

ESL Teachers' Challenges in Implementing E-learning during COVID-19

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Abstract. Education sector in Malaysia had put emphasis on the use of online learning or e-learning with technology and devices as a mediator of communication to replace face-to-face learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, with the improvement of learning technologies, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers faced various challenges in language teaching. In this regard, this study aimed to investigate the challenges ESL teachers faced in implementing e-learning during COVID-19. Using a qualitative approach, this research was a case study which involved 20 primary ESL teachers. Data collection was done through an in-depth interview to explore teachers' e-learning experiences and challenges in teaching the English language. Based on the findings, the majority of teachers expressed that the use of e-learning was effective with various limitations such as teachers' readiness to adopt e-learning, accessibility to mobile phones and Internet connectivity, classroom management in term of low students' participation and assessment. Thus, the researcher recommended more studies to highlight teachers' insight regarding the significance of e-learning. ESL teachers, stakeholders, policy makers, and institutions can benefit from the results of the study and come out with practical strategies to utilize online sources for education in the pandemic situation.

Keywords: E-learning; English Language; ESL Teachers; COVID-19; Challenges

1. Introduction

Across the globe, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic had led to profound changes, which affected social interaction and organization in general, and the education sector in particular. The Malaysian government had enforced Movement Control Order (MCO) and introduced pandemic precautions for all which was called "social distancing" (Kamarudin, 2020). These actions were taken to reduce close contact and minimise any community transmission that could rapidly develop in crowded places like the university, as mentioned by

Weeden and Cornwell (2020). Therefore, the government together with the Ministry of Education (ME), came up with several measures to close all schools and turn to e-learning initiative, marking the fast transition of the standard face to face classes to virtual learning (Kamarudin, 2020). Online learning or e-learning had been popular and flexibly used by teachers in teaching and learning due the fast escalation of the Internet and accessible technological tools (Huang et al., 2020). Other studies concerning e-learning during Covid-19 also had been carried out by several researchers; Verawardina et al. (2020), Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020), Almaiah et al. (2020), and Dai and Xia (2020). Malaysian researchers also conducted studies regarding e-learning mainly in tertiary levels of education such as universities (Yusuf & Ahmad, 2020; Ismail et al., 2020; Nassr et al., 2020). However, there was limited research focused on primary schools and primary teachers' practices in e-learning, though they are also shifted to e-learning during this pandemic.

According to Mohammad (2018), technology had an essential role in improving various learning tasks. It would help teachers improve their pedagogical skill, and learners who participated in e-learning were more likely to perform better than students who were learning traditionally, especially in teaching and learning English. Mutambik (2018) stated that the popularity of technology adoption in the domain of education had increased, especially since the emergence of the World Wide Web (WWW). He added, some e-learning applications permitted students learning English to readily access beneficial language resources and communicate directly with native English speakers. It is important to note that English is well known and spoken by many worldwide and known as lingua franca (Yen & Mohamad, 2020), but in some countries, English is the first or second language of its citizen (Breene, 2016). According to Nishanthi (2018), about 1 billion people worldwide speak English, 67 countries have English as their official language, and there are 27 countries have English as their secondary official language. As supported by the English Proficiency Index (EPI), English was taught and learned around the world and had a high proficiency as a second language (Breene, 2016). Accordingly, in 2020, Netherland scored the highest (652), followed by Denmark (632) and Finland (631), while Malaysia made its spot at top 30.

Although many teachers believed how new technology can effectively benefit the teaching and learning process, they did not fully embed it in their practices. This is the initial stage how teachers should plan and prepare for their teaching methodology in the classroom. In terms of language teaching, teachers need to create a supportive environment where learners will have comfort if the language is taught with the communicative language teaching approach (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). During this pandemic period, students who have been struggling learning English in face to face meeting will face a more challenging situation when they learned it virtually. Thus, this situation caused delay in learning English. During the COVID-19 outbreak, all educational levels such as schools, colleges, universities have been shifted to e-learning. Unfortunately, institutions that had less or no experience with e-learning were subject to failure when implementing it. Add to this, teachers are having difficulties to handle the

online applications (Zaharah et al., 2020). These challenges range from ICT skills, lack of motivation and training, and poor access to the Internet, resources and materials, to name just a few. Research regarding education during the covid-19 pandemic, particularly in English language teaching was lacking and had not been conducted thoroughly. Accordingly, more research is needed to identify individuals' challenges about integrating technology into the teaching and learning process especially in English language teaching. Therefore, this study investigated the challenges faced by primary ESL teachers while implementing e-learning during COVID-19. This study also sought to discover ESL teachers' experiences of e-learning effectiveness during COVID-19.

2. Literature Review

2.1. E-learning

According to Verawardina et al. (2020), online learning or e-learning used Internet technology that allowed teachers and students to conduct teaching and learning in or out of the classroom. Teaching and learning materials presented using this medium are visual, word, animation, video or audio-visuals so that learning can occur flexibly anytime and anywhere. Aparicio et al. (2016) mentioned that the e-learning was a concept of the use of computerised systems to aid and help teachers and students with the learning process. They determined other terms that were in the same concept such as online learning, virtual learning, distance education, and other learning management systems. In the same vein, Rodrigues et al. (2019) defined e-learning as an innovative web-based system invented based the use of digital technologies and various choices of learning resources and materials which aimed to give a conducive, learner-centered, and interactive environment to students.

This online learning skill was one of the 21st century skills that every person needed to master to succeed in this challenging age. In fully-online education, learners and teachers only meet via virtual environments using the Internet and its technologies. Hybrid teaching or the so-called blended learning took place when there is a face-to-face interaction between educators and learners in online learning. The web-assisted method of e-learning used synchronous well-designed tools that are meant to enhance teaching and make learning effective. Web-assisted learning included online discussions and interactions between the learners and instructors, and varied information can be analysed, to improve teaching quality (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Various online applications can be accessed using mobile phones or laptops in this modern-day such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Edmodo. According to Amry (2014), WhatsApp is considered as cost-effective, easy to administer as it has low uploading and downloading rate. Thus, using WhatsApp can lighten teachers' burden and enable students to access in a short time. It has been found out that WhatsApp was unique in promoting good student-teacher relationships and a positive classroom environment (Hershkovitz et al., 2019).

2.2. Benefit of E-learning

Bailey and Lee (2020) stated some benefits of e-learning as compared to the traditional modes of classroom learning, namely: (a) accommodated everyone's needs, (b) learners can take lectures any time, (c) low cost, (d) offered access to updated content, and (e) little environmental impact. Recently, there are many alternatives which can suit the students' learning styles in language learning. By instilling the interactivity in language learning, students will feel more attracted to learn the language as their affective filter is lowered. E-learning improved teachers' pedagogical skills, offered varieties of instruction methods, relevant curriculum design, and language learning tools (Mynbayeva et al., 2017).

Merç (2015) claimed that teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of technology in the second language classroom influenced their pedagogical beliefs, strategies, procedures, and choice of materials to be utilised in their teaching. This aspect provided us to better understand their actual practices. In this respect, Shifflet and Weilbacher (2015) stated that teachers' beliefs about the technology for teaching and learning might be the strongest factor in the classroom. Besides, Halim and Hashim (2019) mentioned that teachers' way of engaging the lesson can be improved, they would build self-confidence, and had an effective interaction in the classroom. Students' motivation can also be improved if they were involved in e-learning activities that can attract and sustain their attention (Morat et al., 2017). As supported by Pazilah et al. (2019) and Morat et al. (2017), the use of authentic learning materials such as videos from YouTube can make the online teaching and learning experience meaningful and purposeful.

2.3. E-learning in ESL Classroom

Various studies have been conducted to evaluate how e-learning impacted its users (Mahlangu, 2018; Kintu et al., 2017). As for English language learning and teaching, the widespread use of technology and the e-learning environment has impacted the pace of learners' second language learning. The rapid developments and innovations in technology provided opportunities and new features in language learning. For example, a combination of audio, visual and animation effects made the e-learning more appealing and effective (Wijaya & Helmi, 2018). Moreover, e-learning is also considered a cost-efficient and time-saving tool in learning a language. It also provided massive forms of sources to practice the language such as online educational applications.

Learning a second language is said to be challenging especially in semi-urban and rural areas (Endriyati, 2019). Fortunately, in this modern technology, it served second language learners in many ways. According to Foti (2020), e-learning became an easy and affordable source for learners to access and interact with others by sharing knowledge and information. It is claimed by many researchers that advanced technological methods in teaching can spark interest and boost the motivation of learners to learn the target language (Nadeak, 2020). Despite its advantages in teaching and learning, many teachers did not fully maximise the use of this technology in their classes due to the lack of facilities, time, and poor ICT knowledge (Ghavifekr et al., 2016).

In modern times with easy access to smartphones and the Internet, students are likely to become more open to using technology and online resources as tools to learn a language. Nowadays, many students have offline or online dictionaries downloaded in their smartphones which can help them find the meanings of the new words. Apart from that, ESL teachers also find those applications quite useful when designing particular tasks for their students. As asserted by Mohamad et al. (2017), electronic dictionaries were handy and time-efficient for learners to search for the meaning of new words that they wanted to know. This advanced application has promoted students' self-directed esteem to become independent learners and take responsibility in their learning as they controlled their own learning pace (Mohamad et al., 2017). Other online educational platforms such as blogs, social media applications, and smartphones can alleviate and enhance both teachers' and students' language teaching and learning.

Learning English as a Second Language (ESL) had always never been easy especially for the remedial students who always needed teachers to monitor and guide them during lessons. Some studies mentioned the difficulty to teaching language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing during this COVID-19. For example, teachers and students found it difficult to teach and learn writing during the pandemic period (Yunus et al., 2019). Sayuti et al. (2020) stated that the lack of confidence in speaking during the virtual class made students uncomfortable compared to face-to-face meeting in the classroom (Pazilah et al., 2019). Face-to-face teaching is different than online learning, where teachers can address and give attention to almost all students' doubts and queries (Dai & Xia, 2020). Furthermore, students were all different in terms of learning styles, interest, and proficiency levels especially in learning English as a second language is bound to be moderated by a wide array of linguistic, contextual and individual difference (Pawlak, 2017).

Moreover, in Malaysia, ESL pupils also found it hard to learn during the pandemic period (Yen & Mohamad, 2020). In the online classroom, peer interaction during speaking class rarely happened making which resulted in making students feel shy to practise compared to the traditional classroom (Pazilah et al., 2019). Furthermore, in a study that was conducted in Hong Kong by Moorhouse and Beaumont (2020), they mentioned that learners with mixed-abilities were having problems in catching up with the rest of the class as teachers were giving standardized-tasks to all of them. Although there was slightly improvement in language learning using Learning Language Strategies (LLS), their effectiveness was still not fully applied (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020).

2.4. Challenges of E-learning

Even though e-learning was rapidly being used worldwide, it persisted as a challenging problem for various levels of education. As asserted by Eltahir (2019), universities' readiness was one of the challenges in adopting e-learning that led to failure in the system. He also mentioned several problems of e-learning adoption; technology barriers and accessibility, self-competencies, norm/cultural challenges, and course challenges. However, these challenges

were very different for each country regarding their geographical location, norm, and users' awareness. Ghavifekr et al. (2016) also stated that poor network connection and the lack in the main development of infrastructure were the significant challenges of e-learning system adoption in developing countries. Another study also presented system features, Internet connection, and computer skill that hindered the successfulness of the e-learning system. Despite these efforts, none of these studies had investigated the actual challenges users face during the e-learning system. However and according to Al-Khasawneh and Obeidallah (2019), the e-learning challenges still exist, and that cause learners to become reluctant to use it in Jordan.

Similarly, many researchers had stated few challenges in English language teaching. During the COVID-19, the rush to use e-learning had caused teachers and students to adopt the shift. Shahzad et al. (2020) mentioned that e-learning environment had impacted teachers' instructional methods and caused failure in teaching and learning. According to Ko and Rossen (2017), the successfulness of teaching activities is affected by teachers' ICT skills and experiences, which was considered as one of the challenges they face. Furthermore, Aliyyah et al. (2020) mentioned other challenges of e-learning related to teachers' lack of readiness to tackle students to fully participate and complete their tasks. Senior teachers found it difficult to adapt but those who master the applications and technology tools approached it significant which can be implemented effectively and smoothly especially during the COVID-19 (Reimers et al., 2020). Furthermore, the learners showed less effort and responses during teaching and learning session in switching off their video and audio throughout the whole online lesson, thus effective engagement and interaction between students and teachers could not be highly produced (Mohammed et al., 2020). Alternatively, teachers will need to find other alternatives to deliver the lessons using other available platforms which in turn caused students to be delayed in learning (Kaden, 2020).

It is indeed that e-learning had plenty of benefits to education, however, its challenges hindered the smoothness and success for learning. Students' engagements can be distracted by other online content, and thus can cause the lesson to become less meaningful (Yunus et al., 2019). Besides, technical issues were there to arise, such as audio and video problems (Halim & Hashim, 2019). Also, in terms of language learning, authentic communication was hardly existing and less opportunities during e-learning lesson (Pazilah et al., 2019). Furthermore, "one size fits all" approach is not suitable to use in e-learning situation as it could restrict students with individual differences to participate in the lesson (Gillett, 2017). Add to this, instructors who are not competent about online delivery could make course design and planning useless and problematic. Teachers should really plan and prepare their lessons beforehand so that objectives of lessons can be achieved and aligned with the curriculum framework. Despite the many challenges related e-learning with the rapid widespread of COVID-19, teachers and other parties will have to create and design innovative strategies that best suit educational needs so that no student would be left behind.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Using a qualitative approach, this research was a case study which involved 20 primary ESL teachers. It aimed to investigate their experiences and challenges of e-learning implementation during COVID-19 pandemic. Creswell (2009) mentioned that a case study is used to get a rich data from groups of different people in a particular setting or scenario. The aim of using case study was to identify a case in a thorough and comprehensive manner.

3.2. Research Participants

Table 1 presented a summary of the participants' demographic profile for this study (n=20). The majority of the participants were females, n = 13 (65%). The participants clustered towards the youngest group, at 23 to 30 years old (n = 11, 55%). The participants' school setting clustered towards rural (n = 12, 60%). Participants were all degree holder in teaching English as Second Language (TESL) and they taught one to three English classes a day from primary one till primary six, respectively.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic Profile	N	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	7	35
Female	13	65
Age		
23 - 30	11	55
31- 40	4	20
41 - 50	3	15
51 - 60	2	10
School Setting		
Urban	3	15
Suburban	5	25
Rural	12	60

3.3. Research Instrument

This study employed an interview to obtain and achieve the study objectives. Questions in the interview generally involved open-ended questions, semi-structured, and closed-ended questions. Besides, the interview served as a powerful and a useful data collection instrument to reach participants. In this research work, the interview was used because it was suitable and relevant to obtain data on teachers' experiences in implementing e-learning and the challenges they faced. They answered the interview questions completely through online by means of WhatsApp application, wherein each interview lasted for 10-15 minutes through audio and video calls. The interview consisted of 11 questions adapted from Lie et al. (2020), and is considered as an important tool for teachers to include their views and opinions about online teaching and the use of technology during the hard circumstances like the present crisis.

3.4. Research Procedures and Analysis

The data for the present study were collected from 28 November to 18 December 2020 through WhatsApp interviews with all the selected teachers who taught English in primary schools. After describing the objectives and purposes of the study, the teachers were then required to sign the consent form if they agreed to participate in the interview. The latter was conducted via audio and video calls with all the participants. Conducting an interview using WhatsApp was best method to collect data as the pandemic was still actively spreading around the world. Five-step data analysis model was used in the present research.

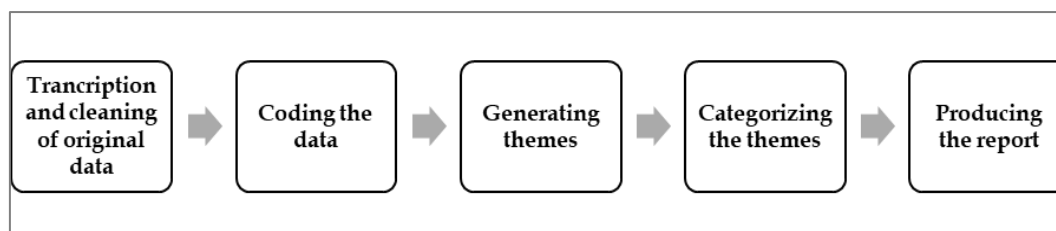


Figure 1: Five Steps Data Analysis Model

Based on Figure 1, the researcher transcribed and filtered the original data from the interview. This was intentionally done to omit unnecessary data and retrieve important details. The answers given by the interviewees were categorised into several patterns or sub-themes using the Nodes function. Next, the list of themes was then classified into few main themes. Lastly, the researchers proceeded with the report by writing the interview results.

4. Findings and Discussion

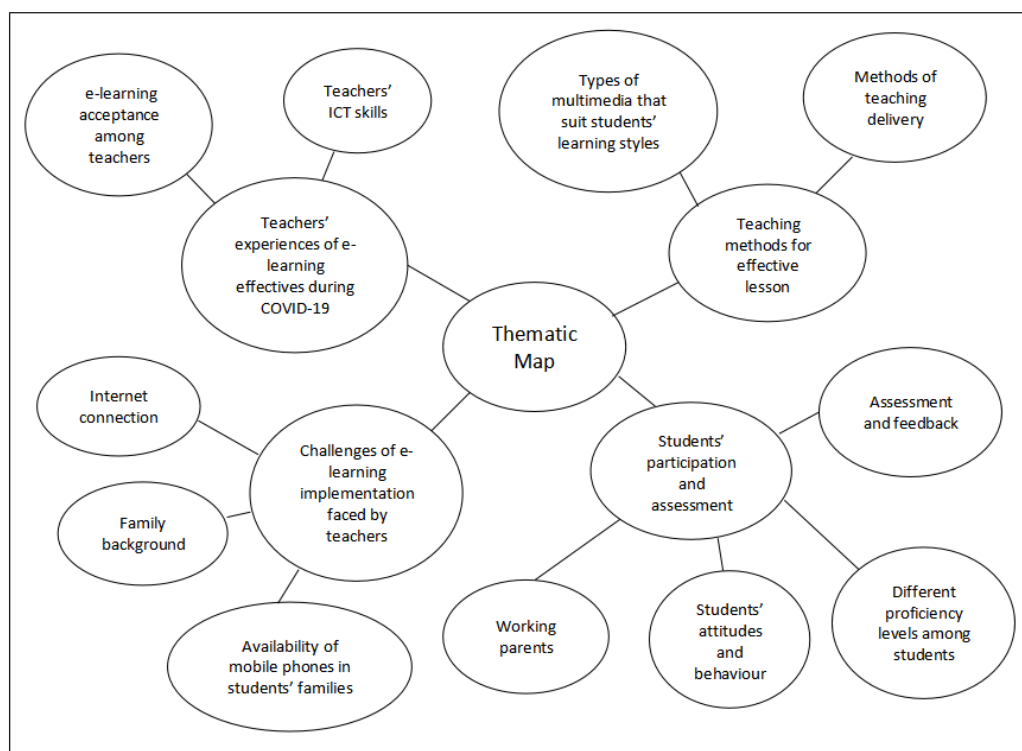


Figure 2: Thematic Map

From Figure 2, 11 nodes (themes) were created during the interview analysis; Internet connection, family background, e-learning acceptance among teachers, availability of mobile phones in students' families, students' attitudes and behaviour, methods of teaching delivery, types of multimedia that suit students' learning styles, working parents, teachers' ICT skills, different proficiency levels among students, and assessment and feedback. The nodes were then classified into 4 nodes classifications (themes) depending on the answer to the research questions. The themes were classified according to the number below:

1. Teachers' experiences of e-learning effectiveness during COVID-19
2. Teaching methods for effective lesson
3. Challenges of e-learning implementation faced by teachers
4. Students' participation and assessment

4.1. Teachers' Experience of E-learning Effectiveness during COVID-19

Based on teachers' e-learning experiences, they looked at online ESL teaching from different degrees of agreement. The participating teachers had almost similar experience of e-learning over COVID-19 when all of them were mainly using WhatsApp application for their online teaching. Interestingly, WhatsApp (75%) became particularly practical and convenient for their online teaching during the closure of schools as they were able to reach their students. Other online applications that they utilised were: Google Classroom (15%), Zoom (10%), and Quizziz (25%). Figure 2 below represented teachers' modes of online applications.

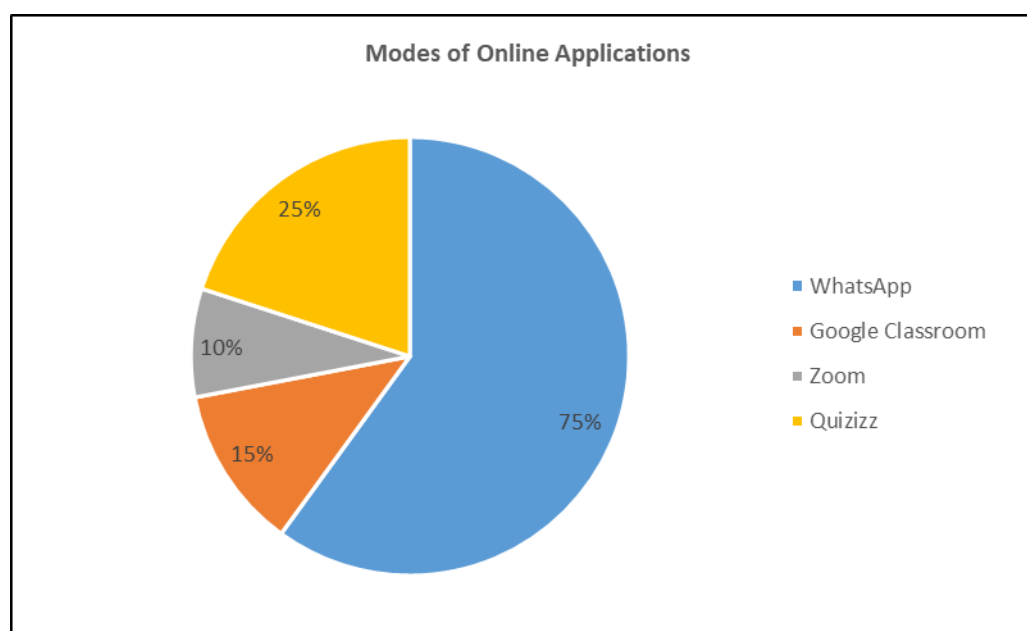


Figure 2: Modes of Online Applications

The following were some excerpts manifested by some interviewees:

"I prefer to use WhatsApp for online teaching and learning. It is easy to use and nowadays all parents who own smartphones has WhatsApp application." (Teacher 2)

“Using WhatsApp is easy to upload and download materials as it does not really require excellent Internet connection.” (Teacher 10)

According to Amry (2014), WhatsApp was cost-effective, easy to administer as it had low uploading and downloading rate. Thus, using WhatsApp can lighten teachers' burden and enable students to access in a short time. Hershkovitz et al. (2019) also supported this finding in their study mentioning that WhatsApp was an application that facilitates and promotes good students-teacher relationship and also creates an optimistic learning condition.

In terms of lesson plan preparation and implementation, 15 teachers prepared their lesson plans according to the syllabus and Scheme of Work (SoW) and implemented them accordingly during their online teaching. Another five teachers otherwise expressed their uncertainty of their lesson plans implementation as e-learning sometimes faced inconsistency in delivering the intended knowledge. The factor to this problem was related to teachers' unexpected situation during online teaching such as poor internet connection. This finding also existed in other studies which presented system features, internet connection, and computer skill that hindered the successfulness of the e-learning system (Almaiah et al., 2020). Poor internet connection can be the main factor behind the failure of e-learning which would result in frustration of both teachers and students.

4.2. Teaching Methods for Effective Lesson

Despite having time to adapt to online teaching and learning, and at the same time adhering to government initiatives to shift from the traditional classroom teaching to e-learning, teachers still have to ensure that learning can take place. There were various methods to utilise online teaching such as lectures, game-based, task-based, problem-based learning projects, and discussion. In this study, 13 teachers gave worksheets to their students through WhatsApp, and the others mentioned project-based, inquiry-based, online quizzes, and educational videos.

“I find it easier to send worksheet or task through WhatsApp, parents easily can understand my instruction and let students complete the worksheet given. Plus, I can easily send any related materials (notes) I find in the Internet for the English lesson.” (Teacher 14)

“Giving worksheets is the best online teaching I can do for my students. I list out the learning steps in a simple language and attach the worksheet. Giving them time and ask them to send the pictures of their work through WhatsApp.” (Teacher 15)

“I implement my online teaching sometimes using online quizzes. The quizzes are related to their learning, and through its students become more active and attracted to the leaning.” (Teacher 5)

Some of them also mentioned that they used various methods to reach to their students including giving worksheet through WhatsApp, and sending pictures or videos as extra support materials. For example, a combination of audio, visual

and animation effects made e-learning more appealing and effective (Wijaya & Helmi, 2018). Their choices of methods were strongly related to students' home area which had poor internet connection. This finding was in line with several studies that presented technology barriers and accessibility which were approached to be the main obstacles in adopting to online teaching (Eltahir, 2019; Ghavifekr et al., 2016).

Notwithstanding teachers had to utilise various methods to teaching online during Covid-19, some others liked the ideas of it as they can access to plenty of English materials to share with the students on the spot compared to the traditional classroom teaching. Based on this assumption and according to Foti (2020), online teaching and learning became an easy and an affordable source for the teachers and learners to access and interact with others by sharing knowledge and information in the modern era. It provided plenty forms of sources to practise the language significantly through online educational applications.

"As time passes by, I find online teaching is effective as it has various relevant materials and sources for teaching and learning English. Teacher can adopt and adapt teaching materials based on students' proficiency." (Teacher 8)

"One thing that excites my students is the use of videos or animations even in the face-to-face meeting, so in this period of online teaching I try my best to get them attracted to my lesson by using pictures and videos even though we cannot interact using the real time application like Microsoft teams or Google Classroom." (Teacher 12)

As supported by Pazilah et al. (2019), the use of authentic learning materials like videos from YouTube can make the online teaching and learning experience meaningful and purposeful. These optimistic views showed that teachers accept the use of online teaching as it benefited their teaching and their students. According to Merc (2015), teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of technology in the second language classroom influenced their pedagogical strategies, procedures, and materials, and provided a better understanding about their actual practices. Below statements showed teachers' view on how online teaching and learning was effective for their teaching practices.

"The advantages of online learning are making the learning to be possible in everywhere and every time as long as the facilities are well adequate as it is convenience and fun." (Teacher 16)

"Students are able to explore more knowledge with Internet as students are trained to look for information independently. Also, teachers get to explore lots of strategies in teaching." (Teacher 5)

4.3. Challenges of E-learning Implementation Faced by Teachers

In spite of their optimistic views about e-learning, teachers also mentioned few of its limitations such as readiness to adapt to e-learning, technological barriers in terms of internet connection and devices, and classroom management in term of students' participation and assessment. The participating teachers stated their

anxiety and concern during the process of e-learning. Teachers' readiness in term of technological experience and competence was one of the challenges mentioned in the interview. Ko and Rossen (2017) also supported this by saying that teachers who were lacking ICT skills found it challenging to implement e-learning, and it determined whether the lesson can be delivered successfully or not. They found it not convenient for them to conduct e-learning as they were less competent with technology. This problem mostly impacted senior teachers in which they regarded it difficult to run the advanced applications. When this happened, teachers feel burdened, and online teaching and learning was not optimal. However, it was different for young and those who master the applications and technological tools, in which e-learning can be implemented effectively and smoothly during COVID-19 (Reimers et al., 2020). In the interviews, few of them mentioned their readiness in adopting online teaching during the pandemic period.

"At first, I was so worry about what platform should I utilise and what if my students do not understand the lesson. I am still anxious about how my online teaching will be even until now, not so sure about its effectiveness." (Teacher 18)

"I have never taught online before, and I find it difficult, not confident to catch up with the technology. But I use WhatsApp, which is doable and easier than other applications." (Teacher 4)

"I feel that e-learning is not easy to implement, especially now, and even the parents face the same problems as mine." (Teacher 6)

"I find it difficult to prepare my teaching materials for the online teaching as I am not experienced and need longer time to adapt to this." (Teacher 19)

"I am teaching three classes; I am still struggling to adapt to the new norm. I'm having difficulty in organising my classes' tasks, but I try to put more effort." (Teacher 9)

The transformation in the education to make use of e-learning had influenced teachers' working progression and education quality. Teachers who participated in this study believed that e-learning needed to be effective and practical to implement, and all related parties should cooperate and have the same goals that align with the objectives of the government ensuring the notion that education must take place no matter what situation we are in. Regarding teaching strategies using e-learning, teachers emphasised that technological readiness and skills, whether online or offline applications was essential for the "new normal" approach, and it was necessary to support online learning success. Dai and Xia (2020) mentioned that educators are recommended to attend regular professional development workshops to utilise e-learning and high access to the curriculum resources.

The second main challenge was technological barriers in term of accessibility to internet and devices like mobile phones and laptops. The low-income family

background where parents did not have access to the electronic devices and poor network and also those who lived in the suburbs and rural area are subject to be unsuccessful when in e-learning situation. It had been confirmed that learning a second language can be challenging especially in semi-urban and rural areas (Endriyati, 2019). Eltahir (2019) mentioned several problems of e-learning adoption; technology barriers and accessibility, self-competencies, the norm cultural challenges, and course challenges. These challenges determined the successfulness of the instructional activities to be taken place. Also, student's participation was low, and learning was not optimal. These obstacles caused some students to be left behind the lesson and led to procrastination and delay in submitting their tasks. These technological impediments often faced by students with poor access to internet who came from low economic level and live rural areas as previously highlighted. The following statements covered what had been claimed by the participating teachers:

"Poor Internet access and not all of my students have mobile phones to follow e-learning." (Teacher 1)

"The Internet coverage in my students' area is not supportive of them to use e-learning as most of my students live in rural areas." (Teacher 7)

"More screen time which may cause eye strain and worsen my eye health condition." (Teacher 20)

"Pupils use their parents' device. Sometimes, parents can only guide or make time for online learning after working hours." (Teacher 17)

In the implementation of online learning during COVID-19, teachers and students must have enough internet quota and accessibility towards various electronic devices. Owning this privilege will help students to follow online learning smoothly. However, some teachers visited students at home, sending homework to make sure that all students received the same materials.

4.4. Students' Participation and Assessment

Some students were not familiar with online learning as they were so used to face-to-face interaction with their teachers. Moreover, students struggled a great deal with gadgets such as mobile phones as most of them did not own one. Learners from the rural area which had poor or no internet connection and low-income family could not access to online learning. Teachers will need to find other alternatives to deliver the lessons using other available platforms which again caused students to be delayed in learning (Kaden, 2020). Due to these factors, students were gradually losing interest and motivation in joining online classes. This is also felt with some interviewees as shown below:

"Remedial students that need guidance are sometimes left behind as the good students conquer the lessons. I find it hard to monitor and guide struggling students and that somehow demotivate them." (Teacher 2)

"One of the disadvantages of online learning is I feel there is a wall between me and my students that I couldn't really feel their presence, unlike in classroom. I might don't know what is their problem because

in the screen I cannot see their body language and mimic for instance if they apply display picture on their screen. Some of the students also might lie to their teacher, by only joining in but they are doing something else." (Teacher 3)

"I cannot run from the fact that face-to-face interaction is still imperative to be able to keep track of students' progress (tasks or performance) especially in the rural areas and it is hard to assess students as their performances are inconsistent." (Teacher 10)

"Parents were answering the quizzes instead of students which in turn teachers can't assess students' performance." (Teacher 13)

"Some students did not do their homework on their own, as some answers seem dishonest. Plus, it is difficult to provide feedback individually." (Teacher 11)

Teacher can plan and prepare virtual classroom that both interesting and effective at the same time. In order to appeal to students' enthusiasm and motivation in online learning, teachers had to be creative to attract students' attention. Teachers were required to maximise the use of varied instructional methods to encourage more enthusiastic participation in online learning. Involving students in a fun and engaging learning activities can also increase their motivation to learn (Morat et al., 2017). During learning from home, several teachers expressed that they were having hard time in getting students to be interested and maintain students' attention and motivation for learning. At the beginning of online learning, students were excited about immersing themselves with the "new normal" of learning, but the spirit was fading after a few months, in which students became uninterested and less bothered to learn. Moorhouse and Beaumont (2020) stated that learners with mixed-abilities were having problems in catching up with the rest of the class as teachers were giving standardised-tasks to all of them. Thus, feedback and assessment were not consistent as pupils perform way better than at school. This condition was highly due to major helps came from parents as they were the ones who did and completed the task instead of their children.

All the aspects above have affected the achievement of instructional objectives and teachers' performance in delivering knowledge to students online, however and according to Moorhouse and Beaumont (2020), challenges still existed. The most significant obstacle teachers encountered when conducting e-learning was students' poor internet connection and little to no access to mobile phones or laptops. Influential parties such as parents, teachers, and the government should give unconditional support to ensure effective implementation of e-learning. Collaboration from those parties will nevertheless help teachers to deliver the knowledge successfully and motivate students at the same time. The findings of this study indicated that educators and curriculum designers ought to prepare online learning frameworks that catered to few conditions such as teachers' perception of e-learning, accessibility to the technologies, students economic background, and needs in implementing online learning during the COVID-19

pandemic. Thus, for successful e-learning implementation, several factors must be considered. Importantly, teachers' technology readiness must be polished and improved so that fun, meaningful and purposeful lesson can be created.

5. Conclusion

In the findings on this study, the majority of teachers expressed that the use of online teaching was effective but with various limitations. There were limitations connected to teachers' readiness to adopt online teaching, accessibility to mobile phones and internet connectivity, classroom management in terms of low students' participation and assessment. The study found that it was important for instructors to be prepared and flexible in utilising e-learning to increase learning effectiveness. Hopefully, findings of this study will help teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders to have a more depth understanding of the online teaching efficacy and digital divide caused by the pandemic in Malaysia. Collaboration and innovation from essential parties such as government, teachers, parents, and schools were crucial to optimise the efficacy and practicality of e-learning during this critical period. Based on the current limitations of this research that covered a small number of ESL teachers, future research needed a thorough and comprehensive research on the issue with large population. Teachers' personal experiences such as years of teaching experience, age, and education level may lead to differences in their view about e-learning in teaching English.

6. Implication

COVID-19 pandemic has caused a big crisis in all educational systems worldwide. Many countries have come out with alternatives to make sure the learning is still taking place. Eventually, the ministry of education put great emphasis on e-learning implementation. Along with the shift, alterations were necessary to employ effective instructional pedagogy, teachers' technological readiness to conduct e-learning and giving constructive support to all needed. This was to maximise e-learning potential, and no student would be left behind.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. What online applications (s) do you utilise for your e-learning?
2. Do you follow the lesson plans that you had prepared?
3. What methods do you use?
4. How do you provide assignment and assessment after each lesson?
5. How do you provide feedback to you students?
6. How would you describe your students' response and participation to e-learning?
7. Are your students able to use your e-learning platform? Justify your answer.
8. According to you, what are the benefits and drawbacks of e-learning?
9. How effective is your e-learning?
10. What have you learned about your teaching pedagogy during this pandemic?
11. What are other challenges you face in implementing e-learning?