



## Tourism Vocational High School Students' Online EFL Learning Experience during Covid-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

The unique nature of ESP instructions that mainly focuses on practical use of English and the lack of previous studies in the area inspired the writers to investigate the tourism VHS students' experience when they conducted online EFL learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to explore the tourism vocational high school (VHS) students' experience of EFL learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative study was utilized to obtain 20 students' experience. The data were obtained from grades 10 and 11 students of tourism VHS in Yogyakarta. A semi-structured interview was conducted, and verbatim transcripts were analyzed using inductive and thematic analysis approaches. Three major themes were identified from the students' experiences, namely how they conducted the EFL teaching and learning; language learning strategies; and perceptions of online EFL learning. It was found that students have made use of all available resources. This study suggests that students have used appropriate language learning strategies for online EFL learning, such as cognitive, metacognitive, resource management, and social strategies. Their perceptions toward EFL online learning were mainly positive. However, students still prefer face-to-face learning to online learning.

**Keywords:** EFL, Online Learning, Experience, COVID-19 Pandemic, Tourism Vocational High School

#### History:

Received : August 12, 2021

Revised : August 14, 2021

Accepted : September 18, 2021

Published : October 25, 2021

**Publisher:** Undiksha Press

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught in two fashions in Indonesia, English for general purposes (EGP) and English for specific purposes (ESP). EGP focuses on general students' English language ability. Meanwhile, ESP focuses on helping students function well in workplaces where English serves as a medium of communication, and it caters to the different needs of diverse groups of vocational students (Octaberlina et al., 2021; Widodo, 2016). The uniqueness of ESP over EGP is that in ESP, the general rule of English four skills is stressed equally and focuses on context use of English. While in EGP, the emphasis is on teaching grammar and language structures. ESP is usually taught in the vocational high school (VHS) and higher vocational education, where the graduates are expected to master English based on their expertise (Vogt & Kantelinen, 2013). Various vocational programs are available for the students, ranging from technical, farming, to office administration. One of many vocational programs in secondary education is tourism vocational high schools, where the graduates are expected to pursue careers in the tourism industry. Tourism VHS students require more English exposure for their future employment, as they might interact with foreign visitors or employers (Mahbub, 2019).

Therefore, the EFL instruction emphasizes a more practical use of English. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit at the beginning of 2020, the Ministry of Education developed a series of guidelines for educational institutions to conduct online teaching and learning and providing recommendations to schools and teachers to prepare strategies for developing online and distance learning. Therefore, since March of 2021, students from kindergarten to university level have been studying from home, tourism VHS students were included. EFL

teaching-learning processes that were meant to be practical and encouraging real-world communication during face-to-face learning must be shifted into fully online and distance learning since March 2020. The shift in the EFL learning process led to a different learning experience among students. When they got into different learning situations, they also needed to apply suitable language learning techniques (Cohen, 2014). Also, the ICT integration during online and distance learning was inevitable. Therefore, in supporting online learning that was conducted synchronous or asynchronously, learning management systems (LMS), Instant messaging (IMs), and gadgets have been highly integrated to support the teaching and learning process (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Thus, teachers and students needed to adapt to the teaching and learning process using suitable ICT tools based on the different learning situations. Students also tended to learn with visual and auditory styles as they were used to learning independently at home using gadgets and accessing materials from the web (Albeta et al., 2021). Problems when conducting online EFL learning, such as internet access, financial issues, and the lack of support from the teachers, were also experienced by students (Allo, 2020; Hermanto & Srimulyani, 2021). The problems happened due to the lack of online learning preparation as it came as unprecedented under emergency.

Since 2020, educational researchers have pictured how online EFL learning experience was from the teachers' and students' points of view. The studies have been varied from teaching and learning obstacles (Handayani, 2020; Thijs Bol, 2020; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020), teaching and learning instructions (Allo, 2020; Rahim & Fuad, 2020), learning styles and strategies (Miguel & Malpartida, 2021; Albeta et al., 2021; Jimola & Ofodu, 2021), and teaching and learning perceptions (Allo, 2020; Shukri et al., 2020). Those studies were conducted in various settings, yet they shared similarities, of which they investigated the teachers or students in the general EFL setting. As a result, little research has attempted to explore the students' online EFL learning experience from those who learn English under the ESP. The unique nature of ESP instructions that mainly focuses on practical use of English and the lack of previous studies in the area inspired the writers to investigate the tourism VHS students' experience when they conducted online EFL learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The depiction of students' learning experience was considered significant as they were the main object of the teaching and learning process. It was expected that this paper could be considered as an evaluation for EFL teachers and stakeholders so that reflection could be undertaken to face the future of EFL learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic or under other similar situations.

## **2. METHODS**

This study took an exploratory qualitative orientation with interviews as the primary technique for data collection. The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was used in this study. It enabled gaining in-depth tourism VHS students' experience after conducting online EFL learning. Data were collected through interviews using WhatsApp voice and video calls from 11 – 30 July 2021 after the school year ended. Each interview lasted for 30-50 minutes. This study used the purposive sampling technique. The participants were 20 tourism VHS students from various departments, namely hospitality, culinary arts, fashion, and travel business departments, from grades 10 and 11. At the time of the data collection, the participants had had a full year of online EFL learning. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and thoroughly examined. Before conducting the interview, written consent was provided for the participants. Then they were asked to share detailed explanations on learning procedures, online learning tools, materials, assignments, their ways of learning English, and their overall perceptions towards online EFL learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Details of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Research participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Departments</b>
<b>P1</b>	Female	10th	Tourism Business
<b>P2</b>	Female	10th	Tourism Business
<b>P3</b>	Female	10th	Fashion
<b>P4</b>	Female	10th	Fashion
<b>P5</b>	Male	11th	Hospitality
<b>P6</b>	Male	11th	Hospitality
<b>P7</b>	Female	10th	Culinary arts
<b>P8</b>	Female	10th	Culinary arts
<b>P9</b>	Male	10th	Hospitality
<b>P10</b>	Female	11th	Tourism business
<b>P11</b>	Female	11th	Hospitality
<b>P12</b>	Male	11th	Hospitality
<b>P13</b>	Male	11th	Hospitality
<b>P14</b>	Female	11th	Hospitality
<b>P15</b>	Male	10th	Tourism business
<b>P16</b>	Male	10th	Tourism business
<b>P17</b>	Female	11th	Fashion
<b>P18</b>	Female	11th	Culinary arts
<b>P19</b>	Male	10th	Culinary arts
<b>P20</b>	Female	11th	Fashion

After that, the data were then carefully reviewed, and significant codes reflecting the experience of EFL learning were identified. Interview transcripts were read several times in gaining some significant points. Data coding was then administered to exhibit the classification and emerging themes. Data that were repetitive and non-significant were also omitted. Ultimately, suitable extracts on the students' experience in the EFL learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic were elaborated in the result section.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Result**

#### **Teaching and Learning Process during EFL Online Learning in the COVID-19 pandemic**

The teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic was carried out entirely online. Some aspects are needed for the online learning continuity, such as facilities and infrastructure, application and platforms used, and learning materials and activities. Students stated that they primarily used mobile phones and mobile data during online EFL learning. Mobile phones are considered familiar, simple, and easy-to-use tools that have been part of their daily lives. Some students reported having other gadgets such as tablets and laptops. Even some stated that their parents set them up Wi-Fi at home to study from home comfortably, as indicated in the following statements: *"I usually use my mobile phone when learning online. I do not have a laptop at home. I do not think I need a laptop cause my mobile phone is adequate. I think it is amazing that we can use such a small device for communication, learning, and exploring new materials."* (P2, P3). *"I use mobile phones and laptops at home. I also use wifi. At the beginning of the online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I complained to my parents that online learning consumed many internet data, so they set me up wifi."* (P1, P7).

The government provided mobile data aid for the students every month during the learning process. This support was considered necessary by the students even if they already had a good internet data package, as the students expressed in the following statements: *"We got 20GB from school every month for learning. I think it was from the government and our school distributed it. The data could only be used to access educational applications, so I could not use it for anything else. However, I feel that it helps me a lot because I do not need to ask my parents to buy me extra data for an online school."* (P5, P8, P10). *"I got a weekly mobile data allowance from my parents. Moreover, with the Internet, data aid from the government is quite helpful. Even though I could only use it to access limited websites and apps, I think the aid must keep being given to using every month."* (P3, P4). The main tools that EFL teachers used during online EFL learning were WhatsApp and Google Classroom. Few students admitted that they used Kaizala as well. English teachers created a WhatsApp group that contained themselves and the students of each class. Supporting arguments can be seen in the following statements: *"At first, we were included in one WhatsApp group under the class name and the subject name, for example, 'English Class X Boga 1' (English class of 10<sup>th</sup>-grade culinary arts 1). Imagine how many subjects that we have; the amount of WhatsApp groups is too much. Then all the learning happened there."* (P16). *"At the beginning of online learning, we used Kaizala, but more and more we stick to WhatsApp and Google Classroom. Because we have been using it for too long now, we do not mind using those platforms anymore."* (P12, P13).

When it was time for the English lesson, the teacher started the conversation with greetings and checked the students' attendance. Learning materials and resources were given through WhatsApp chat, as expressed in the following: *"Most of the teaching and learning process happened on WhatsApp and Google Classroom. English teachers distributed the materials on WhatsApp, and then we used Google classroom to submit the task and assignments."* (P1, P2). The teachers opened discussion during lessons asking students if they had anything to ask. Most students felt hesitant to ask first because they had not met the teachers and their classmates in person. Second, because the materials given by the teachers were in the form of a summary, the students could understand them well. The kind of interaction between teachers and students was primarily conducted asynchronously through WhatsApp chats and Google Classroom. Only a few students admitted that they conducted face-to-face virtual meetings. It happened two or three times during one semester. However, the majority of the students and the teachers carried out the teaching and learning process asynchronously. WhatsApp was used to communicate, and Google Classroom was used for assignment giving and submission. Below are the supporting statements from the students: *"I do not think WhatsApp and Google classroom was enough. Some of us want to have a regular video conference with our teachers to know what they look like. I could understand why my classmates and I were reluctant to join the discussion on WhatsApp group or Google classroom because we did not feel comfortable. We barely know our teachers since the school year started."* ( P16, P18, P19) *"During one semester, we only had one video conference session with our English teacher."* (P3, P5) *"I would love to have a video chat with English teachers. It is important to practise our English with her. However, I realized that some of my classmates lived in a rural area where sometimes internet signal is limited for video conferences. So I think it is fair enough"* (P11, P12).

Materials given by the English teachers were in PPT and document files and distributed on WhatsApp group. The materials contain functional language based on the students' departments. Examples of dialogues, the summary on using a proper expression in practical situations, and web links to additional material resources such as BBC English and YouTube videos were commonly mentioned by students. Learning materials from textbooks and worksheets provided by the schools were also discussed during the learning process.

Besides changing the learning materials delivery, teaching, and learning medium, the kind of exercise conducted during online EFL learning differed from the face-to-face learning. Most exercises involving ICT use include voice and video recording while practicing the conversation, posting English poetry on students' social media, and tagging the English teachers, as expressed below: *"During English periods, the teacher sent materials on WhatsApp. Usually on ppt or word documents. She then explained to us what the material was about and started a discussion. Materials were clear and straightforward, such as the dialogue examples or video/audio recording. Even if we studied online, we were still required to practice English." (P1, P17, P19) "English teacher sent the materials on WhatsApp group and asked us to study them, and if we did not understand something, we could ask. We also need to study and do exercises from textbooks that the school lends us at the semester's beginning. Sometimes there were also quizzes using Google forms. So, there were questions, and we answered the questions. However, I liked it the most when the teacher provided us with some websites to study independently. It was fun so I could explore more." (P7, P10, P11) "At first, I thought the exercises were a bit bizarre, like recording videos and sent them to the teacher. However, I felt it was enjoyable the more often I did that, especially when I practiced with my friend. Once, we had a group assignment to record our video chat on WhatsApp (using English) and then sent it to the teacher. We also use social media for the exercise, such as Facebook and Instagram, writing captions in English. The teacher then gave us written or spoken feedback. It was fun." (P4, P5, P6).*

### **Students' language learning strategies**

Engaging in the learning process that mainly occurred asynchronously, students admitted that they often carefully read and re-examined the learning materials and then summarized what they read, listened to, and watched—the use of ICT tools when learning from home made them easier to learn independently. The Internet had provided them with an abundance of additional learning materials they could access freely. Learning flexibility at home is considered by all the participants as enjoyable. They could adjust their pace of learning, creating their safe zone area and time for learning while studying from home, as reported by the following statements: *"I took note and highlighted the important things from the materials after the teacher gave it to me. I also played video materials over and over. It took me a while to comprehend the materials well because basically, teachers just gave the materials on WhatsApp group or Google classroom with only a little explanation. By taking notes, it made me easier to make sense of the materials. It was also useful when I face examinations." (P6, P11) "I took notes of the materials; for something like dialogue, I memorized them because they were used for speaking practice as well. I also look up additional materials online. It was easy for me. YouTube was my favorite source because there are many videos with clear explanations and subtitles. I also shared what I found on the Internet with my peers." (P15) "I like online learning is even though sometimes boring, most of the time it was quite enjoyable. I do not get to wear uniforms, and I can learn while relaxing on my bed or having snacks. I could not do that in the classroom. The fact that we used the Internet and gadgets while learning was also great because besides summarizing the materials, I could also learn through the web." (P3).*

Being apart from their peers and English teachers did not mean that they could not seek help from their peers and teachers. Students stated that some teachers were always ready for them 24/7 when they needed them, while others were only available for their students at a particular time of the day. Another use of ICT tools was enabling students to interact with their peers and teachers. Social media and instant messaging played an essential role in supporting students' learning. Students admitted that interacting with their peers made the learning burden easier. They could also exchange information and practice English together.

Supporting data describing this theme is presented below: *"My English teacher was very open, and she told us that we could ask her anytime if we encountered difficulties regarding the learning materials. I contacted her on WhatsApp several times, and she explained it to me very well. Besides, she also gave me a website link containing additional information."* (P1) *"Before asking my English teacher if I did not understand the materials or assignments, I usually re-read the materials and looking up some additional information online. If I was stuck, then I contacted my more knowledgeable peers for a solution. Often my peers and I ended up studying together through WhatsApp chat. If studying with my peers did not solve the problems, then the teacher was my last source. I was shy, asking the teacher for help. Often I did not do that."* (P5).

The assignment's deadline during online learning was usually on Fridays, not on the same day as when they conducted face-to-face learning. It made the students sometimes felt overwhelmed by assignments and tasks from other subjects as well. However, some students admitted that their time management was also improved throughout conducting online language learning, as can be seen in the following statements: *"The good thing about online learning was that the deadline for assignments and tasks usually on Fridays at 23.59. it did not happen before during face-to-face learning. But, the assignments were not only from English lessons but also other lessons. So sometimes I feel overwhelmed because assignments have to be submitted on the same day."* (P11). Other students expressed a similar concern: *"At first, the amount of the assignments during online learning made me overwhelmed because they were just so many. However, I felt that my time management has also improved. Whenever the tasks were assigned, I did it immediately, so when the deadline came; I only needed to polish it a little bit."* (P5, P6, P12).

### **Students' perception of online EFL learning**

The findings showed that students found online language learning enjoyable. Some factors supporting the idea were highlighted; they were motivation, attitude, and internet anxiety. At the beginning of online learning, students felt happy to have a 'school break.' However, the joy only lasted for several weeks. The excitement turned into boredom and craving for interaction with their peers and teachers. During this period, students felt demotivated in learning. Internet, mainly social media, helped the students while conducting online learning. It was not the only source of information and entertainment but also a means of communication with their peers. Then, their motivation started to increase again. Supporting data describing the theme is presented below: *"At first, I felt that we were about to have a long holiday. It meant no early rising, no need to go to school. I communicated with my friends a lot while telling each other how fun that was to stay home. But then, it was not true. It was still like school but just a different learning location. The assignments started to pile up. The deadlines of all subjects were just at the same time. I felt overwhelmed by them. Then I started to miss school and my friends."* (P11) *"I felt bored and alone, of course. But, I shared what I felt with friends. I could feel that many people were in the same boat. When there were many assignments and deadlines, I remember that others were going through the same thing. Then I felt okay"* (P3). Another student added: *"When I had a break from learning, I went to Instagram and Tiktok a lot; it was fun to be on social media for a while. I could see what was happening in the world, seeing what my friends were up to. Getting some entertainment made me feel fresh and ready to study again."* (P6).

As the motivation increased, their attitude towards online EFL learning was also increased. Students admitted after a while conducting online learning started to engage more in learning, especially practicing English. The case for the 11<sup>th</sup> graders, they needed to a conducted apprenticeship at the end of the term. They realized the importance of practicing English in order to do the apprenticeships well. 11<sup>th</sup> graders who got interviewed after

finishing their apprenticeship program admitted that almost no international tourists visited Yogyakarta. They managed to practice their English at their apprenticeship places such as hotels and museums, as the employees tried to communicate using English occasionally. 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students also stated a similar notion: English plays a vital role in their vocational departments when they conduct apprenticeships or at their workplace after graduation. The curriculum and materials that emphasized English practice made the students keep practicing even during online learning. With the help of ICT tools, they could learn as well as when they conducted face-to-face learning, as stated below: *"English is important for my departments. I just finished my three months apprenticeship in one of the museums in Yogyakarta. During COVID-19, there were almost no guests. However, the staff there taught me some useful English expressions if I meet any foreigners. Then, in the third week, There were a couple of foreigners visiting the museums. They were Indonesian residents and spoke good Bahasa Indonesia, but I managed to talk with them in English."* (P14). Another student also expressed: *"I plan to work in the tourism industry after I graduate. That is what motivated me to master English. My motivation did not change during online learning. Instead, I found some useful apps and websites to practice my English, such as Elsa Speak, National geography, and BBC kids."* (P9).

Students also admitted that they felt anxious when using ICT tools at the beginning of online learning. The anxiety came when they encountered technical problems when accessing materials online or when they conducted online examinations. However, they adapted to the new situation quickly. Schools also updated the learning system based on the students' feedback, especially regarding the online examination. During an online examination, students needed to answer questions online using a website. Since online examinations were carried out simultaneously, the internet system used by the school experienced internet bandwidth overload. The website could not be opened, or even students' answers were not recorded properly. Students admitted that it only happened during the first semester. Everything ran smoothly again after the second semester. Another technological problem was internet signals. Some students live in rural areas, and the internet connection sometimes was interrupted, especially during specific weather conditions. Students' concern can be seen in the following statements: *"I was worried when there was a system error. It was during the English mid-term exam. Somehow the page was reloaded by itself, and my answers could not be saved. I was panicking. Then I asked my friends, and they encountered the same problem. As a result, we rescheduled the exam for another day. After that happened, there was no such problem anymore. I guess school staff were aware of what happened and fixed it."* (P14) *"I live in the city outskirts and using mobile data as the internet source. Sometimes when the weather was rainy and stormy, the signal was bad. When it happened during assignment deadline submission, I usually asked the teacher for time compensation. I was anxious at first, but as the time went by, I could adjust to the situation, such as finishing the assignments ASAP when the signal was good."* (P12, P16).

Overall, students' perception has been positive. Notwithstanding, they confessed that they expected to go back to face-to-face learning or blended learning. Students stated that even though online EFL learning was enjoyable and manageable, virtual interaction could not replace face-to-face interaction with their peers and teachers, as stated in the illustrative quotation below: *"Of course, online and face-to-face learning has their advantages and disadvantages, but I think English learning should be conducted face-to-face again, or at least through blended learning. We need to practice the language in real life. Practicing English through the virtual world felt different. I felt it was not all optimized such as no synchronous communication with our teachers, while we need real-time feedback when we practice."* (P19) *"If I got to choose, I prefer face-to-face learning. It is easier to grasp the materials because we face the teacher directly. So, I can ask her if I do not understand or*

*when I need feedback. Communicating through instant messaging feels so emotionless for me sometimes." (P7).*

## **Discussion**

### **Teaching and learning process during EFL learning during COVID-19 pandemic**

ICT tools have become inevitably crucial in supporting teaching and learning in the COVID-19 pandemic (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Lie et al., 2020; Satyawati, 2020). It functions as a means of communication and tools to build a virtual learning space. They also have provided accessibility in accessing various learning resources, greater interactivity, and more significant opportunities for students to manipulate and use language (Jati, 2017). Tourism vocational high school (VHS) students in Yogyakarta reported using smartphones as their primary gadget for EFL learning. The findings were in line with previous studies implying that smartphones dominated the online learning tools used by students (Gandasari et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2020). Smartphones were considered the most convenient gadget to do various activities such as browsing the web, opening and creating documents, watching videos, etc. By connecting themselves to the web, students enhanced their EFL learning. However, most of the learning time was conducted asynchronously using WhatsApp and Google Classroom as the primary learning media. Both were used for communication between teachers and students, material distribution, discussion, and assignments. It could be understood as studies showed that schools in third-world countries were not ready yet to impose fully online learning due to the inequality of infrastructure to support learning (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Wright, 2017), and synchronous learning required more resources, such as more data bandwidth and faster internet speed. In addition, some factors influenced online learning during the emergencies, such as students' household situations, teachers' unpreparedness, and lack of school support (Azzahra, 2020). That was why asynchronous learning was prevalent. These findings are also in line with Churiyah & Sakdiyyah (2020), stating that the dominant asynchronous learning use was due to the inequality in accessing online learning facilities. However, asynchronous learning also had some advantages. It allowed teachers to prepare learning materials more quickly and allowed students to balance the demands of home and school. It also gave students flexibility on how and when they learned and did the assignments based on reasonable time frame (Daniel, 2020).

At the most superficial level, according to the students, the teachers have made the best use of ICT tools they had to support the teaching and learning process and the assessment, ranging from the use of LMS, various online learning resources, and social media to enhance online learning. Another study supported this statement that English teachers must flexibly adapt to the current technology development in EFL teaching (Fuad et al., 2020). Teachers were also found to give students qualitative feedback, whether in voice or video recording or comments on the students' social media posts. Feedback in EFL teaching and learning was noteworthy as it advised students about the learning objectives, their performance, and what they should do next (Wisniewski et al., 2020). Qualitative feedback in any form provided students with indispensable scaffolding through interaction between an expert and a novice (Bakla, 2020). It could also be used to spark communication between teachers and students as students admitted that they were shy to ask questions to the teachers during online discussions. Previous studies also showed that students responded well and had positive perceptions towards feedback during online EFL learning (Abri et al., 2021; Tai et al., 2015). In conclusion, even under the pandemic situation, tourism VHS teachers and students in Yogyakarta could use the resources to conduct optimum teaching and learning situations using smartphones, asynchronous learning, and appropriate LMS and IMs.

### **Students' language learning strategies during EFL online learning**

Students employ suitable learning strategies to acquire language well (Cohen, 2014; Setiyadi, 2015; Xiao, 2007). Language learning strategies were activities performed by the learner to make learning simpler, faster, more pleasant, more self-directed, more successful, and more transferrable to a different learning situation (Oxford, 2014). The new online learning situation forced students to be more self-directed. As a result, they experienced distinct EFL learning strategies use. Online learning that occurred mainly asynchronous allowed students to re-examine the materials provided by the teachers, whether during the learning period or after. Cognitive strategies were reflected on the way tourism VHS students elaborate the learning materials by making a summary. In contrast, metacognitive strategies were reflected when they used the summary and learning materials for the exam and assessment preparation (Cohen, 2014; Hardan, 2013; Kuama, 2016; Oxford, 2014; Setiyadi & Sukirlan, 2016). Besides cognitive and metacognitive strategies, students were reported to employ resource management strategies such as browsing materials online, managing their time and place for study, and help-seeking from their peers and teachers (Kuama, 2016). Employing resource management strategies during online learning is believed that students would overcome the learning difficulties and acquire the language better (Hu & Gramling, 2009). Other strategies used by students were social strategies. Social strategies have two main characteristics: on the one hand, they stimulate feedback and interaction; on the other hand, they are activities performed with the assistance of others that aid in understanding, learning, or retaining knowledge (Cohen, 2014; Setiyadi, 2015). The use of social media allowed students to interact both with peers and their teachers. Sharing the burden when the learning and assignments felt overwhelmed, exchanging learning resources they found online, and asking help from their peers and the teachers were commonly found. In addition to helping students learn and acquire language better, social strategies also helped students feel less isolated. The feeling of isolation was commonly found in online learning students (Etxebarria et al., 2012; Solak & Cakir, 2015). It could be concluded that tourism VHS students employed appropriate language learning strategies based on their learning situation.

Previous research on the language learning strategies in online setting showed that learning environment and situation are the contributing factors on how the students use language learning strategies (Al-khaza, 2020; Habók & Magyar, 2018; Miguel & Malpartida, 2021; Nguyen & Terry, 2017; Ras et al., 2017). In other words, the use of learning strategies could not be generalized based on one particular setting. However, the previous studies were conducted under the planned and organized online EFL program. It can be inferred that even the current study was conducted in the EFL learning setting under emergency, the findings implied that tourism VHS students could elaborate, monitor, and cope with the learning obstacles during online EFL learning.

### **Students' perception of online EFL learning**

The dimension of perceptions found among the tourism VHS students was motivation, attitude, and internet anxiety. Theoretically, positive perceptions led to good learning engagement (Kuama, 2016; Tsai et al., 2009). Student engagement also increased students' learning satisfaction, enhanced students' motivation to learn, reduced the feeling of isolation, and improved their performance in online courses (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). This current study found that students' motivation increased at the beginning of online learning in 2020. However, after some time, their excitement was decreased due to boredom and overwhelmed assignments. It was then known that students coped with the low motivation by seeking online entertainment through social media and by communicating with their peers online. Technology use has also been shown to be a coping mechanism for the students during online learning from home (Garfin, 2020; Goldschmidt, 2020). The belief about the

importance of mastering English is also a contributing factor. Combining the increased motivation and positive beliefs about English changed the attitude towards online EFL learning and higher engagement in learning. The curve-like of students' perceptions during fully online EFL learning resulted from their adjustment to the new learning situation (Baber, 2020; Patricia, 2020).

Summative assessments in mid-term and final exams were also conducted online during the online EFL learning period. The students commonly faced technical problems when conducting online exams during the first semester of online EFL learning. This problem was commonly found as the schools were unprepared for the sudden alteration of the learning situation. Technological problems during the online exam could cause internet anxiety among students (Allam et al., 2020; Arora et al., 2021; Suryaman et al., 2020). However, schools quickly adapted to the new situation and feedback that similar problems were not found after the first semester. Internet anxiety was also discovered when the students conducted a formative assessment. The anxiety resulted from the students' circumstances, such as a bad internet connection. Teachers wisely gave students relief by allocating extra time for students to submit the assignments. It was not only schools that learned from the previous mistakes regarding internet and technology problems in online learning. Students also did the same by adjusting the way they work on their tasks and assignment.

The overall students' perception of online learning from the dimensions of motivation, attitude, and internet anxiety was positive, even with the slightest low motivation at the beginning. Adolescents tend to adapt more to the new learning circumstances (Cockerham et al., 2021), and the tourism VHS students in Yogyakarta have shown that they cope and adapt well to the new learning situation. The students' positive attitude found in the findings was in line with previous studies exploring similar learning settings (Khan et al., 2021; Shukri et al., 2020; Syauqi et al., 2020). Another potential contributing factor to these findings was that students adapted well to the online EFL learning situation after a year. This good indication implied that they are ready to welcome the new era of EFL learning and online learning in general. Despite the positive perceptions, students prefer face-to-face learning to fully online learning. Previous studies investigating Indonesian students' perceptions of online learning also showed similar positive results towards online learning but had more preference towards face-to-face learning (Allo, 2020; Azizah & Nugraha, 2021; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Rianto, 2020). Tourism VHS students still pondered that face-to-face learning with direct interaction between teachers and students is more meaningful. Feedback when practicing English face-to-face could be given directly. Additionally, synchronously learning in the face-to-face classroom can create open discussion and interaction between teachers and students and within students themselves.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Even though facing some limitations and online teaching and learning activities only occurred asynchronously, it did not stop the tourism vocational high school (VHS) students from empowering all available resources for the teaching and learning to run appropriately. Students also showed a good engagement in EFL learning and could monitor their learning. A positive attitude towards online EFL learning and good adaptation to the new learning situation was also present. Even so, fully online EFL learning could not yet replace the throne of face-to-face learning. Students still prefer face-to-face learning to fully online learning, which provides real-life communication, meaningful discussion and feedback, and a more authentic learning experience. There are some possibilities of how post-pandemic EFL learning could be. This study and others investigating online EFL learning during the

COVID-19 pandemic in the vocational education settings are hoped for teachers and educational institutions to evaluate the EFL teaching and learning and prepare. Despite the positive findings of this study, EFL teachers should remain vigilant in motivating students and providing and facilitating them to learn so that learning goals can be achieved no matter the future circumstances are. Teachers and students are also required to adapt to the paradigm shift in education. Technology use and new teaching methods must be considered to support online learning, blended learning, and face-to-face learning. Nonetheless, this study only illustrated the tourism VHS students' online EFL learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic in a small scope using a small sample. Therefore, a survey can be further conducted to a larger sample over geographical areas to explore broader dimensions of the online teaching and learning process, online language learning strategies, students' perceptions of online learning, and the relationship between those variables.

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