

# Online Learning Experiences for Speaking Activities among Malaysian Undergraduate ESL Students

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Received: June 5, 2023      Accepted: July 26, 2023      Online Published: August 16, 2023

doi:10.5430/wjel.v13n7p355

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n7p355>

## Abstract

Speaking practice is crucial for ESL (English as a Second Language) students. Nevertheless, accomplishing speaking activities via online learning might be difficult for the college students at universities in Malaysia as they are non-native English speakers. There have been several studies about students' perceptions and preferences on online learning. Nonetheless, there was only a little research conducted to ascertain deep online learning perceptions and preferences of the undergraduate ESL students in Malaysia. The current article's goal was to look at ESL learners' opinions on the experiences through online connected to speaking activities at a public institution in Tanjong Malim. The mixed-research method of study was used. In this article, observation checklist, semi-structured student interview, and questionnaire were employed to get the information from the sample. The sample was then subjected to statistical analysis and standard deviation, mean score, as well as percentage to identify the Malaysian undergraduate ESL students toward online learning platforms, the difficulty that the learners encountered during the online learning, and the strategies implemented by undergraduate ESL students. Whereas the interview result was analysed by thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the use of technology for distant learning for undergraduate ESL students to improve speaking abilities was progressing well. This signifies that the students perceived that they have knowledge to use the online platforms with mean (x) = 4.07. However, several students noted that their main concern when undertaking online speaking exercises was the connection speed with mean (x) = 3.93. As a result, soliciting thoughts or ideas to boost their engagement in online speaking projects was beneficial to the pupils with mean (x) = 3.97.

**Keywords:** students' perceptions, online learning, undergraduate ESL students, speaking activities

## 1. Introduction

Studies have been conducted to look at the implementation of teaching and learning of English Language through the lenses of English teachers, educators and pre-service teachers (Albakri et al., 2021; Chandaran et al., 2022; Omar & Kussin, 2017; Prasangani, 2019; Sarudin et al., 2019; Tahir et al., 2020; Tahir et al., 2021). The studies have focused on the basic skills in communication which are reading, listening, speaking and writing. Thornbury (2005), as cited in Sakkir, Suardi, Dollah, and Ahmad (2022), believed that speaking is such a crucial component in the English language that we must learn. Based on Richards (2008), as cited in Sakkir et al. (2022), speaking is necessary as students use it when they want to exchange information. As a result, learning speaking skill is required for second language learners.

Speaking practice is crucial for ESL (English as a Second Language) students. Nevertheless, accomplishing speaking activities via online learning might be difficult for the college students at universities in Malaysia as they are non-native English speakers. As English is broadly used in local and international communication, many Malaysians see it as a secondary language to the local language which is Bahasa Melayu. The regular student in Malaysia spends roughly 11 years learning English from elementary through secondary school (Karnine, Preece, Ahmad & Muhammad, 2022). Yet, many of them fail to become fluent in these 11 years (It is aligned to what Nik Fauzi, Ambi, Abang Madaud and Unin (2022) claimed that university physical classroom shutdown and new online learning practices have had an influence on the educational opportunities of this group of first-year students even though they have studied English in Malaysian primary and secondary schools for 11 years. Hunt and Beglar (2005), as cited in Nik Fauzi et al. (2022), indicated that English learners' vocabulary learning is consistently poor. The Star Online Publication (2022) reported that the Central Bank of Malaysia discovered more than 10% of adolescents are jobless.

Even though online learning research is thriving due to the current epidemic, the present research is necessary to describe pupils' perspectives of online learning experiences regarding the speaking tasks for ESL students from a public university located in Tanjong Malim. To illustrate, the past studies below discussed the students' perspectives on the e-learning (Herrera & Gonzalez, 2017; Tseng & Yeh, 2019; Hassan & Nika, 2021; Mosatova & Vyskrabkova, 2019; Tahir, Mohd Adnan, Ya Shak, Mohamad Shah & Devi Piaralal, 2021; Cakrawati, 2017; Sakkir et al., 2022; Al Saleem, 2018; Melani & Kuswardani, 2022) were not conducted with ESL undergraduate students

in Malaysia.

Moreover, there have been several studies about students' perceptions and preferences on online learning (Ismail & Albakri, 2012; Ismail, Hussin, & Darus, 2016). Nonetheless, there was only a little research conducted to ascertain deep perceptions and preferences of the undergraduate ESL students in Malaysia in relation to online learning (Ismail, Hussin & Darus, 2013; Ismail, Hussin & Aboswider, 2019). Consequently, the writer believes that a study regarding the topic is required to get further understanding and thorough knowledge for the ESL teachers, students, and researchers for better online learning quality. Since language evolves, English in Malaysia should be utilized in an ESL classroom (Mohamed Mokhtar et al., 2022). Furthermore, the essential goal of this research is to comprehend deeply about how students perceive and prefer online learning in terms of its convenience and challenge.

In fact, students stated there are way too many tasks, even when they do not comprehend the content since approaches are just explanations and Q&A sessions. As a result of monotonous studies, students feel less interested and hesitant to share their thoughts. It influences students' comprehension of the learning sources. The students hesitate to throw questions to the lecturer about things they do not understand even though they are expected to be free to share views which are not emerged in offline lectures that owing to embarrassment, shyness, nervousness, or even a lack of appropriate language ability (Munadliroh & Faizah, 2020).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Online Speaking Skills

According to Nazilah, Ibrahim, Rohaizad, Norillah, Ibrahim and Dagang, (2021), the Malaysia Education Development Plan for University Level from 2015 to 2025 established several objectives for Malaysian university level. Given tech significance as well as digital innovation in the education of Malaysia and leadership for constructive virtual learning, Nazilah et al. (2021) expressed that the 9th aim of the plan involves a Globalised Online Learning (GOL) strategy that concentrates on extending educational opportunities, enhancing instructional quality, as well as continuing to allow learning to be customised to students' present requirements. Cakrawati (2017) stated that some students can encourage and promote self-directed learning as they feel that learning speaking skills online are more dynamic and effort-saving. Moreover, Alimi et al. (2021) argued that the students can improve their ability in speaking. Other research, like Ismail, Hussin and Darus (2012) and Dhawan (2020), have found the constraints of learning online that may have a negative influence on speaking instruction and development abilities because of a shortage of humans in the online classroom. As a result, learning speaking via online are judged less successful than regular classroom encounters (Mardiah & Anastasia, 2020).

Kurniati and Ervina (2019) elucidated the capacity to convey ideas, feelings, or thoughts in a suitable and accurate manner is referred to related to speaking abilities. Furthermore, Nuryanto et al. (2018) defined speaking ability is the capacity of someone to communicate thoughts or deliver messages in response to his audience's requirements. Students may adequately express themselves while maintaining strong interpersonal interactions. The main purpose of communication skills is to express feelings and thoughts (Ismail & Albakri, 2012). Whereas, the main objective of speaking is to enlighten, entertain, and persuade (Saddhono & Slamet, 2012). Speaking talents are acquired rather than innate. Speaking talents cannot be inherited; they must be practised to develop (Sholihah, 2020). On the other hand, critical thinking can be taught and learned (Lei & Mokhtar, 2023).

### 2.2 Online Platforms Perception

Nik Fauzi (2022) defines online platform perception as students' opinions regarding online evaluation. Cakrawati (2017) has hinted that virtual learning systems encourage both inquiry-based learning and autonomous learning since online platforms enable interactions between teachers and students even when they are not in the same room. In relation to the present study, Oh et al. (2022) stated that Students who employed the internet medium of learning predicted increased learning from spreadsheet-based application tasks. Totanan et al. (2018), nonetheless, argued that research indicated that perceived utility and user attitudes increased interest in integrating a technology-based cost of production automated calculating system in the learning process, notably in cost accounting courses.

### 2.3 Online Learning Adoption

As it involves the use of internet platforms, internet-based learning turned out to be a component of the 21st century. According to Zakaria (2021), distance education is described as the use of web-based learning tools to facilitate and give learners entry to online services. Schools and universities have increased their use of distance and online learning, reinvigorating the need to capitalise on e-learning adoption potential (Ismail et al., 2010). Consequently, some Malaysian universities have used online Learning Management Systems (LMSs). Tahir et al. (2022), for instance, stated that Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) used MyGuru; Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) employed U-Campus; University Teknologi Mara utilised i-learn and U-Future. Therefore, the media have emerged as basis of study process for solutions to conduct the actual classroom sessions throughout the world (Tahir et al., 2022).

### 2.4 Remote Education Challenges

Technology is one of the obstacles of distance education. Various sources such as Rajab et al., Nambiar, and Aguilera-Hermida (2020) claimed one of the obstacles is technology. Those experts highlighted that the two primary technological difficulties were identified as technology availability and technology literacy. Moreover, according to Mohamed et al. (2021), several issues students face during virtual instruction that have been highlighted in earlier research include inadequate internet connection, a lack of access to appropriate equipment, overloaded tasks, a lack of attention, and time management.

Two studies from Islam et al. (2015) and Maatuk et al. (2021) discovered that the internet-based education platforms, nevertheless, have technical flaws. Few barriers include issues concerning classroom environment as well as attitude, cognitive of virtual learning, tech, professional education, and strategic planning. On the other hand, Vershitskaya et al. (2020) noted that virtual learning system challenges include insufficient ICT and e-learning facilities, budget restrictions, a shortage of affordable and satisfactory network capacity, a lack of operations and maintenance e-learning distance education policies, a lack of professional skills in internet-based education and content advancement, commitment to the use of virtual learning systems, as well as the amount of time needed to develop instruction material.

2.5 The Useful Strategies to Increase Students' Participation in Online Learning

Sherman (2003) performed a study in which the researcher stated that video is today's most popular medium, and that people spend more time viewing video than reading written items. Furthermore, according to the study, authentic information is more inspirational, and people prefer learning about real-world topics. Because most individuals like to learn visually, using actual materials to improve speaking abilities is certainly beneficial. It also helps students acquire confidence by allowing them to practise on their own before implementing it in a real-life circumstance. Even while planning typically yields favourable outcomes, some individuals are not comfortable with it, which allows them to make mistakes or increases their anxiety. It is aligned with Emaliana (2017)'s study, in which the researcher indicated that EFL learners have a negative perspective of planning ahead of time on what to say since they are typically anxious to ask questions while participating in a circumstance that demands them to speak.

3. Theoretical Framework

As the article examines students' perspectives and interests of online learning, the researcher adapted the theoretical framework from Picciano (2021) that also focuses on the pedagogical features of electronic-based education.

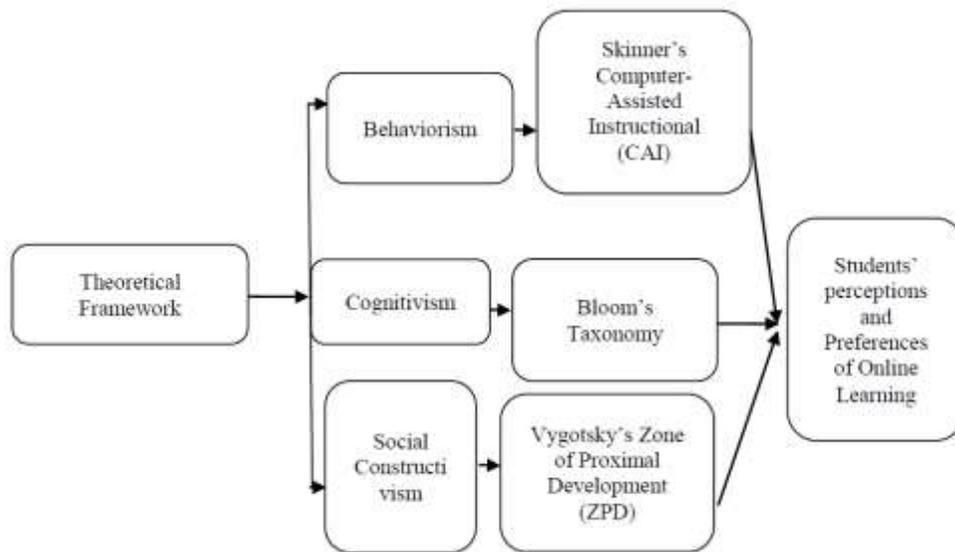


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for the distance learning perspectives and preferences of the students (Adapted from Picciano, 2021)

This study was guided by behaviorism, cognitivism, and social constructivism. These learning theories served as the overarching premise that will guide the discussion of this study. The first framework is Computer-Assisted Instructional (CAI) from Skinner. In Picciano (2021), Skinner's focus on encouragement and repetition to generate pleasant learning activities had a significant effect on early computer-aided instruction (CAI). Skinner is notably well-known for developing the use of both advantage and disadvantage reinforcement to assist people develop various behaviours was emphasised in stimulus and response. The second framework is Bloom's taxonomy, which is connected to intellectual skill development and emphasises the relevance of problem solving as a higher-level ability. The Taxonomy of Bloom (1965) was built on six fundamental elements: producing, assessing, analysing, applying, comprehending, and remembering. Bloom's taxonomy fundamentally assisted to bring cognitive and developmental psychology learning concerns forward (Picciano, 2021). In addition to behaviourism and cognitivism, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development provides a third framework (ZPD). Picciano (2021) asserted the academic performance is defined as the formation of a zone of proximate growth where the instructor, the student, and a problem to be solved coexist.

4. Research Design

This study was conducted by employing a quantitative research approach. The prime focus of this study was to look at perspectives from undergraduate ESL students from a public university located in Tanjong Malim, Perak.

4.1 Research Objectives

The aims of the present study as follow.

1. To evaluate problems encountered by Malaysian undergraduate ESL learners during speaking activities through virtual education.
2. To investigate the approaches used by undergraduate ESL learners through online learning to boost their engagement in speaking activities.
3. To ascertain undergraduate ESL learners' perceptions of speaking assignments and speaking activities through online learning in Malaysia.

#### 4.2 Research Questions

As the research objective previously presented, the research questions are stated below.

1. What are problems encountered by Malaysian undergraduate ESL learners during speaking activities through virtual education?
2. How do the undergraduate ESL learners' approach online learning to boost their engagement in speaking activities?
3. What are undergraduate ESL students' perceptions of speaking assignments and speaking activities through online learning in Malaysia?

#### 4.3 Participants

A total of 30 participants took part in present research. This research had informants who were selected from the fifth semester of TESL students of Faculty of Languages and Communications of a public university located in Tanjong Malim, Perak. The participants did their teaching and learning activities online for previous semesters. The participants were chosen by using convenience purposive sampling as the participants had taken speaking subjects online during their first semester. The approach of random selection was used to determine interviewees that would meet the criteria for the online interview (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, Robinson (2014) elucidated that the purposive sampling technique is used to select informants based on their ability in terms of themes, concepts and phenomena related to a study.

#### 4.4 Data Collection Methods

The data for this study were gathered utilising an observation checklist, a semi-structured student interview, and a questionnaire. According to Gorman and Clayton (2005), observation is research that entails the systematic recording from a phenomenon or a specific behaviour that may be noticed in the natural world. An observation checklist is a list of items that an observer will consider when watching a lesson. This list might have been created by either the observer or the teacher. Observation checklists not only provide a structure and framework for an observation, but they also function as an understanding contract with the instructor, who may feel more at ease consequently and get specific comments on areas of the class. In this study, the author used and created an observation checklist as a data collection tool. The researcher mentioned it twice.

According to Kvale (2006), semi-structured interview is conducted in a discourse aimed at gathering information in a description of a person's life in conjunction with the interpretation of the significance of the stated occurrences. In this situation, a semi-structured interview was undertaken to gain insights and detailed data from undergraduate ESL students. According to Karnine et al. (2022), performing interview-based research is worthwhile to learn about the individual's perspectives. Researchers might go deeper into the details gleaned from explanations requested throughout the interview (Karnine et al., 2022). Before the interview, the researcher had established an interview procedure. The interview was place using the Skype online meeting platform. The Skype application was chosen as the ease and efficiency of new technologies has been more appealing to field researchers than concerns about the overall efficacy of online vs paper-based survey questions. The writer selected three random students who are pursuing their degree in TESL at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. The was carried out by messaging the participants and scheduling an interview day and time. The interview lasted between 10 to 30 minutes. The interview session was recorded, and the results were stored as film and then transferred to Audio recordings. In the present study, the interview guidelines were adapted from Melani and Kuswardani (2022) which consisted of five questions that refer to difficulties faced by students during speaking practice.

The survey form was delivered to respondents by the writer to obtain real data about their perceptions towards online learning experiences for their speaking skill activities. Furthermore, the questionnaire led to the triangulation of research data, where more information and resources were combined with data provided from different approaches (Mohamed Mokhtar et al., 2022). In the current study, a Google Form questionnaire link was delivered using the WhatsApp application to 50 undergraduate ESL students who have completed their English speaking online course in the previous semester. The researcher used Google Form as the platform to distribute the questionnaire as it is the most convenient and cost-effective approach to the participants. The questionnaire items of this study were adopted from Nik Fauzi et al. (2022), which was divided into six parts (A, B, C, D, and E portions). Segment A dealt with population data such as gender, age ranges, online location, geography, and online learning platforms. Sections B, C, D, and E contained information about impressions of internet platforms among students, acceptability of online education, online session obstacles, as well as methods for increasing online learning participation. Each questionnaire item in sections B, C, D, and E were graded on a 5-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

In order to create a questionnaire with reliable findings, validity and reliability tests were done. Using SPSS 22, the researcher conducted a

validity test. The data is acceptable if the value of  $r_{count} > r_{table}$  (Suprihatin, Rachmawati, Sasongko, Maarif & Kader, 2022). The calculated  $r_{table}$  value was 0.850, indicating that the 24 questionnaire questions were valid. Besides that, the researcher also conducted a reliability test. Suprihatin et al. (2022) stated that if the reliability test results are more than 0.6, the research instrument items are dependable. The reliability test score in this study was 0.98. It is possible to infer that the questionnaire items in this study were trustworthy.

#### 4.5 Data Analysis Method

This study was under quantitative strand with quantitative data and supported by qualitative findings. The main quantitative data were obtained from 30 undergraduate ESL students from a public university in Tanjong Malim. The respondents required answering online questionnaires consisting of questions regarding students' perspectives of online learning experiences for speaking practices. The data were analysed by using SPSS version 22 accordingly. Additionally, the author gleaned the quantitative information from evaluation form. There were 30 participants who were observed and participated in present research. The findings from survey form and observation checklist were analysed based on descriptive analysis using frequencies. Subsequently, the frequencies of respondents' perspectives, online education challenges accosted by the students and the students' strategies in online learning were analysed and tabulated. Descriptive statistics, according to Sugiyono (2010), are statistical numbers that convey concepts to the things studied through the gathering of data from samples and populations. To analyse the data, the author used descriptive analysis in form of average score, root-mean square value, and percentage to identify the Malaysian undergraduate ESL students toward online learning platforms, the difficulties faced by students during the virtual education as well as strategies implemented by students. The table below was adapted from Moidunny (2009) as the interpretation of mean score.

Table 1. Interval Score Adapted from Moidunny (2009)

Mean	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.80	Very bad
1.81 – 2.60	Bad
2.61 – 3.20	Moderate
3.21 – 4.20	Good
4.21 – 5.00	Very good

To carry up the quantitative evidence, the researcher then interviewed 5 undergraduate ESL students in the form of a group via the Skype online meeting application and the session was recorded and transcribed manually. Subsequently, content analysis was used to analyse the data from the interviews. Based on Yusof, Phang, Sadikin, and Helmi (2014), content analysis means qualitative study form where researchers record and identify sections of document or pictures related to similar subject and concept, approving them guiding the material onto groups, and hence build a thematic framework. Hence, content analysis was used in this study to identify any recurring themes.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1 Demographic Respondents

Table 2. Demographic Respondent Information

Demographic Information	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	14	46.7
	Female	16	53.3
Age Brackets	21	23	76.7
	22	7	23.3
Online Location	Malaysia Peninsula	22	73.3
	Sabah	4	13.3
	Sarawak	4	13.3
Area	Urban	9	30.0
	Rural	21	70.0
Online Learning Platform	Google Meet	20	66.7
	Google Classroom	4	13.3
	WhatsApp	2	6.7
	Zoom	4	13.3

According to the provided table, among the 30 respondents involved in this research, 14 (46.7%) were male students, whereas the remaining 16 (53.3%) were female students. Moreover, data showed the 23 (76.7%) of the students were 21 years old and 7 (23.3%) were 22 years old. There were also 22 (73.3%) students from the Malaysian Peninsula, 4 (13.3%) from Sabah, and 4 (13.3%) from Sarawak. Furthermore, 9 (30%) of the 30 learners are in urban regions, while 70% are in rural areas (21 students) As shown in the table above. In this study, students often used four online learning platforms. Additionally, the findings indicated that 20 (66.7%) students use Google Meet, 4 (13.3%) students use Google Classroom, 2 (6.7%) students use WhatsApp, and 4 (13.3%) students use Zoom. These findings are supported with the study conducted by Diaz-Nunez et al. (2021). It was stated the students had revealed a favourable impression toward Google Meet was used by 86% of students, and the tool was stated to have helped them enhance their grades.

5.2 The Difficulties Faced by the Undergraduate ESL Students

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of the difficulties faced by ESL Students

Questionnaire Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
When conducting online speaking tasks, my main concern is the network bandwidth.	3.93	1.172	High
When conducting speaking exercises, communicating with my instructor via online platforms is challenging.	3.07	1.048	Moderate
In my location, technological resources (such as software and hardware) are few.	2.80	1.243	Moderate
When performing speech chores via online platforms, I feel pressed.	3.20	1.215	Moderate
When it comes to using an internet platform, I lack confidence.	2.90	1.269	Moderate
Total	3.18	.737	Moderate

According to the findings of the descriptive analysis conducted on obstacles experienced by respondents during distance education, the min score of all OLC questions was at the Moderate stage, as evidenced by the overall mean score = 3.18 and standard deviation = .737. These findings are related to prior findings done by Nugroho, Basari, Suryaningtyas, and Cahyono (2020) and Tahir et al. (2021), which concluded that most of participants who were into the virtual courses particularly using Google Classroom application as it was not easy to operate. This suggests that the problems that students confront when participating in online learning have modest size or simple issues that have no interaction with other challenges, have little effect, and the resolution does not need a broad and deep view, and may be done independently by the students. Furthermore, the statistics in the preceding table are substantially confirmed by research conducted by Longhurst, Stone, Dulohery, Scully, Campbell, and Smith (2020); Agung, Surtikanti and Quinones (2020); Lischer, Safi and Dickson (2021). According to that research, students had difficulty attending online classes owing to inconsistent internet connections. The circumstances of online classrooms may differ from those of regular classes, where conversation is more mutual. Consequently, of the absence of engagement, the process of information delivery and sharing may be hampered, negatively impacting student motivation to study.

The table also revealed that item 1 is at a high level. Where is item 1 "When conducting online speaking tasks, my main concern is the network bandwidth."? This demonstrates that the only significant challenge that students experience while engaging in online learning is internet speed. This conclusion is supported by the findings of 5 informant interviews, which show that internet speed issues are frequently encountered when conducting online classes. Meanwhile, S2 stated that the lecturer's voice frequently halted, etc., leading the learning content supplied by the teacher to be incompletely transmitted. Meanwhile, as indicated in items 2–5, additional issues are at a moderate level. Item 2 scored at 3.07 and a standard deviation of 1.408; item 3 (min = 2.80, SD = 1.243), item 4 (min = 3.20 and SD = 1.215), and item 5 (Min = 2.90, SD= 1.269).

Table 4. The Problems Perceived by Students during Online Learning

Interval Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category
1.00 – 1.80	1	3.3	Very low
1.81 – 2.60	5	16.7	low
2.61 – 3.20	12	40	Moderate
3.21 – 4.20	10	33.3	high
4.21 – 5.00	2	6.7	Very high

According to the table above, there was 1 (3.3%) student who stated that the problems encountered while completing online learning were extremely minimal. This suggests that these pupils have no serious difficulties with online learning. The data also shows that 5 (16.7) students felt the problem in OL was at a low stage, which meant that these students could still conquer it. There were 12 (40%) students who stated the difficulty was at a moderate level, and 10 (33.3%) said it was at a high level. While 2 (6.7) others stated that the challenge was quite difficult. However, majority of the students believe that the OLC level is uncomplicated, with a minimum grade of 2.61 to 3.20.

5.3 The Strategies Implemented by Undergraduate ESL Students

Table 5. Frequency and Percentage of the Strategies Implemented by Undergraduate ESL Students

Questionnaire Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
It is advantageous for me to use e-dialogue to boost my involvement in online speaking duties.	3.60	1.163	Good
It is important to me to use e-roleplay to boost my engagement in online speaking activities.	3.63	.850	Good
It is beneficial for me to solicit thoughts or suggestions to boost my engagement in online speaking activities.	3.97	.999	Good
E-interviews can help me participate more in online speaking assignments.	3.63	1.159	Good
I am using e-storytelling to get more involved in online speaking assignments.	3.87	.973	Good
Total	3.74	.817	Good

The table is related to the strategies used by students in carrying out online learning. It is known that the total items are in the good stage,

which is indicated by the min value = 3.74 and SD = .817.

Table 6. Frequency and Percentage of the Strategies Implemented by Undergraduate ESL Students (Cont.)

Interval Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category
1.00 – 1.80	0	0	Very bad
1.81 – 2.60	3	10	Bad
2.61 – 3.20	8	26.7	Moderate
3.21 – 4.20	10	33.3	Good
4.21 – 5.00	9	30	Very good

Referring to the table above, none of the students said the strategy implemented in online learning was in the very bad category. 10% (3) of the students demonstrated the strategy implemented by undergraduate ESL students was bad. 26.7% (8) of them said it was moderate, 33.3% (10) of them said it was good and 30% (9) students said it was very good. Based on the table, it can be seen that most students tend to say that online learning strategies implemented by the undergraduate students are at the good stage (min = 3.21, SD = 4.20). It was noted that role play is one of the effective ways for improving speaking abilities. The study revealed that using role-playing exercises helps students enhance their language abilities. This form of work is more appealing to pupils because they find it interesting to play the role of someone else and communicate messages through words and actions.

Fauzan (2016) also conducted research on the speaking area and the findings show that debate practise considerably enhanced students' capacity to communicate their views and ideas. The debate exercise boosted students' creativity in language studies since they were expected to create their arguments from particular motions. The gestures were taught to them so that they could openly address the difficulties. They improved their fluency and confidence by speaking in debate sessions. Based on the researchers' past study, it can be stated that there are numerous relevant tactics that may be used to increase speaking abilities and that they should be linked with the effort put in by learners.

This is reinforced by the findings of the observation checklist, which revealed that students use a variety of strategies in online learning. For example, students who do not have a strong online connection may visit friends who do have a good internet connection in order to continue the lectures. The observation findings suggest that the students' approach is in a good stage, as evidenced by the mean = 4.13 and the standard deviation =.730.

5.4 The Perceptions of Undergraduate ESL Students

Table 7. Mean Score for the Students' Perceptions

Questionnaire Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
It is a good choice to use online platforms for English speaking classes.	3.87	.973	Good
The recent pandemic condition encourages the use of internet platforms for speaking assignments.	3.87	1.224	Good
The usage of internet platforms for speaking jobs is becoming increasingly organised.	3.60	1.163	Good
Interacting using online platforms during English-speaking lessons are helpful.	3.70	1.119	Good
Interacting on internet platforms during English classes is beneficial.	3.37	1.299	Good
Completing the speaking tasks via an online platform is better than the face-to-face method.	3.47	1.167	Good
It is preferable to do the speaking assignments online rather than in offline.	2.67	1.213	Moderate
When I undertake online speaking tasks, I become nervous.	3.57	.858	Good
My learning method is congruent with the use of online platforms to perform speaking activities.	3.73	1.112	Good
Overall, using online platforms for English-speaking training is good to me.	3.90	1.062	Good
I am familiar with using internet tools to achieve my speaking assignments.	4.07	.980	Good
I am able to complete my speaking works via internet platforms.	3.93	.907	Good
It is totally within my control to use online platforms to complete the speaking tasks	3.90	1.094	Good
I can do speaking tasks on internet sites without assistance.	2.90	1.269	Moderate
I have a very little grasp of how to use internet platforms for speaking assignments.	3.93	1.172	Good
Total	3.63	.689	Good

The table shows that all items used to assess students' perceptions of online learning are in good shape (min score = 3.63, SD = 0.689). Based on the descriptive analysis results in the table above, it was discovered that there were two simple item questions. Item 7 has a minimum score of 2.67 and a standard deviation of 1.213, while item 14 has a minimum score of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 1.269. This can be further explained by the findings from the interview sessions with the participants in this study. S3, S4, and S5 stated that online learning systems are excellent and highly useful, particularly for developing students' speaking abilities. In this situation, students may use a range of online learning materials, such as videos, pdfs, photos, audio, and podcasts, to supplement what the lecturer has supplied. Online learning systems may also modify student learning preferences, where some students like to study visually while others prefer to learn through audio. As a result, students may select and filter the learning styles that best fit their needs. Furthermore, S1 noted that employing an online learning platform allows students to participate in learning from wherever they are. Online learning platforms may help students develop

their abilities, particularly in the usage of technology such as gadgets, computers, and so on. Students can also learn about the numerous types of online platforms and applications that can be used as learning media, so that the student can select the one that is most suited to the skills they wish to acquire. Results from table 2 are in line with a study conducted by Kulal and Nayak (2020) expressed Students acknowledged that an online class had a considerable influence on their learning style (M 5 3.53), and they also stated that they receive help from the teacher in online classes, such as good reading material and clarification of their uncertainties using online tools.

Table 9. Frequency and percentage table of students' perceptions

Interval Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category
1.00 – 1.80	0	0	Very bad
1.81 – 2.60	2	6.7	Bad
2.61 – 3.20	8	26.6	Moderate
3.21 – 4.20	14	46.7	Good
4.21 – 5.00	6	20	Very good

According to the frequency table, 2 students (6.7%) thought online learning was awful, 8 (26.6%) thought it was moderate, 14 (46.7%) thought it was good, and 6 (20%) thought it was very good. According to the data, most students believe that online learning is at an advanced stage (min score 3.21 to 4.20). This finding is corroborated by the findings of interviews that online learning platform.

Based on the results of the survey, it was determined that online learning is in the good category since the presence of online learning may increase the confidence of employees, particularly in the field of technology. the student was assigned to change the way technology is used. It is in line with the study done by Omar et al. (2021), students' perspectives of online learning are rather favourable, with most students preferring online learning over traditional face-to-face learning.

## 6. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Pedagogical Implication

### 6.1 Conclusion

It takes a lot of work to improve the students' speaking skills. Therefore, the selection of media or teaching and learning tools must be appropriate and relevant to support the students in improving their speaking skills. In this post-covid 19 era, online learning platform is an alternative tool employed in the world of teaching and learning.

The findings indicate that the usage of online learning platforms for undergraduate ESL students in improving speaking abilities is progressing well. This signifies that the platform is successful and assists students in improving their speaking abilities. Aside from that, online learning allows students to attend the classes from wherever they are. In addition, students also have more access to numerous programmes and resources for obtaining additional information to improve their speaking abilities. The data also reveal that students' obstacles in integrating online learning are at an early stage. It signifies that students may still conquer the barrier so that the learning process can proceed effectively. The only high-level problem faced by the students is the internet connection. In this situation, students use a variety of strategies to solve issues which is to ensure that the internet is properly connected before learning begins. According to the findings of the study, students' online learning practices were in a good stage.

As a result, when conducting learning, students must select the appropriate platform and abilities to improve their speaking skills. It is also necessary to understand that students must estimate the challenges that may arise which could interfere with the learning process so that students may create and plan solutions to overcome them.

### 6.2 Recommendations

As this study focused on ESL undergraduate students' perception on online learning platforms in increasing speaking skill, it is suggested that the next study should be focused on other English skills (reading, writing, and listening). Additionally, this research only involved fifth-semester undergraduate ESL students from a public university in Tanjong Malim, Perak. It is highly recommended to conduct studies with a wider population reach. Furthermore, this research only used a quantitative approach, so it is suggested that the next study can use a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative). Moreover,

### 6.3 Pedagogical Implication

Based on the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that online learning has the potential to influence the future of education by pushing the traditional classroom environment onto the web especially for the students' speaking activities. The usage of e-learning has grown drastically over the years as instructors and students recognised its value and felt the influence of the distance education on their teaching approaches and learning styles. As a result, the entire academic community must work together to guarantee that the components of e-learning efficacy are appropriately given, and that the use of e-learning is reviewed on a regular basis. Thus, online learning is critical to the success of online teaching and learning.

## Acknowledgement

This research was financially supported by the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (2021-0134-107-02) provided by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in Malaysia.

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