

Asian university students' perspectives on online English courses during COVID-19: A systematic review

Nurzahirah Zainal, Melor Md Yunus

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Article Info

Article history:

Received Jun 25, 2021

Revised Mar 28, 2022

Accepted Apr 20, 2022

Keywords:

English language courses
Online learning
Task assessments
Technological infrastructure
Training program

ABSTRACT

Globally, English courses intended for university students are conducted online due to the COVID-19, including in Asian countries. Hence, this systematic review paper attempts to review relevant studies regarding the Asian university students' perspectives towards online English courses during COVID-19. This paper employs PRISMA, whereby several stages to filter and gather relevant information have been carried out. Twelve articles have been identified and analysed based on the research designs, methodologies, and themes. The main themes are positive and negative perspectives on online English courses learning during COVID-19, and suggestions to improve online English courses learning during COVID-19. It is found that university students in Asia are generally ready to learn online English courses due to flexibility and easy access. Poor internet connection and infrastructure are among negative perspectives towards the online English courses during COVID-19. It is recommended that improving technological infrastructure, conducting training programmes, and restructuring task assessments should be done to improve the quality of online English courses during COVID-19.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Nurzahirah Zainal
Faculty of Education, University Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 UKM, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: nurzahirah2197@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

In early 2020, the global population was alarmed by the declaration from the World Health Organisation (WHO) about the rise of a new pandemic called COVID-19 [1]. Its rapid spread has brought genuine concerns among people worldwide. Gradually, we have acknowledged this new threat and its impacts on our normal lifestyle [2]. COVID-19 has affected several sectors tremendously, including the education system [3].

Globally, the education system during COVID-19 is not the same as the pre-COVID-19 years. On 26th March 2020, UNESCO has announced that 1.5 billion students in the world have been affected by the pandemic [4]. In Asia, over 384 million students have been affected by school closures [5]. They have to face interrupted education and emotional adjustment to the "new normal" [6]. The Movement Control Order (MCO) implemented around the world, including in Asia, has driven educators to employ online platforms for teaching and learning processes [7], [8].

Online learning is an educational approach that emphasises the use of technology in education, such as emails, texts and video teleconferencing [9]. It can potentially be the most preferred learning approach in tertiary academic institutions in Asia due to its flexible learning [10], [11]. The students gain several

advantages from online learning [12], [13]. Furthermore, several universities in Asia have employed an online learning approach during the COVID-19 outbreak [14]–[16].

In Asia, the enforcement of MCO has led the teachers and lecturers to strive for an online learning approach that complies with the standard operation procedures (SOP) urged by the government and Ministry of Health (MOH) [17]. This pandemic crisis has opened the window of opportunities for more than 1.2 million university students in Asia such as Malaysia and Indonesia to gain knowledge through online platforms [18]. The significant shift from conventional to online learning has raised the attention of many university students in Asia to adapt to the new learning setting, including familiarizing themselves with online English courses [19]. The learning of English courses has shifted its reliability significantly on online platforms to aid the communication in the classes, which is challenging and requires high motivation [20].

In Asia, the implementation of online English courses such as English as a Second Language (ESL) course, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course has witnessed several feedbacks from the university students whose first language is not English. The sudden shift to online interaction via Blackboard application in Bangladesh has reduced the students' psychological mood in English classes due to a lack of experience in handling the technological tools [21]. In Pakistan, the majority of the two local university students have shown positive feedback towards online learning in terms of high learning autonomy [22]. However, the main challenge of online learning processes is poor internet coverage, which leads to interrupted learning and absenteeism [23]. Moreover, the motivation level of English Department students in Salatiga, Indonesia has been affected due to the feeling of being forced to adapt to the new learning setting [24]. Several university students in Indonesia do not have the privilege to learn comfortably online during the lockdown [25]. Thus, high learning autonomy, poor technical skills, and psychological stress are among the positive and negative perspectives towards online English courses in Asia which should be highlighted.

Various feedbacks from the university students in Asia have initiated the researcher to review the relevant studies regarding this issue more in-depth for a holistic understanding of this issue. The implementation of online English courses among university students in Asia is considered new to several countries and the students struggle to adapt to the “new normal” [26], [27]. Moreover, the lecturers and students in Asia experience a sudden significant shift to learn online English courses during COVID-19, which is challenging to them as English is not their first language and they are among the pioneers in the holistically digitalized learning era [28], [29]. These issues have strengthened the need to explore more on the perceptions of university students in Asia towards online English courses in the era of COVID-19. Thus, this paper attempts to fill the gap in reviewing relevant studies regarding the Asian university students' perspectives towards online English courses conducted in the era of COVID-19. The study is significant to the future of online English courses in terms of reviewing relevant studies about Asian university students' perspectives towards online English courses systematically, evaluating the learning scenarios of online English courses in Asia during COVID-19 from the university students' perspectives, and summarizing the proposed solutions for the learning problems to gain an optimal learning experience in the future [30], [31].

Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is one of the methods to review scholarly articles related to a particular issue. It is a research method to answer research questions that arise from the issue. The process of reviewing includes a thorough examination of previous relevant studies using explicit criteria. SLR is also defined as a research process that reviews scholarly articles and past literature according to an analytic framework and discusses the results. It is described by the process of searching relevant details about the issue to determine and evaluate the results of the analysis [32].

In SLR studies, the processes need to be handled thoroughly and carefully. The objectives of the SLR process are: i) To filter the articles and literature to control the quality of the research; ii) To produce a summary about a general theme; iii) To determine the strengths and limitations of the research; and iv) To propose new research with a theoretical framework. One of the models of the SLR method is the Preferred Reporting Item for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA), which refers to a thorough analysis of constructed questions using structured procedures to choose research findings selectively [33].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research design (PRISMA)

The researcher has applied the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach in this study, which is directed to gather, determine, analyze and synthesize several studies on perspectives of Asian university students and online English courses during COVID-19. To avoid systematic or biased errors, the SLR method possesses a structure of scientific procedures. PRISMA is employed in this study, whereby several stages to filter and gather relevant information systematically have been carried out, which are identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. PRISMA brings three benefits to the researchers: i) Constructing research questions that describe thorough research; ii) Applying inclusion and exclusion criteria; and iii)

Searching for related literature using structured planning [34]. Thus, PRISMA is employed to determine the perspectives of Asian university students on online English courses during COVID-19.

2.2. Systematic review process

In the systematic review process, four stages should be highlighted. The first phase is the identification, in which the researcher has identified several relevant keywords to search for the articles. The total number of articles found based on several search databases (Google Scholar, Scopus, Open Access Theses and Dissertation, ResearchGate) is 64. After an in-depth screening, 23 duplicated articles have been eliminated. The next stage is screening, in which 26 articles out of 41 articles that are not eligible to be reviewed have been removed. The third stage is eligibility, where the researcher has analysed the whole part of the articles. After a thorough analysis, three articles have been excluded due to the target of focus was not among university students, carried out outside of Asia and did not target English language learning. Twelve articles have been analysed qualitatively at the end of the process. Figure 1 shows a glimpse of the systematic process of fulfilling this research purpose. There were 12 articles analyzed according to the flow diagram of the systematic review process as shown in Figure 1.

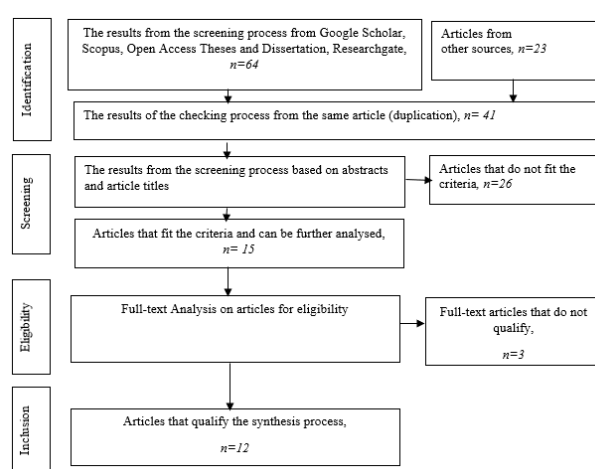


Figure 1. The systematic process of reviewing the resources

2.3. Identification and screening

To search for sources of data, several online databases have been assessed such as ResearchGate, Google Scholar, ERIC. Various keywords have been included in the data search, namely the COVID-19 online learning perspective, e-learning perspective during COVID-19, and perspectives on online learning during COVID-19. The selection process to filter and analyze the chosen articles refers to PRISMA. All the articles chosen have been retrieved from creditable journals and apply the peer-review approach.

2.4. Eligibility

Inclusion and exclusion criteria need to be determined to ensure the eligibility of the articles, which are literature type, language, timeline, region of research, and field of research. The researcher has included only journal articles with empirical data. Only articles that are written in English have been included. In terms of timeline, all the articles included are published in 2020 as the researcher has focused on the study done during the COVID-19 era. Regarding the region of research, only articles from Asia have been included. In terms of the field of research, only articles from the education field have been qualified to be synthesized. Table 1 represents the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the resources.

Table 1. The inclusion and exclusion criteria of the resources

Criterion	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Literature type	Journals (research articles)	Proceeding, book series, reviews
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2020	Before 2020
Region of research	Asian countries	Non-Asian countries
Subject area	Education	Other than education

2.5. Data analysis

There were 12 articles have been analyzed using the content analysis approach. The data have been collected by reading the abstracts, followed by analyzing the whole article to formulate the themes. A qualitative analysis has been performed to identify themes regarding the perspectives of university students in Asia on online English courses during COVID-19. The sub-themes under the major themes have been established by typology. Table 2 shows the identity of the articles which are qualified for the synthesis process.

Table 2. The identity of the articles which are qualified for the synthesis process

No	Author (s)	Title
1	Chung, Subramaniam, & Dass [17]	Online Learning Readiness Among University Students in Malaysia Amidst COVID-19
2	Almekhlafy [21]	Online learning of English language courses via Blackboard at Saudi universities in the era of COVID-19: perception and use
3	Shahzad <i>et al</i> [22]	Impact of Virtual Teaching on ESL Learners' Attitudes under COVID-19 Circumstances at Post Graduate Level in Pakistan
4	Afrin [23]	Virtual EFL Classes during COVID-19 in Bangladesh: Pros and Cons with Possible Solutions at Tertiary Level
5	Famularsih [24]	Students' Experiences in Using Online Learning Applications Due to COVID-19 in English Classroom
6	Baber [35]	Determinants of Students' Perceived Learning Outcome and Satisfaction in Online Learning during the Pandemic of COVID19
7	Krishnapatria [36]	From 'Lockdown' To Letdown: Students' Perception of E-Learning Amid the COVID-19 Outbreak
8	Farrah & Hatem [37]	Online Learning for EFL Students in Palestinian Universities During Corona Pandemic: Advantages, Challenges, and Solutions
9	Allo [38]	Is the online learning good in the midst of Covid-19 Pandemic? The case of EFL learners
10	Rinekso & Muslim [39]	Synchronous Online Discussion: Teaching English in Higher Education amidst the Covid-19 pandemic
11	Krishnan <i>et al.</i> [40]	Challenges of Learning English in 21st Century: Online vs. Traditional During Covid-19
12	Syahrin & Salih [41]	An ESL Online Classroom Experience in Oman during Covid-19

3. RESULTS

3.1. Research design

There are three research designs used, which are quantitative approach, qualitative approach, and mixed-method approach. There were six articles have employed quantitative methods, four articles have employed qualitative methods, and two articles have employed a mixed-method approach. The method used in each article have been analysed thoroughly.

For the quantitative approach, all the articles have employed an online questionnaire as their research instruments. Among the online platforms used to conduct the survey are Google Form and WhatsApp application. A study [17] aimed to investigate the perspectives of 399 undergraduate students registered for two English classes, Almekhlafy [21] aimed to study the perspectives of students of Preparatory Year (PY) English courses regarding the online Blackboard platform. Another study [22] proposed to investigate the perspectives of 100 students of KFUEIT, RYK University regarding online English lessons, while Baber [35] aimed to determine the learning outcomes and satisfaction of online English learning during COVID-19, and Krishnapatria [36] aimed to investigate the students' point of view regarding two online English language courses during the pandemic. Furthermore, Farrah and Hatem [37] aimed to examine the perspectives of EFL undergraduates in Palestinian universities about online learning advantages, challenges, and solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the qualitative approach, previous study [23] adopted online questionnaires via Google Form as the research instrument, which was aimed to analyze feedback from the university students in Bangladesh on online EFL classes during the lockdown. Another research [24] aimed to investigate the EFL students' perceptions of online learning applications using a semi-structured interview. Moreover, previous study [38] aimed to identify the students of the English language program of UKI Toraja's perceptions on online lessons during COVID-19 using interviews. Virtual observation and semi-structured interviews were employed to investigate EFL university students' views and obstacles regarding synchronous online discussions [39].

For the mixed-method approach, there have been two studies that have employed a combination of two methods. A study [40] investigated the perspectives of students from intensive English classes regarding online English lessons via conventional and online approaches. This study employed a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews as their research instruments to collect data. Meanwhile, Syahrin and Salih [41] applied a questionnaire survey and textual analysis to investigate the perspectives of Oman tertiary ESL students regarding their online learning experience during COVID-19.

3.2. Research locations

Based on all the articles which have been reviewed and analyzed, all the studies have been conducted in Asia regions. To ensure the eligibility of the studies based on the aim of the study, all the articles should obey the geographic criterion to be qualified for the synthesis process. There have been four studies conducted in Indonesia, two studies have been conducted in Malaysia, and one study has been conducted in Bangladesh, Oman, South Korea, India, Pakistan, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, respectively. Table 3 shows an overview of the research methods employed in the articles and the research locations.

Table 3. The overview of research methods employed in the articles and the research locations

No.	Research approach	Author(s)	Instruments	Research participants	Research location
1	Quantitative <i>n=6</i>	Chung, Subramaniam, & Dass [17]	Online questionnaire	399 undergraduate students registered for two online English courses in the UiTM during Covid-19	Malaysia
2		Almekhlafy [21]	Online questionnaire	228 students of Preparatory Year English courses in Najran University	Saudi Arabia
3		Shahzad et al [22]	Online questionnaire	100 ESL students of KFUEIT, RYK University	Pakistan
4		Baber [35]	Online questionnaire	100 ESL undergraduates who are studying in India and South Korea	South Korea
5		Krishnapatria [36]	Online questionnaire	56 Padjadjaran University students who register for English for Business Purposes and Speaking for Business Purposes courses	Indonesia
6		Farrah & Hatem [37]	Online questionnaire	191 EFL students in six Palestinian countries	Palestine
7	Qualitative <i>n=4</i>	Afrin [23]	Online interview	60 EFL Students of East Delta University, Bangladesh	Bangladesh
8		Famularsih [24]	Semi-structured interview	35 English Department students in one of the universities in Salatiga, Indonesia.	Indonesia
9		Allo [38]	Semi-structured interview	30 students of the English study program of UKI Toraja	Indonesia
10		Rinekso & Muslim [39]	Virtual observations and semi-structured interview	5 Master students who register for the English education study program in Bandung	Indonesia

3.3. Theme and results of the article under review

The articles have been analyzed and reviewed systematically to locate the main and sub-themes addressed in each article. The main themes discovered through the systematic review process are positive and negative perspectives on online English courses learning during COVID-19 among university students in Asia and the suggestions to improve online English courses learning during COVID-19 in Asia. There are also a few sub-themes underlying each main theme. Table 4 shows the representation of the main and sub-themes addressed in the articles.

Table 4. The representation of the main and sub-themes addressed in the articles

No.	Article reference	Main themes												
		Positive perspectives of online English courses learning during COVID-19					Negative perspectives of online English courses learning during COVID-19					Suggestions on online English courses learning during COVID-19		
		MR	FOR	FL	SL	EA	PIC	PIT	LODL	PLS	IA	ITI	TP	RA
1	[17]	/					/	/				/		/
2	[21]	/				/		/				/		/
3	[22]			/	/			/			/		/	
4	[23]	/				/	/	/				/		/
5	[24]						/	/		/	/	/	/	/
6	[35]				/		/	/		/		/		/
7	[36]			/		/		/				/		/
8	[37]	/					/	/		/	/	/		/
9	[38]			/				/		/		/		/
10	[39]	/		/					/	/		/		/
11	[40]		/	/			/		/			/		/
12	[41]	/			/	/						/		/

MR (Mental readiness); FOR (Free online resources); FL (Flexible learning); SL (Satisfying learning); EA (Easy access); PIC (Poor internet connectivity); PIT (Poor infrastructure and technology); LODL (Lack of digital literacy); PLS (Poor learning satisfaction); IA (Improper assessment); ITI (Improving technological infrastructure); TP (Training program); RTA (Restructuring assessment)

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Positive perspectives on online English courses learning during COVID-19 in Asia

In terms of the positive perspectives on online English courses learning during COVID-19, the sub-themes are mental readiness, free online resources, flexible learning, satisfying learning, and easy access. Regarding mental readiness, most university students in Asia such as Malaysia, Palestine, Oman, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia are mentally ready for online English courses. Moreover, university students in Asia whose average age is 21 years old have a better resilience than students from the younger age group in adapting to online learning. University students in Asia are exposed to digital technologies to ease their learning, and hence; they are familiar with digital learning during COVID-19 [42]. Moreover, it encourages them to have better self-resiliency towards the challenges of online English courses. Hence, this aspect highlights the role of mental readiness and positive mindset in influencing the good responses towards online English courses during COVID-19.

Regarding free online resources, it is discovered that university students in Malaysia favour online English courses due to their free access [40]. As stated in previous study [43], they could search for online articles for free and download them for full viewing although they could not have the access to the library due to Movement Control Order (MCO). Moreover, it enables university students in Asia to be more productive and increases their horizons of knowledge online. Hence, this aspect emphasises that free online resources are viewed as the door to various opportunities offered in online English courses.

Regarding learning flexibility, the majority of university students in several countries in Asia, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Pakistan, perceive online English classes as flexible and promote independent learning. They state that they can reschedule when necessary and increase their time management skills [22]. According to previous study [44], the studies claim that the use of independent online learning platforms such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) helps them to be responsible for their learning and track their learning progress. Thus, this aspect highlights that the students regard learning flexibility as a golden opportunity to practise independent learning and time management skills which are important to succeed.

Meanwhile, regarding learning satisfaction, university students in Asia such as Pakistan, Oman, and South Korea are generally satisfied with the quality of online English courses during COVID-19 [22], [26], [41]. Moreover, they are allowed to interact with the lecturers conveniently [45]. Furthermore, other similar studies state that university students in Asia view online interactions as the best way to learn the English language effectively during COVID-19 [26], [41]. Hence, this aspect highlights that learning satisfaction influences positive responses from the students which raise their potential to study with high motivation.

Regarding accessibility during online English courses, university students in Asia such as Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Indonesia perceive them as accessible regardless of time and place. Moreover, they could access the courses virtually without having to meet physically [15], [23], [41]. Similarly, the students could attend online English courses conveniently using devices such as mobile phones and laptops to ensure an optimal learning experience [26], [45]. Hence, this aspect shows that accessibility during online English learning is important to allow a smooth flow of learning.

4.2. Negative perspectives on online English courses learning during COVID-19 in Asia

In terms of the negative perspectives on online English courses learning during COVID-19, the sub-themes are poor internet connection, poor infrastructure, and technology, lack of digital literacy, poor learning satisfaction, and improper assessment. Regarding poor internet connection, university students in Asia such as Malaysia, Palestine, and Bangladesh generally reveal that they have encountered challenges in ensuring stable internet connection during online English courses [17], [23], [40]. Occasionally, they have been automatically disconnected from their online classes due to unstable internet connection, and, thus, it has decreased the quality of their learning [24], [35]. This statement is supported by Farrah and Hatem [37] in which university students in Asia have been frustrated and lost their focus when the connection errors interrupt their lesson. Hence, it is important to highlight the role of a stable internet connection to ensure the learning quality of online English courses.

Regarding poor infrastructure and technology in online English courses, university students in Asia such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Palestine, and Pakistan generally have poor infrastructure and technology at home. Moreover, some do not have conducive learning spaces and encounter several distractions from the home environment [17], [38]. Similarly, several university students in Asia could not afford devices to attend online English courses due to poverty. Poor learning condition significantly affects their learning satisfaction. Thus, this aspect signifies the impact of proper infrastructure and technology to ensure learning quality and satisfaction among university students in Asia in online English courses during COVID-19.

Meanwhile, regarding lack of digital literacy, several university students in Asia such as Malaysia, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia are discovered to have poor technical skills [21], [23], [36], [39]. Consequently, they are found to be having difficulties managing the online courses. Furthermore, another study [40] supports the findings by stating that university students in Asia require sufficient time and effort to

comprehend the technology, which includes the ability to extract implicit and explicit ideas from the online platforms. Hence, this aspect highlights the importance of digital literacy to improve the learning performance of university students in Asia during online English courses.

Regarding poor learning satisfaction, some university students in Asia such as in Indonesia and South Korea are discovered to have low learning satisfaction in online English courses. In addition, as stated in previous study [45], online English courses do not bring much satisfaction due to the limited interaction which pushes the students to rely heavily on the course content. Furthermore, they also experience a sense of isolation and lack of social support due to not having physical classroom activities. Hence, this aspect highlights that learning satisfaction should be improved to create an enjoyable learning experience.

Regarding improper assessment during online English learning, several university students in Asia such as in Pakistan, Palestine, and Indonesia are found to be stressed out due to heavy workload during online English courses [22], [24], [37]. Moreover, their grades are evaluated based on their online assignments and it might not be equally fair as they do not have the same privilege towards online learning [45]. Consequently, during online examinations, they could not be able to give their best performance due to the improper assessment. Hence, this aspect emphasizes the need to improve the format of assessment during online English courses to ensure fair learning assessment towards the university student in Asia.

4.3. Suggestions to improve online English courses learning during COVID-19 in Asia

In terms of the suggestions to improve online English courses during COVID-19, the sub-themes are improving technological infrastructure, conducting training programmes and restructuring assessment. Regarding the suggestion of improving technological infrastructure, technological infrastructure such as a proper learning environment should be improved to ensure that the learning quality could be enhanced [17], [23], [37], [40]. Moreover, the initiatives to provide devices such as smartphones and laptops to university students who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds should be considered to ensure every university student has equal opportunities towards online English courses [46]. Hence, this suggestion is important to be highlighted to improve learning quality in online English courses in Asia.

Regarding the suggestion of conducting training programmes, the Ministry of Higher Education in Asia countries should play their role in conducting training programmes for the lecturers to ensure they are ready mentally and physically to conduct online English courses. From the training programmes, they are expected to enhance their digital literacy to provide a quality learning experience for university students [21], [24], [35], [46]. Hence, this suggestion is vital to be addressed to improve the learning quality.

Regarding the suggestion of restructuring assessment, the English lecturers should restructure the task assessments assigned to their students to ensure they can cope with the amount of workload given [47]. Moreover, they should assign assessments that are practice-oriented and not heavily based on exam-oriented, which could not evaluate the students' performance systematically [48], [49]. Hence, this suggestion is relevant to be implemented by the lecturers in Asia to ensure equal learning assessment.

4.4. Contributions to the future of online English courses in Asia

This systematic review highlights the perspectives on online English courses among university students in Asia during COVID-19, which are reviewed and analyzed systematically based on the articles. This study also summarizes relevant suggestions from several previous studies to improve the learning quality of online English courses during COVID-19 in Asia. This study is relevant to the current learning scenario during COVID-19, which emphasizes digital learning experience and student-centered approach [50]. Moreover, the study is also significant to capture the idea of online English courses during COVID-19 from the views of the university students in Asia to fill in the learning gaps and improve their learning experience holistically.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper is a systematic literature review on the perspectives of Asian university students on online English courses during COVID-19. The main themes are positive and negative perspectives on online English courses learning during COVID-19, and suggestions to improve online English courses learning during COVID-19. In general, most of the university students in Asia are ready to learn online English courses online during the COVID-19 pandemic and they are satisfied with the nature of online learning. Meanwhile, lack of digital literacy and poor learning satisfaction are among the negative perspectives towards online English courses during COVID-19. The suggestions to improve online English courses during COVID-19 are improving technological infrastructure, conducting training programmes, and restructuring assessments. All these themes have been discussed thoroughly in the articles and analysed for systematic reviewing to increase the quality of future online English courses at the tertiary level in Asia.

This study is relevant to the learning needs of the digital learning nature in COVID-19, which focuses on the university students in Asia and their overall learning satisfaction. It is significant to address the positive and negative perspectives regarding online English courses during COVID-19 to provide enlightenment to the Ministry of Higher Education and lecturers in Asia to take prompt actions from the students' feedbacks. It is also vital to highlight the suggestions from previous studies to improve the learning quality of online English courses during COVID-19. Overall, the study has attempted to exhibit a big picture of online English courses during COVID-19 based on the systematic review of relevant previous studies to guide the direction of future researches for the betterment of university students in Asia.




REFERENCES

- [1] S. Tadesse and W. Muluye, "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Education System in Developing Countries: A Review," *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 08, no. 10, pp. 159–170, 2020, doi: 10.4236/jss.2020.810011.
- [2] S. Dhawan, "Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis," *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 5–22, 2020, doi: 10.1177/0047239520934018.
- [3] A. Almonacid-Fierro, R. Vargas-Vitoria, R. S. De Carvalho, and M. A. Fierro, "Impact on teaching in times of COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative study," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 432–440, 2021, doi: 10.11591/ijere.v10i2.21129.
- [4] Y. S. Wan, *Education during Covid-19*. Kuala Lumpur: UNESCO Institute of Democracy and Economy, 2020.
- [5] J. S. Zhou and M. Farrah, "Students' perspectives of online language learning during Corona pandemic: Benefits and challenges," *Indonesian EFL Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 13–20, 2021.
- [6] A. J. Rodriguez-Hidalgo, Y. Pantaleón, I. Dios, and D. Falla, "Fear of COVID-19, Stress, and Anxiety in University Undergraduate Students: A Predictive Model for Depression," *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 11, Nov. 2020.
- [7] A. Elengoe, "COVID-19 Outbreak in Malaysia," *Osong Public Health and Research Perspectives*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 93–100, Jun. 2020, doi: 10.24171/j.phrp.2020.11.3.08.
- [8] F. M. Reimers and A. Schleicher, "A framework to guide an education response to the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020," *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*, vol. 1, pp. 1–40, 2020.
- [9] J. König, D. J. Jäger-Biela, and N. Glutsch, "Adapting to online teaching during COVID-19 school closure: teacher education and teacher competence effects among early career teachers in Germany," *European Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 43, no. 4, pp. 608–622, Aug. 2020, doi: 10.1080/02619768.2020.1809650.
- [10] L. Dhull and M. S. Sakshi, "Online learning," *International Education & Research Journal*, vol. 3, no. 8, pp. 32–34, 2017.
- [11] M. Sadeghi, "A Shift from Classroom to Distance Learning: Advantages and Limitations," *International Journal of Research in English Education*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 80–88, Mar. 2019, doi: 10.29252/ijree.4.1.80.
- [12] A. Sun and X. Chen, "Online Education and Its Effective Practice: A Research Review," *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, vol. 15, pp. 157–190, 2016.
- [13] S. F. A. Rahman, M. M. Yunus, and H. Hashim, "An Overview of Flipped Learning Studies in Malaysia," *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 194–203, Dec. 2019, doi: 10.24093/awej/vol10no4.15.
- [14] K. Rahman, "Learning amid crisis: EFL students' perception on online learning during Covid-19 outbreak," *English, Teaching, Learning and Research Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 179, Dec. 2020, doi: 10.24252/Eternal.V62.2020.A1.
- [15] R. M. K. Nambiar, N. M. Nor, K. Ismail, and S. Adam, "New Learning Spaces and Transformations in Teacher Pedagogy and Student Learning Behavior in the Language Learning Classroom," *3L The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 29–40, Dec. 2017.
- [16] N. A. Ahmad and L. N. Chua, "Technology and higher education: Using an e-learning tutorial as a pedagogy for innovation and flexible learning," *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 21–31, 2015.
- [17] E. Chung, G. Subramaniam, and L. C. Dass, "Online Learning Readiness Among University Students in Malaysia Amidst Covid-19," *Asian Journal of University Education*, vol. 16, no. 2, p. 45, Aug. 2020.
- [18] P. E. Sutrisna and N. P. Dewi, "The effectiveness of e-learning for English class in EFL setting and its implication during Covid-19 pandemic," *Language and Education Journal Undiksha*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 13–21, 2021.
- [19] A. Aristovnik, D. Keržič, D. Ravšelj, N. Tomažević, and L. Umek, "Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Life of Higher Education Students: A Global Perspective," *Sustainability*, vol. 12, no. 20, p. 8438, Oct. 2020.
- [20] M. Mahyoob, "Challenges of e-Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic Experienced by EFL Learners," *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 351–362, Dec. 2020, doi: 10.24093/awej/vol11no4.23.
- [21] S. S. A. Almekhlafy, "Online learning of English language courses via blackboard at Saudi universities in the era of COVID-19: perception and use," *PSU Research Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 16–32, Nov. 2020.
- [22] S. K. Shahzad, J. Hussain, N. Sadaf, S. Sarwat, U. Ghani, and R. Saleem, "Impact of Virtual Teaching on ESL Learners' Attitudes under Covid-19 Circumstances at Post Graduate Level in Pakistan," *English Language Teaching*, vol. 13, no. 9, p. 1, Aug. 2020.
- [23] M. Afrin, "Virtual EFL classes during Covid-19 in Bangladesh: Pros and cons with possible solutions at tertiary level," *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 77–86, 2020.
- [24] S. Famularsih, "Students' Experiences in Using Online Learning Applications Due to COVID-19 in English Classroom," *Studies in Learning and Teaching*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 112–121, Aug. 2020, doi: 10.46627/silet.v1i2.40.
- [25] D. Hidayat, and Anisti Anisti, P. Purwadhi, D. Wibawa, and and, "Crisis Management and Communication Experience in Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 67–82, Sep. 2020.
- [26] W. A. Hazaymeh, "EFL Students' Perceptions of Online Distance Learning for Enhancing English Language Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic," *International Journal of Instruction*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 501–518, Jul. 2021.
- [27] N. Fatima, "English Language Teaching During the Times of COVID-19- Challenges and Opportunities: A Brief Study of GFP Students in Muscat College," *Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching*, vol. 4, no. 21, pp. 1–6, 2020.
- [28] R. Ali and M. Abdalgane, "Teaching English literacy in the time of COVID-19 pandemic in higher education: A case study in Saudi Qassim university," *Multicultural Education*, vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 204–215, 2020.
- [29] L. Efriana, "Problems of online learning during Covid-19 pandemic in EFL classroom and the solution," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 39–47, 2021.




- [30] N. H. Al-Kumaim, A. K. Alhazmi, F. Mohammed, N. A. Gazem, M. S. Shabbir, and Y. Fazea, "Exploring the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on University Students' Learning Life: An Integrated Conceptual Motivational Model for Sustainable and Healthy Online Learning," *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 5, p. 2546, Feb. 2021.
- [31] N. Nartiningrum and A. Nugroho, "Online Learning amidst Global Pandemic: EFL Students' Challenges, Suggestions, and Needed Materials," *English Franca : Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 115, Nov. 2020.
- [32] Y. Xiao and M. Watson, "Guidance on Conducting a Systematic Literature Review," *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 93–112, Aug. 2017, doi: 10.1177/0739456X17723971
- [33] H. Snyder, "Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines," *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 104, pp. 333–339, Nov. 2019, doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039
- [34] M. J. Page *et al.*, "The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews," *BMJ*, vol. 372, no. 71, 2021, doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.
- [35] H. Baber, "Determinants of Students' Perceived Learning Outcome and Satisfaction in Online Learning during the Pandemic of COVID 19," *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 285–292, 2020.
- [36] K. Krishnapatria, "From 'Lockdown' to Letdown: Students' Perception of E-learning amid the COVID-19 Outbreak," *ELT in Focus*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 1–8, Jul. 2020, doi: 10.35706/eltinf.v3i1.3694.
- [37] M. Farrah and G. Hatem, "Online learning for EFL students in Palestinian universities during Corona pandemic: Advantages, challenges and solutions," *Indonesian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 65–78, 2020.
- [38] M. D. G. Allo, "Is the online learning good in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic? The case of EFL learners," *Jurnal Sinestasia*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 1–10, 2020.
- [39] A. B. Rinekso and A. B. Muslim, "Synchronous online discussion: teaching English in higher education amidst the covid-19 pandemic," *JEES (Journal of English Educators Society)*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 155–162, Sep. 2020.
- [40] I. A. Krishan *et al.*, "Challenges of Learning English in 21st Century: Online vs. Traditional During Covid-19," *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, vol. 5, no. 9, pp. 1–15, Aug. 2020.
- [41] S. Syahrin and A. A. Salih, "An ESL Online Classroom Experience in Oman during Covid-19," *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 42–55, Sep. 2020, doi: 10.24093/awej/vol11no3.3.
- [42] M. T. Siew, W. L. Keah, P. Murugaiah, N. M. Jaafar, K. T. Choon, and N. I. B. Ahmad, "ICT tools patterns of use among Malaysian ESL undergraduates," *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 49–65, 2020.
- [43] J. K.-M. Sia and A. A. Adamu, "Facing the unknown: pandemic and higher education in Malaysia," *Asian Education and Development Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 263–275, Dec. 2020, doi: 10.1108/AEDS-05-2020-0114.
- [44] L. R. Octaberlina and A. I. Muslimin, "EFL Students Perspective towards Online Learning Barriers and Alternatives Using Moodle/Google Classroom during COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 9, no. 6, p. 1, Aug. 2020, doi: 10.5430/ijhe.v9n6p1.
- [45] N. M. Nordin and H. Norman, "Cross-culture learning via Massive Open Online Courses for higher education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 35–39, 2018.
- [46] S. Sundarasan *et al.*, "Psychological Impact of COVID-19 and Lockdown among University Students in Malaysia: Implications and Policy Recommendations," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 17, no. 17, p. 6206, Aug. 2020, doi: 10.3390/ijerph17176206.
- [47] Y.-Arifani, S. Suryanti, B. H. Wicaksono, N. Inayati, and S. Setiawan, "EFL Teacher Blended Professional Training: A Review of Learners' Online and Traditional Learning Interactions Quality," *3L The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 124–138, Sep. 2020, doi: 10.17576/3L-2020-2603-10.
- [48] Melvina, N. S. Lenganawati, Y. Wirza, D. Alicia, and Yulmiati, "EFL Learners' View on online learning implementation during Covid-19 outbreaks," *Proceedings of the 4th Sriwijaya University Learning and Education International Conference (SULE-IC 2020)*, 2020, vol. 513, pp. 351–357.
- [49] M. S. Minnabadi, "The Challenge of Learning and Teaching During the Outbreak of COVID-19 (COVID Challenge) Problem or Opportunity," *Journal of Archives in Military Medicine*, vol. 8, no. 1, Sep. 2020, doi: 10.5812/jamm.103455.
- [50] M. M. Obeidat, "Undergraduate students' perspective about online learning: A case study of Hashemite university students in Jordan," *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine*, vol. 7, no. 8, pp. 4054–4071, 2020.

BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS



Nurzaherah Zainal    is a postgraduate student in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program at the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Her research interests include the development of online module for English-speaking skills, online learning, and technology-enhanced learning. She can be contacted at email: nurzaherah2197@gmail.com.



Melor Md Yunus    is currently a Professor and Deputy Dean of Research and Innovation at the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Her areas of specialization are Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), technology-enhanced learning, writing skills, CALL, and ICT in language education. She is passionate about integrating technology in the English language learning and improving the learning quality via technology. She can be contacted at email: melor@ukm.edu.my.