



## VIETNAMESE HIGH SCHOOL EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD ONLINE TEACHING UNDER THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

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### Abstract:

The coronavirus disease case, commonly known as Covid-19, has spread internationally since March 2020. Approximately 100 countries, including Vietnam, closed their schools due to a public health emergency, according to UNESCO. Due to the circumstance, teachers were forced to convert from in-person instruction to online instruction. In the context of Covid-19, this study investigated how EFL high school instructors felt about online English language education. A descriptive design and a mixed-methods approach were utilized in this investigation. Six EFL high school teachers in the Mekong Delta were interviewed for this study to get their perspectives. The findings demonstrated that the participants' opinions on the usefulness and simplicity of online instruction during the Covid-19 epidemic were overwhelmingly positive. Despite the challenges they encountered when conducting their online classes, the teachers were able to show the proper attitude toward using technology to teach. The pedagogical implications of online teaching and learning are also meant to encourage the development of innovative teaching strategies in the setting of high schools in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, online teaching, perceptions

### 1. Introduction

The applicability of earlier research addressing similar developments is disputed because of how abruptly online learning took off. Some of this study examines the shift to online teaching from the perspective of innovation theory, which contends that an innovation's essential characteristics influence the likelihood of its success. Grgurovic (2014), for instance, analyzed how a blended learning innovation was implemented based on the innovation's complexity and trialability, but in the case of the pandemic, the move to

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online learning was so abrupt that it was difficult to test out various implementations of the innovation. Also, Giovannella (2020) conducted a study on the Italian school system to capture how the teachers perceive and experience online learning two months after the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was found that teachers valued the use of technology. In the context of Vietnamese, it appears that the teachers' perspective on online learning has not received much attention. There have been studies that have exclusively looked at online learning platforms and resources. Teachers have challenging commitments that are tough to transfer if face-to-face changes demand an online learning environment that combines classroom learning and previously unadopted online tools. Understanding the benefits and drawbacks of online learning is vital given that previous studies cannot be used as a guide and the COVID-19 pandemic. At the junior high school education level in Vietnam, there is a critical need for research into the effects of the abrupt shift to online teaching. Ideally, this research will produce guidelines for future applications of online teaching and describe information about teacher perceptions and the challenges that teachers feel stand out in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to ascertain how teachers feel about teaching English online.

We can anticipate using the research's findings in both theoretical and practical contexts. The findings of this study can contribute to and reinforce past beliefs about the perspectives of online instruction. The findings of the study could have significant implications for both teachers and students. Students can use internet learning to obtain English resources even if they are not doing it face-to-face in the classroom to stay current on the subject matter. This study is intended to provide teachers with inspiration or advice for teaching English online. Teachers can then evaluate the severity of the challenges faced by pupils in online instruction based on their perceptions. To put it briefly, this study will have some pedagogical ramifications for EFL language teachers, educational administrators, and school leaders who want to improve the preparation for online teaching.

## **2. Literature Review**

One of the most profound systemic disturbances in history has been caused by the Covid 19 epidemic. While the pandemic mostly had an impact on public health, there were also negative spillover effects in the field of education. Around 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries were affected, making education one of the industries with the most severe interruptions (UNESCO, 2020). Because the illness is so contagious, nations and international authorities decided to close schools and institutions to curb the virus's spread. It was once believed that closing schools were one of the finest ways to create social and physical distance. Given that all colleges in Vietnam were mandated to become online for two months, COVID-19-associated social distancing added new problems to social work education on top of these already existing ones. There is still a great deal to learn about the circumstances, benefits, drawbacks, and student evaluation of online

learning in general and social work in particular. Although Vietnam is so far among the countries that have basically controlled COVID-19 and nearly brought people's lives back to normality, COVID-19 has still been a worldwide threat with a possible second wave of outbreak. Online teaching, according to Rusman (2011), includes any educational activities that are supported by technology. Both traditional education and online education can benefit from these exercises. Online education is described as a "*revolutionary strategy*" by Jennex (2015) and Twigg (2002) for preparing the workforce to transform changes into advantages. For instance, Twigg (2002) also offers an interactive, repeatable, and adjustable system as part of the learner-centered and project-centered online teaching method.

Carliner (2003) defines online teaching as "*access to learning experiences through the use of technology*". Meanwhile, Anderson (2008) describes online teaching as a subset of remote education that has always focused on giving access to an educational experience that is, at the very least, more time and space flexible than campus-based education. In a book review on e-learning methodologies, Marc (2007) listed the following benefits of online instruction: Flexible in terms of time and location, it offers the chance for relationships to develop between students through the use of discussion forums, helps remove participation barriers like the fear of speaking with other students and encourages students to interact with others. Furthermore, Anderson (2008) also lists the following benefits of online learning for students: while synchronous online teaching offers real-time interaction between students and teachers, the students can use the internet to access current and relevant learning materials and can communicate with experts in the field they are studying.

Almosa (2002) asserts that there are several drawbacks to online teaching. First, the learners become undergo contemplation, remoteness, as well a lack of interaction or relation. Second, it is less effective than the traditional method of learning because of the offer of explanations, as well as interpretations. Although the students may have good academic knowledge, they might not have the necessary communication skills to impart their information to others. Third, it is difficult to control or regulate sinful activities like cheating on the test for assessment, misled to piracy and plagiarism, deteriorating the role of instructor, purely scientific fields that include practical cannot be properly studied through e-learning, and the heavy use of some websites bring about unanticipated costs both in time and money. The lack of student involvement and concerns with isolation in online learning is the next challenge because most online courses are asynchronous, allowing students to participate from various locations, which may lead to students feeling lonely. Unfortunately, there are few research studies investigating students' perspectives on online learning, including the effectiveness of instruction, chances for collaboration, teamwork, and technology integration. This study will give information that could aid higher education institutions in creating and promoting their online course offerings by gaining knowledge of students' perceptions of online learning.

According to Aras Bozkur et al. (2020), online learning during a pandemic is a serious emergency in remote education and is very distinct from planned practices like

distance learning, online learning, or other derivations. Additionally, this study offered a worldwide perspective and picture; yet, other nations continued to teach and learn despite the Covid-19 outbreak, demonstrating how nearly every country's technological readiness affects the success of online learning. Rasmitadila et al. (2020) provided a thorough explanation of Indonesia's technological readiness for COVID-19. It should be in keeping with the national humanist curriculum and have backing and cooperation from all parties involved, including the government, schools, teachers, parents, and the community.

### 3. Material and Methods

The research questions that informed this study are:

- (1) What are the benefits of online teaching from high school EFL teachers' perceptions?
- (2) What are the challenges of online teaching from high school EFL teachers' perceptions?

This study used qualitative research and an interview was used for collecting data. The research consisted of two stages. Six participants are chosen to participate in the follow-up interview. The interview consists of 5 questions that are constructed to investigate teachers' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online teaching. The subjects involved in this study are high school EFL teachers in high schools in the Mekong Delta who are experiencing online teaching during Covid 19 crisis. These participants were assumed to be different in terms of proficiency and experience. The researcher is going to interview participants on an individual basis to gather more in-depth information. In the current study, a high school in the Mekong Delta where the researcher works opted for the studied context. The participants were chosen based on convenience sampling due to EFL teachers' geographical distance to the researcher, their willingness to participate in this study after being explained, and the permit of the leaders in the research site. The main criterion for selecting participants as described in the rationale was that they taught online due to Covid 19. Different groups of teachers were invited to join in different stages of the study, as described in the following Table 3.

**Table 3:** Distribution of participants in the study

Research stages	Participants
Interviewing participants	6

To answer the two questions in the study, the researcher used the interview on teachers' depth. Six teachers under investigation included two with the highest, two with the average, and the other two with the lowest mean scores in the questionnaire were involved in the interview.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Benefits of Online Teaching

First, most of the teachers who were invited to the interview go along with the view that online teaching is very flexible and can be cost-saving. One teacher stated:

*"Online teaching is very flexible. Our teachers can teach anywhere that feels comfortable and quiet. In addition, we save the cost of teaching and the time to go to school."* (FT1)

Besides, 3 out of 6 teachers strongly support the flexibility of online teaching for both teachers and students. They claimed identical points of view as follows:

*"Online teaching offers flexibility in time as well as comfortable space for both teachers and students, based on online classroom platforms and learning support sites such as google classroom or doc."* (FT2)

*"I don't need to go to school so my time is more flexible and less expensive. I have more time for preparation."* (MT3)

Second, all the teachers tend to agree that online teaching helps teachers and students improve their computer skills. They have an opportunity to learn and practice through some websites as well as submit their homework quickly and effectively. One of the teachers said:

*"I realize that both teachers and students have the opportunity to improve their technology capabilities to serve learning and teaching. Students are also quite interested in online activities."* (FT1)

*"It is also more convenient to submit assignments online, just sending them via zalo or email, from which teachers can also save printing costs."* (MT4)

Finally, teachers also shared their view that online teaching is a good solution in that serious time of Covid 19 because of students' and teachers' safety. One said:

*"The biggest advantage of online teaching is that it reduces the risk of students being infected with covid to the lowest level because they have not been vaccinated, and also helps parents feel more secure. Teachers will have more flexible time and better preparation."* (FT5)

*"Learning materials are stored on management software, so students can easily access and download them at any time. Also, the lectures are recorded and saved so that students who are absent from school can review them without losing their lessons."* (MT4)

The results showed that EFL high school teachers well identified the positive impacts of online teaching. According to (Arora, 2019), teachers can find unlimited information that they can access via the internet. It will make teachers think more innovatively and creatively because online teaching can help develop their cognitive abilities. Besides, the teachers who choose to teach online have an opportunity to gain technical skills in using ICT (Arora, 2019). The result of this study is relevant to the result of previous research. The research conducted by (Martene & Bernadowski, 2016) states that online teaching has made it easier for the teachers with limitations to provide the activities; improvements have been made in teachers' academic performance; teachers have had success with asynchronous and synchronous teaching and student motivation has increased.

#### **4.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Benefits of Online Teaching**

The quantitative results were correlated to what was explored in the interviews, online teaching has some challenges that may impede the teachers from using it. The first challenge that six interviewed teachers share is a large amount of time to invest in online teaching. Whether it takes time in the preparation step, to choose and adapt the activities, during the process of teaching, or at times to consolidate after teaching, online teaching requires teachers' careful preparation and reasonable organization to obtain effectively rewarding results. A teacher with about 3 years of experience teaching high school students explained her difficulties:

*"I feel that it takes me more time to prepare online lessons than f2f ones. I have to combine games or software so that they can grasp the lesson without the lecture being too boring..."*  
(MT3)

Considering stable Wi-Fi connections and modern facilities for online learning and teaching, all of the teachers stated that online teaching is hard for students because they lack Wi-Fi connection. Three of them claimed:

*"On the negative side, the biggest difficulty is that not all students have a stable internet connection and a quiet place to study. In the learning process, they also encounter problems such as teachers can't hear their answers..."* (FT1)

*"Their learning process is affected by external factors that can also disrupt their concentration in learning, in addition to other problems such as unstable networks, and unstable devices. It also affects the lesson a lot."* (FT2)

Additionally, one difficulty that all the teachers had was managing the classroom. Among these, managing the cacophony brought on by online learning and inspiring pupils merit attention. If the second wave of school closings were to occur before the health crisis has been fully addressed, developing strong learning attitudes, for example,

is essential if students are to remain focused and motivated in challenging learning environments, and could therefore be key to addressing the main difficulties that students may encounter again shortly. The interaction between teachers and students is one of the key factors in determining how satisfied they are with online courses, according to Nambiar (2020) and Orhan & Beyhan (2020). The results unveiled a large number of the teachers' agreement on the challenges of online teaching. The result of this study is relevant to the result of previous research. According to (Todd, 2020) in his survey of all 52 English language teachers at one respected Thai university, the teachers have a positive perception of challenges of online learning such as limited access to the internet and less interaction with the students. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that most teachers perceived the challenges of online teaching. By using online learning, the teachers can get to know more about technology and they can be more creative and innovative in the learning process. Still, other teachers have negative perceptions of online teaching. Online learning can cause miscommunication with the students. Also, the teachers who are unfamiliar with the ICT will find it difficult to teach the students in the learning process.

In conclusion, the analysis of the questionnaire and interview data has been reported in this chapter to examine EFL high school teachers' perceptions of online teaching. The positive attitudes toward online teaching and the challenges that these participants confront are beneficial to raising the consciousness of EFL high school teachers around the world about what they can do and should do for more effective online teaching. As indicated in the section of Literature Review, there are many benefits and challenges discussed based on some previous studies by other researchers. Surprisingly, many of the responses received in this research had the same points of view as in the second chapter.

Firstly, the results obtained from this research are shown to be reliable and detailed. Talking over the online teaching media, a majority of teachers who participated in this study agreed that it is easier than f2f teaching. Online teaching media makes learning effective as it helped students absorb knowledge effectively through interactive activities. For example, the statement of the research conducted by Yanti, Setiawan, Nurhabibah, and Yannuar (2018) shows that the teachers perceived that online learning media is useful and also easy use technology is right. In the current study, the teacher participants believed that online teaching media made learning more effective through interactive activities. In addition, for the strategies used in online teaching, the findings in the current study are very similar but more detailed in terms of teachers' perceptions. The teachers recommended that more learning be done online because it was a fun setting. In a similar vein, Bonner and Reinders (2018) found that the employment of online techniques in language learning processes encouraged students to actively engage in the online learning process and improved the environment for online teaching and learning.

Secondly, in terms of the advantages of online instruction, it has been mentioned that students can access the materials at any time and interact with subject matter experts.

The majority of the teachers who took part in the current survey felt favorable about this element. These findings are fairly similar to those of the other studies, but they are more focused on the manner that online instruction benefits from flexible characteristics of time and space. Additionally, online instruction uses IT to successfully teach students using audio files, videos, applications, and internet resources wherever and whenever they are. Moreover, online teaching helped teachers think innovatively and creatively, and they knew more about IT skills to facilitate their teaching. Such findings are in accordance with those in the studies by various researchers. Anderson (2008) lists some advantages of online teaching for learners and teachers such as no time zones, location, and distance. Besides, while the benefits of online teaching include the flexibility to complete assignments at a time that is most convenient to the student, both teachers and students still need to manage their time wisely to ensure students complete their assignments by the deadlines. As a result, students not only gain knowledge from the coursework but also sharpen their time management skills. So, it is safe to say that online teaching brings convenience, time savings, and reduced costs are hailed as significant positive aspects that push it towards adoption and continued use in the future (Shubhrajyotsna, 2016).

Finally, for the challenges of online teaching, based on the study of Lestiyawati & Widyanoro (2020), it was stated that technology infrastructure was the most frequent challenge for teachers and students, and the results of this study said that lacking IT skills, IT facilities, Internet connection are the big disadvantages. It can be seen clearly from the findings that working individually seems not interesting and attractive to students as interacting directly. In addition, Nambiar (2020) and Orhan & Beyhan (2020) emphasized that interaction between teachers and students is one of the crucial aspects of teacher and student satisfaction with online categories. The pleasure of teachers was significantly influenced by students' engagement. Due to the full dialogue and interaction, face-to-face instruction was more successful for teachers than online instruction. One of the main causes of students failing to finish online courses is still a lack of self-motivation on their own. During their learning activities, students are frequently left on their own with no one prodding them along toward their learning objectives.

## **5. Recommendations**

Based on the results and the discussions of the study, the researcher put forward directions for further research. Imposing online learning at the time of Covid-19 had caused both opportunities and challenges for Vietnamese teachers to simultaneously experience online education with predictable disadvantages. Despite the fact that technology has improved learning environments, various barriers prevented teachers from continuing online instruction. It is useful to forecast the future of online courses based on an analysis of the impacts of online teaching barriers to assess learners' preferences and suggest a series of activities to maximize online learning and teaching's effectiveness. Importantly, there may be worth noticing results to compare teachers' perceptions and students' perceptions toward online teaching and learning. In addition,



the combination of various methodologies such as questionnaires, interviews, online class observation, etc. should be taken into account to explore participants' perceptions of online teaching and learning.

## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate Vietnamese EFL high school teachers' perceptions of online teaching under the impact of Covid 19. The major following findings provide an analysis of the importance of online teaching in a serious pandemic, the benefits, and the challenges of online teaching.

The results from the interviews indicated that teachers showed a positive perception of the usefulness and ease of use of the online teaching system during pandemic Covid-19. Firstly, by using an online teaching system, teachers get several new experiences such as computer skills, creativity, and innovation in the teaching process. Therefore, online teaching can be applied continuously; however, it needs several revisions so that online teaching can be carried out effectively. It is a very convenient way to keep teachers teaching and ensure that the education systems continue even during adversity (Muhkter, 2020). Besides, students can access the online materials anytime because online learning is flexible in time and place. Also, it provides opportunities for relations between learners through the use of discussion forums and permits each student to study at his or her own pace and speed whether slow or quick.

The results from the last part of the questionnaire and the personal interview gained useful insights into the challenges that Vietnamese EFL high school teachers encounter when using an online teaching system under the impact of Covid 19. Firstly, online teaching media is more difficult for teachers to use because of the lack of technical knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out several activities related to the use of technology in the teaching process. Moreover, more than half of teachers did not agree on online teaching's effectiveness during pandemic Covid-19. They thought that the online learning system was less effective because of the lack of communication and interaction quality between teachers and students. Some students lacked technological infrastructure, a quota for the internet, motivation, and parents' support. Meanwhile, some teachers faced difficulties using ICT, designing exciting material, explaining the material, assessing, and feedback. These problems make teachers think that teaching online was not more comfortable nor convenient for education.

## 7. Directions for Further Research

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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