

# Conducting Online Learning: What to do? (A Preliminary Study of Information Technology Department Students)

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## Abstract

Teaching and learning practices in Indonesia changed by the global spread of Covid-19 that constrain the teaching practices nationwide to virtual. The conventional teaching and learning activity where students and lecturers meet in a classroom for lecturing and having discussion were no longer possible. Of a sudden, all the teaching and learning practices had to be done online. This critical situation leads to confusion and distress that experience by both educators and learners. This paper aims to investigate online learning practices in the Information Technology Department, State Polytechnic of Malang during the even semester of 2020/2021 and find out the proper online learning practices from the students' feedback. Some Information Technology Department students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade become the respondent that taken the English for Job Preparation subject. The results show that the students' little experience in online learning can be overcome by creating a suitable learning atmosphere for students.

**Keywords:** Online Learning, Preliminary Study, Information Technology Department, ESP

## Introduction

The Ministry of education and culture launched a policy called *Kurikulum Darurat* to assign teaching and learning due to the Covid-19 outbreak (Kemdikbud, 2020). The current situation constrains the teaching practices nationwide (Permatasari & Oktawati, 2021). Conventional teaching is replacing by online in a blink of an eye. Pros and cons arise to deal with the practices of online learning. Online learning practices come as the answer to deal with the pandemic situation.

Meanwhile, after the launch of the new educational policy, the new practices became contradictory. Some practices in the field found that online learning is bounced back with its practices. Online learning is assumed to burden both the teacher and learner since it requires many factors to compete. Some highlighted issues related to the new practices as the high cost for internet access, the availability of devices that support learning activities, student demographics across the nation that living in rural or remote areas, and the gaps in digital skills. Thus, online learning practices in Indonesia are out of the blue.

Online learning practices may be running in contradiction, so it is challenging for anyone interested in the new learning practices. Online learning practices are applying in the State Polytechnic of Malang. The institution announced the SFH (Study from Home) scheme as the

strategy to minimize the Covid-19 transmission. In my perspective, the following situation comes as a new challenge ahead. The study from home allows everyone to experience and involve with online learning.

The students in State Polytechnic of Malang were experiencing with the LMS (Moodle). The institution regulation instructs all the faculty members to perform the synchronous and asynchronous learning activity with 70% (face-to-face) -30% (LMS). After the massive virus outbreak, the new regulation changes the proportion for the learning activity to 100% online learning (learn combining through LMS and Virtual classroom). The new regulation also applies to my faculty, Information Technology Department. The learning activity beforehand is taken in a face-to-face setting with the use of LMS to distribute the learning materials and assignments. Now, the LMS performs in powerful combination with the virtual classroom to conduct the teaching and learning activity. The new teaching practices are more challenging compare to standing for some hours in front of a class. Some obstacles may arise during the new practices held.

The students encounter some problems during the teaching and learning. Some students have mentioned that they seem not to be ready for online lecturing. They pretend that online learning is likely listening to a learning tutorial rather than participating in a classroom activity. Sometimes students feel boring during the learning activity since the interaction among peers is conduct in virtual. Performing activities during online learning seems intriguing when students know what to do, but some students pretend to be nervous when interacting in virtual. Most students were familiar with the direct interaction in face-to-face settings and took some time to adapt. Few of them prefer to respond in short answers in a discussion. This situation demands a solution for dealing with the current problems in the classroom. The pre-observation to my student indicated that online learning and its advanced technology demand commitment in all learning activities. Thus, online learning is not only focused on students' participation in a classroom but also demands student engagement in teaching and learning thoroughly.

This research aims as a preliminary study to evaluate the teaching and learning of English Subjects in the Informatics Technology Department by revealing the student's responses related to the online learning practices. Online learning was completed in virtual for seventeen weeks and requires an improvement to set the learning target and accomodate the students' needs. The research was performed for evaluating teaching and learning material to improve ESP teaching online in the Information Technology Department, State Polytechnic of Malang.

## **Literature Review**

### **Online Learning Practices**

Online learning leads the current trend for global education with the advancement of technology. Online learning expands the classroom boundaries and can access by everyone. Online learning practices are predestined not for replacing conventional learning and teaching but developed the previous one to the advance. Conventional learning comes with its nature as a sphere for transforming knowledge.

In general terms the classroom in online learning context is not completely real. Online learning means learning through virtual reality, but not in reality. Online learning is the new version of distance education (Nguyen, 2015). Online learning today is originated from what

we call “distance learning” in few past decades. Online learning ease the learner for providing meaningful learning experience with the use of internet. Online learning conduct by the use of the internet (Suryadi, 2021) for delivering the learning material, interacting with peers and instructors, and taking part in teaching and learning activities in the virtual sphere (Nasution, Surbakti, Zakaria, Wahyuningsih, & Daulay, 2021).

Moreover, online learning is similar to the traditional classroom that runs virtually for learners and teachers to interact (Mannong, 2020) to transfer knowledge (Mu'ayyadah and Sahiruddin, 2020). Online learning practices mostly combine face-to-face (synchronous) activity and online (asynchronous) with percentages of 30% and 70% or adjusted with the current situation in the learning setting (Nasution & Ahmad, 2020). In the practice, online learning delivered the course virtually then continue to discuss and interact in a face-to-face online.

In general, online learning is built from the face-to-face learning culture with more developed instruction and learning materials that attach to the use of technology. Similar to face-to-face learning, the new practices (online learning) is underline the learners' engagement as the principal issue to achieve the successful learning target. Online learning still requires a face-to-face to get learner engagement (Rahman, 2020). Moreover, online learning provides some learners with the benefits of time flexibility, broaden access to various learning resources, and a self-driven learner perspective to empower the student ability.

### **Online Learning Practices during pandemic**

Emerging technologies have made education more fruitful and autonomous, providing a more scientific basis for teaching and making it more robust. Since the global spread of pandemic Covid-19, the education practices for all tertiary levels nationwide transform into virtual learning (Nasution et al., 2021). The traditional teaching usually taking place in class performs virtually from home to prevent the massive spread of the Covid-19 (Mu'ayyadah & Sahiruddin, 2020). The COVID-19 crisis that has resulted in the new strategies for maintaining teaching and learning activities is continuously working (Suryadi, 2020). Some challenges may arise in finding feasible and manageable solutions for all education levels.

The current situation has driven some problems to adapt to the new learning practices. As the learner, students may experience confusion, stress, and learning gap due to the online learning they should complete during the semester. Some problems encountered are come from internal and external factors of the learners. Teacher-centered, less experienced in the online learning environment, lack of digital skills, self time-management came as a burden of internal factor. The external factor is related to the technical issue as the availability of internet connection, the supported devices for online learning, and the financial issue.

The problems encountered by the learners demand a practical solution. Considering the virtual teaching and learning practices that apply in recent times, the adopted classroom setting is needed to solving problems for the learners to achieve the learning target (Rahman, 2020). As the educator, teacher or lecture have to investigate their students need to promote proper teaching and learning that adjust with their learning ability, environment, and outcomes.

### **Online Learning in Information Technology Department**

With the global outbreak of COVID-19, teaching and learning across the country is transitioning to online. Most students in Information Technology were familiar with the LMS (Asri, Ulfa, & Suryadi, 2019), but not with the online learning. While experiencing previous learning practices, students can interact directly with their peers and lecturers in two ways: in the classroom or online through LMS. When the students encountered some problems after the class, they could take a sharing session through the discussion room in LMS. As online learning started from the beginning of the semester until the final exam, students were unable to interact with their peers and lecturers instead of online. Physical presence in the classroom is crucial to nurture students' motivation. Students are enthusiastic to learn when they sit at their desks and listening to the lecturing activities.

Online learning during pandemics has forced students with anxiety. The students revealed that they experience stress, falter, and distract by the burden of the assignment and practices they should complete in one semester. Students are also frustrated with the internet connection issue that sometimes is unstable, unpredictable, and high cost. The supported devices for the online learning practices are also a dilemma for students. Online learning requires the supported devices to assign online learning. The supported system comes as a tool for learners to get involved in teaching and learning activities. The system covers the Learning Management System (Moodle or Google Classroom), the online classroom (Zoom or Google Meet), and some additional tools that are used for supporting learning activity such as Quizzes, Mentimeter, Canva, and so on. The important thing is the capability of the students with their digital skills to take part in online learning. In some cases, while their computer was halting during learning activities it spontaneously drains their motivation. The gap in digital skills is another issue to solve. Consequently, student proficiency in digital skills determines their performance during online learning.

Some obstacles found in the classroom affect student participation in the teaching-learning process. The majority of the students have little experience in full-time virtual learning beforehand. They defined that online learning is similar to taking an online short course, listening to the materials in real-time, and doing the assignment without engagement to the following activities. This condition puts them in confusion as there is no feedback to dealing with online learning.

### **Method**

The present study was conducted Qualitative with descriptive analysis to identify the suitable online learning practices in Informatics Engineering Study Program at State Polytechnic of Malang. Online questionnaires were used to collect the data related to the students' opinions on online learning during one semester. The participants are the 4th-grade students in the Informatics Engineering study program who have taken an English for Job Preparation course in the even semester 2020/2021.

### **Finding and Discussion**

Based on the questionnaires being analyzed from ninety seven respondents of Information Technology students, the student response identified as follow:

Table 1: Student responses related teaching materials for Online Learning

No	Questions	1	2	3	4
1	Teaching materials for online learning should provide an interesting topic.	1	2	39	55
2	Teaching materials for online learning should provide with interactive instructional media.	1	9	35	52
3	Teaching materials for online learning should provide updated topic related to the subject.	1	3	32	61
4	Teaching materials for online learning should provide various learning sources	3	6	43	45

The positive response performed by students when online learning upgrades its way of presenting learning materials that follow by the suitable teaching activities and learning methods that are helpful for students to engage in learning. From the table above, most student answers strongly agree when the teaching materials deliver interactively with the supported teaching aids. Students will gain more when they are excited about the activities. Upgrading the way of lecturing can motivate students' participation during the learning.

Most students appreciate attaching a recent topic for online learning that relates to the subject they have learned. Provides students with a clear illustration taken from some upcoming trend that is in line with their subjects on the news or discussing their personal experiences, it can stimulate them to be active in sharing their knowledge and ideas. The student feels to be involved in the activities.

Various learning sources aim to boost students' curiosity to get details on the subject. Textbook and Module sometimes is mundane to challenge students to achieve their competence. Different sources for learning enhance the student experience in gathering information, formulating new ideas, and sharing their sight with peers to get beneficial feedback to improve their knowledge.

To help students get involved in online learning some strategies need to perform by the lecturer. The researcher assumes when the online learning setting is proposed from the students' perspective that supports proper teaching materials, interesting topics to discuss, and various resources to enrich their knowledge, the teaching and learning can achieve the learning target effectively.

Table 2: Student responses related teaching methods for Online Learning

No	Questions	1	2	3	4
1	Discovery Learning helps students to understand the course	1	14	27	55
2	Problem Based Learning helps students to understand the course	1	8	38	51
3	Project Based Learning helps students to understand the course	1	6	35	55

The English subject in Information Technology Department combines some teaching methods to perform in the classroom to provide the students with the different experiences to get involved in teaching and learning activities. In terms of the proper teaching methods for online learning, most students prefer project-based learning. Some of them argued that project-based learning is more challenging and it spontaneously triggers their motivation to understand and complete the task. Project-based learning also serves as self-driven motivation for students to participate in learning.

Table 3: Student responses related teaching activities for Online Learning

No	Questions	1	2	3	4
1	Role play helps students to understand the course.	3	10	37	47
2	Simulation helps students to understand the course.	7	13	30	47
3	Presentation helps students to understand the course.	10	17	30	40

Presentation in groups and individuals is a common activity in face-to-face learning instead of lecturing. Presentation performs for teacher lecturing or students presenting their work. Mostly the presentation is wrapped up with a discussion to get a summary of the presentation. When learning goes online, presentation is not the favorite activity for students. Some students assume that presenting their work online is burdening. While presenting their work face-to-face, students did not worry about the technical error that may encounter during the presentation. But, it takes more effort when presenting their work online. It indicates that students that might have heterogeneous digital skills that become an obstacle in the learning process.

To deal with the situation, students suggest that role-play is the proper activity for online learning. The students' response shows that role-play is the best option for them to get into the classroom activity. Online learning requires some productive activities to promote students' engagement. So, role-play can provide interactive activities to enhance students' responsibility to participate in learning.

## Conclusion

The emerging of online learning practices for handle teaching-learning during the crisis popped up many questions to answer. Teachers, Students, institutions, and Stakeholders are working hard to adapt online learning at their pace. Particularly to students, since they were not ready to conduct out-and-out online learning. Most of them have experienced stress, discomfort, and confusion. The previous semester for online learning was a hard time for students.

Online learning is currently new for our education sphere that requires more theoretical and practical feedback from scholars to build the proper online practices with determination to achieve the nationwide educational target. To deal with the problems encountered by the students, I initiated an observation to hear from them on the current obstacles, perspective on the proper online learning, and the way to manage the activity that can boost students' engagement during the activity in the online classroom.

In short, the student can participate in online learning at their own pace. Observing their problems, and defining the proper solution can improve their performance later. Each of them had their strategies to conduct with the online learning. Most students suggest the combination of asynchronous and synchronous activity with percentages of 40% and 60 %.

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