

## **Online Learning Preferences And Motivational Impact In Learning English During Covid-19**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The increase number of Covid-19 outbreaks has profoundly changed our education system. From ordinary face-to-face learning, the educators need to find new alternatives in adapting the students into online learning. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the students' motivation to using e-Campus as an online platform in learning the English Language at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan using the questionnaires adapted from the ARCS Model of Motivation. 161 English language learners from various levels of classes participated in this study using simple random sampling. Data from the questionnaires consisting of 20 items on an observation checklist were collected, analysed, and supplemented using descriptive statistical analysis of students' responses from questionnaires. The findings indicated that 68% of the students exhibited positive feedback towards the use of e-Campus as an online platform when learning the English language during the pandemic period. This study also suggested a need to improve students' experiences of using e-Campus as an online learning platform to implement online teaching and learning successfully. The outcome is believed to be valuable for educational authorities in planning, developing, and implementing measures to address possible challenges faced by students when using e-Campus as their main alternative in online learning. It is hoped that more future research should be carried out so that the students who

are currently using e-Campus as their online learning platform will be able to learn and comprehend their language learning despite the challenges.

**Keywords:** e-Campus; Online Learning; Learning Management System (LMS); English language; Teaching and Learning.

## INTRODUCTION

During this pandemic era, the world is in chaos and full of uncertainty. Malaysia is also not excluded. The increasing number of Covid-19 outbreaks has profoundly changed our education system (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020; Simamora, 2020), and it causes class suspensions, leading to the requirements of online learning (Moorhouse, 2020). As a result, the Minister of Higher Education decided that teaching and learning processes and activities to be implemented through e-learning to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak and maintain the health of students, teachers, and educational staff (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). This condition has led to the complete closure of universities and the educators' need to conduct classes through online platforms. Online learning emphasizes internet-based courses synchronously and asynchronously. One of the platforms used by educators in engaging with students in this new classroom environment is learning management system (LMS).

Learning Management Systems (LMSs) are educational technologies which combine numerous elements, and create a great enriched media for learning. They provide a convenient platform for the creation and dissemination of educational materials, as well as the simplicity of contact between different users and the ability to collaborate. An LMS is extensively used as a source of learning materials since it provides a consistent interface to multiple stakeholders such as students, teachers, writers, and administrators. An LMS provides flexibility in terms of space and time by allowing advanced interactions between instructors and learners as well as easy access to learning resources. It also serves as a single point of contact for all types and degrees of interactions for students, instructors, and administrators (Georgiakakis et al., 2005). Several institutions have begun to use learning management systems (LMSs) to supplement their existing resources and enable distance learning. LMSs are also used by educational institutions to manage their teaching-learning resources.

In higher learning institution in Malaysia, the use of LMS have been introduced for quite sometimes. Moodle, WordPress, Atutor are among a few LMSs that are widely used. For example, at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK), we are using e-Campus as a platform for teaching and learning. In addition, e-Campus UMK is a Moodle-based LMS used at UMK since 2016. Since its introduction, e-Campus has significantly contributed to enhancing teaching and learning in a number of aspects. As of right now, Moodle Version 2.0, a completely customizable learning management system, serves as the foundation for e-Campus in UMK.

However, with the new norm in learning, the students need to adapt to recent technologies and catch up with the rapid growth in a short time. As we know, computers and the internet have permeated every area of our daily contacts, and in this context, education and teaching. Due to the continual expansion of Internet breakthroughs and technologies, learning through technology (often referred to as e-learning) has become a popular technique inside higher education institutions (Al-Adwan, Al-Adwan and Smedley, 2013). There is little research found on the application of online learning at certain stages of education. Based on Sujarwo et al. (2020), their research investigated university students' perspectives on using

online learning during this pandemic. Their results showed that online learning had a positive impact on students despite the current pandemic.

In addition, there are a few options used by educators in order to deliver their teaching. This study focused on the university e-learning platform (e-Campus), embedded with the YouTube platform, and video conferencing tools such as Google Meet and Zoom. Based on some previous studies, there are a lot of advantages and disadvantages in utilising online tools. Firstly, based on the research by Iftakhar (2016), one of the advantages of using Google classrooms is that it can reduce the need to print documents and lessen the risk of losing them. But it is reported that many students are having problems in accessing Zoom and other online learning platforms because they need proper gadgets and sufficient data in order to access the platforms (Agung et al., 2020). However, Amin & Sundari (2020) added that free video-conferencing applications such as Zoom and Google Meet have proved to become answers to the absence of direct face-to-face interaction between teachers and students during online classes.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this study is to ascertain students' motivation to the usage of the e-learning platform and other online learning tools at the selected university, as well as their varying capacity to use e-learning resources. It will serve as an informed decision for the educators to prepare themselves to correct impacted situations that require intervention and strategy to increase the effectiveness of education by utilising new technology resources to teach English language skills to their students in various settings.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

In light of these facts, the goals of this study are accomplished using the research questions:

1. Do the students prefer to use online learning platforms in English language learning during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. How are online learning platforms useful in motivating students to learn English through online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic?

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Perspective on Online Learning**

Before we shift our focus to the students' response to online learning, it is necessary to define online learning. Online education originated with remote education. Bates (2005) notes that while the phrases 'online learning' and 'e-learning' are used interchangeably, e-learning refers mainly to the usage of the internet and the web. Bates (2005, p. 9) uses the phrase "completely online" to refer to distance education courses that need students to have access to an internet-capable device in order to participate. Additionally, Ally (2008) emphasises the fact that there are several definitions of online learning, reflecting the diversity of practice and technology used. He continues by defining it as follows:

The use of the internet to access resources; to engage with the content, teacher, and other learners; and seek assistance throughout the learning process to acquire information, build personal meaning, and grow from the learning experience (p. 5).

According to some academics, online learning or e-learning is the method of delivering online courses through the use of technology (Forbes & Khoo, 2015). Additionally, e-learning is described as the use of cutting-edge technology and the internet to improve the quality of teaching and learning by enabling learners to gain knowledge and information freely. Thus, e-

learning is the use of the internet and information communication technologies to facilitate learners' access to online teaching and learning resources. E-learning is the process through which individual learners make use of digital technology. Later on, several researchers confined the notion of e-learning to internet-based learning. E-learning is applied in various ways, including dispersed learning, remote education, online education, blended learning, and hybrid teaching. In other words, online learning is defined here as a type of distance education mediated by technology. Students are physically distant from the instructor and the primary institution.

This study uses the term 'online learning' as it refers to engaging in learning using the Internet as the primary medium in the learning process. The use of electronic devices and all types of digital media in delivering the information is crucial as the classes were conducted without having to attend them physically.

### **LMS (e-Campus)**

Learning Management System (LMS) plays a central role in any online environment. They can guarantee the flow of information to and from students securely and efficiently. Furthermore, they were widely used to improve teaching-learning processes and to incorporate tools (Dias et al., 2017), and they were the most widely used educational technology system in remote learning (Almarashdeh, 2016).

Moodle is a popular LMS platform among Malaysian higher education institutions. Moodle provides unique characteristics, such as the ability to integrate resources, communications, or activities centred on a certain area of study. The instructor may also specify a variety of modes of operation, such as weekly, topic-based, or social forms. It is free in the sense that the user can adapt it for his or her own purposes. Liao et al. (2011) stated that:

“Moodle e-learning platform is easy to use and provides a good communication tool, discussion area, group space, workspace, and makes learning more interesting” (p. 193).

When comparing some open-source LMSs, Kareal and Klema (2006) concluded that Moodle is one of the most adaptable systems and highlighted this feature as a significant element of an effective e-learning system. They also stressed that Moodle is the most user-friendly e-learning system among the systems under comparison. As the Moodle platform is customizable, it can be tailored into private websites to serve the purpose of teaching and learning, and at UMK, it is tailored into what is known as e-Campus. According to Bele et al. (2014), e-Campus is a web application designed for learning, learning management and multimedia learning content creation that can be accessed through various devices and platforms.

### **Other Online Learning Platforms**

Online learning technology enables a more flexible and comfortable learning process. The online learning platform can be accessed anywhere, anytime, regardless of the physical location or the instructor's presence, as long as there is an internet connection, such as at home, at work, restaurant, or while travelling. Various online learning platforms, specifically Web-based learning systems, have been developed for higher education to facilitate learning in the teaching and learning process; these include Web-Based Interactive Tools (WIT), LAMS and SAKAI, and Blackboard Learn (BBL). Firstly, Iskander (2008) stated that Blackboard is considered one of the most popular web-based learning systems tools in higher education today as it provides a framework to convey any courses that ease the delivery of the learning process. On the other

hand, Web-Based Interactive Tools (WIT) were used at the University of Nottingham Malaysia (UNM). Lai et al. (2019) demonstrated that the WIT tools helped retain student interests and encouraged engagement in learning.

### **Teaching and Learning during Covid-19**

The outburst of COVID-19 on the year of 2020 has changed the education system. Starting from the declaration of the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 30 January 2020 that constituted COVID-19 as a global public health emergency, online teaching and learning has been initiated to replace face-to-face learning to ensure that students all over the world can continue their learning, even if they are staying at home. During the COVID-19 pandemic, an abundance of studies regarding teaching and learning have been conducted, especially on the effectiveness of online learning. Wildana et.al (2020) stated that online learning is effective during the pandemic, as various applications such as ‘WhatsApp’, “Telegram” and ‘Google Classroom’ were widely integrated into the learning process. However, they concur on a few problems that restricted the effectiveness of the process, for example, the lack of internet access and limited data package, to name a few. However, according to Irfan and Iman (2020). the implementation of online reading is ineffective and does not satisfy the goal or consequence of the learning process. Several factors, such as unsuitable internet packages and facilities, the instructors’ inability to conduct online classes, and the lack of cooperation from the parents itself contributed to the ineffectiveness of the online learning’s implementation.

### **Related Research**

According to a Saudi Arabian study on the use of Moodle in Higher Education, it is largely utilised for sharing and distributing learning resources. The majority of participants considered it as simple to use and highly satisfactory. Teachers praised the ability to communicate with students outside of the classroom, as well as the convenience with which resources could be managed digitally and made available to students at all times. Respondents also reported favourable changes in their classes following the implementation of Moodle, despite the fact that female students avoided using the system or used fictitious names to conceal their identities and registered with male names (Daoud, 2007).

According to research conducted for an English language course in Slovenia, the Moodle platform proved helpful, useful, and time-saving. Above all, it influenced the kids' language learning. The findings also revealed that the learner’s type, i.e., whether a student was full-time or part-time, had no effect on a student's assessed usefulness of the virtual learning environment. Following a closer look into Moodle, it was discovered that all study participants downloaded lecture material and homework exercises (Zoran and Rozman, 2010).

Research conducted in Hong Kong explores the benefits and drawbacks of using Moodle to help students and teachers understand the usage of ICTs in education. The researchers discovered that when education funds are limited, using open-source systems rather than licenced ones significantly cut expenses for schools and universities. MOODLE can give a low-cost option in classrooms, especially in schools (Kennedy, 2005).

## **MATERIALS & METHODS**

This study used quantitative descriptive analysis to investigate students’ motivation for using e-Campus as an online platform in learning English language. A set of questionnaires consisted of 20 items on an observation checklist were distributed randomly among different levels of English classes. This set of questionnaires was adapted from the ARCS Model of Motivation, developed by John Keller (1983) which focuses on motivation. 161 students from Universiti

Malaysia Kelantan participated in completing the questionnaires. Participants were gathered using simple random sampling. A questionnaire with a Likert scale of four items was the research instrument prepared and intended to know the students' responses to online tools usage based on four indicators: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. A four-point Likert scale questionnaire ('Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree'), was first administered to the students in order to gather the primary data on their responses while using online tools during online learning. Students are required to give responses at the end of the semester (Week 16). Questionnaires were administered online using Google Form. The data gathered from the questionnaires was analysed using the descriptive statistical analysis. A simple frequency table for each indicator is presented in the next section.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In this section, four indicators, namely attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction of online tool usage are presented. All items are categorized under four categories; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The results are presented in some figures, followed by an explanation of the data, whilst tables display the opinions of the students regarding the use of e-Campus.

Table 1 showed the overall percentages for the five items of the questionnaire from the first indicator: Attention. For the first question, the respondents were asked whether they were able to focus on learning during Google Meet or Zoom with their respective instructors. A total of 113 respondents (70%), agreed with the statement. None of them responded with a strongly disagree option. For the second statement, they were asked whether they were unable to understand the learning tasks uploaded on the university e-learning platform, and 79 or nearly half of the respondents (49%) disagreed. The next question was whether they paid less attention during their Google Meet or Zoom session and 85 students (53%) responded that they disagreed. Next, when they were asked whether the content of the e-learning platform was interesting and attracted them to learning, 60% (97) of them agreed with the statement. Lastly, the last statement from this indicator stated that students can explore a lot of educational materials using the university e-learning platform and YouTube. More than half of them (55%) agreed with the statement.

Table 1: Attention

STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
1. I was able to focus on learning during Google Meet/Zoom with my lecturer.	0 (0%)	11 (7%)	113 (70%)	37 (23%)
2. I was unable to understand the learning tasks uploaded on e-Campus.	53 (33%)	79 (49%)	23 (14%)	6 (4%)
3. I paid less attention during Google Meet/ Zoom because I can continue my study later after the online class ended.	34 (21%)	85 (53%)	34 (21%)	8 (5%)
4. The content on e-Campus was interesting & attracted my attention.	2 (1%)	6 (4%)	97 (60%)	56 (35%)
5. I can explore a lot of educational materials using e-Campus and YouTube.	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	89 (55%)	68 (42%)

Next in Table 2, the students were asked about the relevance of using online tools in their language learning. They were asked whether Google Meet or Zoom facilitated their online learning. Most of the respondents (59%) agreed that online video conferencing helped them. Next, when they were asked whether learning English using the university e-learning platform and YouTube should be continued in the future, 89 respondents (55%) seemed to agree with the idea. Then, they also responded positively to the statement about whether YouTube is a relevant social media platform that helped to explain the subject content (57%).

Table 2: Relevance

STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
6. A lot of new but irrelevant materials to learn in the lesson.	29 (18%)	77 (48%)	44 (27%)	11 (7%)
7. I think Google Meet / Zoom facilitates my online learning.	3 (2%)	13 (8%)	95 (59%)	50 (31%)
8. The weekly tasks were relevant to this course.	2 (1%)	4 (3%)	92 (57%)	63 (39%)
9. Learning English using e-Campus and YouTube should be continued in the future.	19 (12%)	10 (6%)	89 (55%)	43 (27%)
10. YouTube is a relevant social media that helps to explain the subject content.	2 (1%)	10 (6%)	92 (57%)	58 (36%)

Then, for the next indicator, confidence, the students were asked whether they could communicate confidently with their instructors via video conferencing and the majority (69%) agreed. Furthermore, when comparing actual classrooms to learning English through the e-Campus, the majority of respondents said that they felt more confident. To strengthen the point, they also felt confident about their English language proficiency when they spent time on those online learning platforms.

Table 3: Confidence

STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
11. I was able to communicate confidently with my lecturer using Google Meet /Zoom.	2 (1%)	18 (11%)	111 (69%)	30 (19%)
12. I felt confidence in learning English through e-Campus and YouTube compared to physical attendance in class.	6 (4%)	32 (20%)	95 (59%)	28 (17%)
13. I am not accustomed to chat online with the lecturer.	22 (14%)	82 (51%)	47 (29%)	10 (6%)
14. I sometimes have misunderstandings when learning from the e-Campus or YouTube.	24 (15%)	66 (41%)	61 (38%)	10 (6%)
15. I felt confident about my English language proficiency by spending time on e-Campus and YouTube.	2 (1%)	18 (11%)	106 (66%)	35 (22%)

Lastly, according to the fourth indicator, which is satisfaction, most of the respondents (68%) agreed that they were satisfied when they were learning using the e-Campus and YouTube. They also agreed that they felt satisfied as they were able to develop relationships with their instructors using online video conferencing tools. Thus, it seemed that the students had a positive experience and felt comfortable using e-Campus and other online learning tools during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Table 4: Satisfaction

STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
16. I am satisfied to develop relationship with my lecturer using Google Meet /Zoom.	2 (1%)	19 (12%)	98 (61%)	42 (26%)
17. I am satisfied to develop relationship with my classmates using Google Meet /Zoom.	3 (2%)	29 (18%)	93 (58%)	36 (22%)
18. I could not complete the weekly task on time.	63 (39%)	73 (45%)	21 (13%)	4 (3%)
19. The more I learned English through e-Campus and YouTube, the more I found it satisfying.	0 (0%)	18 (11%)	109 (68%)	34 (21%)
20. Using e-Campus and YouTube was an innovative way of learning English and I enjoyed learning their useful contents.	0 (0%)	8 (5%)	98 (61%)	55 (34%)

## DISCUSSIONS

The research results proved that each indicator has a similar percentage (45%-70%) of getting positive responses from the respondents from each of the statements given. The results of the study also showed that the students enjoyed learning English via the university's e-Campus and other online tools such as video conferencing (Google Meet/Zoom) and YouTube platforms; as they found that learning was fun and enjoyable with the help of those online tools. According to the students' feedback, these online tools helped them in improving their English grammar and vocabulary. They were able to correct their mistakes in terms of grammar and choice of words, even though they were not able to meet the instructors physically. The students also mentioned that e-Campus and other online tools assisted them in developing their language proficiency and communication skills. The interpreted data also showed that the students responded that they felt good when asked about their online learning experience overall. Secondly, from the data gathered, it can be seen that students preferred to use these online tools in their learning despite some limitations, such as unstable internet connections and difficulty in having the proper gadgets to access them. e-Campus is proven to be useful in organising the materials and conducting the teaching and learning activities throughout the semester. This result is consistent with Lister (2014) who stated that one of the barriers to online learning is technology and internet facilities among educators and students. But, most of them answered 'sometimes' when they were asked whether they preferred to continue their classes online after the Covid-19 ends. When asked if students preferred to continue their classes online following the Covid-19, the majority of them responded "sometimes." It is recommended that instructors continue using e-Campus as their primary online platform alongside other online learning tools that are advantageous, affordable, and mastered by all students in the ensuing semester, such as Google Meet, Zoom, and YouTube platforms. Besides, lecturers' and students' skills in using online platforms, adequate internet facilities, and online guidelines are prerequisites for smoothly implementing online learning. Any additional workshops or webinars could be held during the semester break to enhance the knowledge and give new inputs to avoid any problems when the new semester starts.

The findings provide strong support on students' motivation in using online platforms to learn English during and post-COVID. The majority of students reported that learning through online tools such as e-Campus was not only effective but also fun and enjoyable. This suggests that the utilization of online platforms has the potential to positively impact students' motivation levels. This is somewhat related to Hamouda's (2020) assertion that the online learning environment has a compelling quality that captures students' interest. By providing interactive and interesting learning opportunities, it can be said that these online platforms have helped students improve their communication and language skills.

Furthermore, the research objectives, which sought to determine students' motivation for using e-learning platforms and their varying capacity to use online resources, are consistent with the findings. Sujarwo et al.'s (2020) investigation into university students' perspectives on online learning during the pandemic provides support for this. Their results demonstrated that despite the challenging circumstances posed by the pandemic, online learning had a positive impact on students. Thus, their finding further strengthens the discussion by providing empirical evidence of the benefits of online learning in enhancing students' motivation.

Next, it is important for online education to have a positive effect on students' motivation, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasises how effective language learning could be supported and facilitated by online platforms. These tools' enjoyable and engaging features can encourage intrinsic motivation by giving students opportunities for mastery, autonomy, and curiosity. Furthermore, students can take advantage of self-paced learning that is tailored to their particular needs and preferences thanks to the

accessibility and convenience of online platforms. In addition, since students' engagement in online learning is a result of their self-determination, personal interest, and conviction, online learning obviously calls for learners to be self-aware and motivated (Knowles & Kerkman, 2007).

In conclusion, the findings from this study also highlight the importance of utilizing online platforms for English language learning, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Acknowledging the positive impact on students' motivation, language educators and institutions can make informed decisions to effectively integrate online tools into their teaching practices. This integration ultimately enhances students' language proficiency and communication skills. Online learning offers various functions within the classroom, such as sharing materials, submitting assignments, and engaging in online discussions and quizzes. It provides flexibility, convenience, and immediate feedback, allowing students to learn anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace (Kim, 2005; Sumakul, 2013; & Smart and Cappel, 2006). Moreover, online learning proves to be cost-effective as students are not required to purchase printed materials, resulting in cost savings (Nguyen, 2015). The study also revealed that students felt happy and satisfied when learning English through online platforms, which is consistent with previous research by Isaksen and Ramberg (2005), which emphasised the importance of ongoing feedback on student motivation. Despite being in an online learning environment, student satisfaction can be a powerful motivator for their learning journey. Overall, educators can create an engaging and effective English language learning experience by leveraging the benefits of online platforms and addressing students' motivations.

## CONCLUSION

The quantitative findings showed that most students at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan gave positive responses when using e-Campus for English language learning, despite facing some challenges and problems when engaging with e-learning tools and using the internet in the classroom during this pandemic. They had good experiences and felt comfortable utilising online learning tools such as the university e-learning platform (e-Campus) and other tools such as online video conferencing (Google Meet/Zoom) and the YouTube platform. These online learning tools are user-friendly, economical, and helpful. Therefore, lecturers should keep using and maintaining the most popular and favourable online learning tools during online learning (OL) so that all students are engaged and motivated. They can keep having positive perceptions of online learning engagement. In the future, other researchers will need to conduct comparable research with interviews and collect a variety of larger samples so that the obtained data can be extended and generalised to all programs or faculties at other universities.

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