disadvantages of online classes, students see that they don't interact or be motivated in the online classes. Also, they feel bored. A4 said, "It is important to see physically students in the classroom this will make us be motivated and participate more". This finding is in line with Baker, C. (2010) who noted the importance of the instructor's presence to establish proper patterns of communication and enhance student motivation.

Furthermore, some students *agreed* on the poor internet connection. This prevents the effectiveness of online classes. A33 said, "The I can't concentrate in the online classes as the internet disconnects in some minutes". This problem is considered the main problem for most of the students. Mohammad in Farah (2021) found that online learning can't be effective in underdeveloped countries, where a majority can't get access to the internet due to technical as well as economic issues. This makes the results of taking online classes be less satisfied for both students and lectures. Because as the result shows, students are not satisfied with online learning and do not see the learning and teaching process being delivered the same as face-to-face learning; That's why they prefer face to face lecturing. A68 said "I don't accept online learning because I don't understand the material well in the online classes. However, when the researchers asked for more illustration in open ended questions, most of the students agreed on the following advantages of the online classroom: (1) Easy to be reached and accessed. (2) Saves time, effort and money. (3) Easy to be reviewed despite the result in the questionnaire, the researchers find that they were neutral. They don't agree nor disagree about these advantages. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted in this field.

According to the student's perspectives, what are the students' recommendations to overcome the challenges and the difficulties of online learning? According to their perspectives, issues of connectivity are matters as 30% will recommend online classes if all of these problems will be solved. So, it is about the quality of internet connection and the effort that instructors and students give. According to Arora (2019) a number of problems may arise due to lack of careful planning from instructors and students as well as implementation of online learning. Students may feel a sense of isolation, frustration, stress, in some cases and poor performance. Also, 20 % of the students recommend that the lectures make video or record the teaching learning process to avoid connectivity problem for the students who get poor signal and replace it with face-to-face classes.

## **Conclusion**

Covid-19 have changed the traditional teaching- learning method into modern one such as online learning that applied in academic institution across the whole world. Therefore, the online teaching learning was a basic topic to be discussed. Based on the result of this research show that the students are not satisfied with the online classroom. They prefer and

recommended traditional classes more as they participate, they feel more comfortable in interacting with others and doing discussion session when conducted in traditional class and more motivated when they meet their friends by face to face. The participants assume that online classes have more negatives than positive things. But some students also agree that the online classes give the good side such as easy to access, convenient and easy to be reviewed for examination. They recommend to make video or record the teaching learning process to avoid connectivity problem for the students who get poor signal and help them to get good internet connection.

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