

## LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS USING ONLINE RESOURCES IN LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT

*Unlike in the past, nowadays a lot of online resources for learning English have become more accessible and even free. The advancement of digital technology makes it possible to create user-friendly learning applications and various formats of learning materials. The users of these online resources are not only limited to learners but also teachers. Teachers can choose and adjust the materials for their students without having to create them from scratch themselves. Learners can also benefit from these free resources; with some guidance and recommendation from teachers they can make use of these learning materials. However, learners can also choose the resources to their need as well as pace their own learning. This descriptive study investigated the students' perception towards learning English using online resources. There were 25 final year students participating in this study. A survey was conducted to glean the subjects' opinions on their learning process using the online resources. The e-resources assigned were chosen from various websites related to the main and sub skills for iBT TOEFL tests since they took the iBT TOEFL Preparation class. The online exercises on the subskills such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar were also assigned to support their main skills. Aside from the survey, a group-focused interview was also conducted to confirm the subjects' responses in the survey. The result indicates a positive attitude among the learners towards the use of online resources during their learning in that semester. Convenience and flexibility of using online resources are the strong points for this positive perception. However, the instability of internet connection sometimes hampered the smooth learning in accessing the resources. Another finding indicates that only self-study using online resources is found to be insufficient; the combination of independent learning and teachers or tutors' guidance seems necessary if they are to take the official iBT TOEFL test.*

**Keywords:** attitudes, independent learning, online resources

### ABSTRAK

*Tidak seperti dahulu kini banyak sumber daring untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggris menjadi makin mudah diakses dan bahkan gratis. Kemajuan teknologi digital memungkinkan pembuatan aplikasi pembelajaran dan berbagai format materi pembelajaran yang mudah digunakan. Pengguna sumber daring tidak terbatas bagi para pelajar tetapi juga pengajar. Pengajar dapat memilih dan menyesuaikan materi bagi pelajar mereka tanpa harus membuatnya sendiri dari awal. Pelajar juga memperoleh manfaat dari sumber gratis ini; dengan bimbingan dan rekomendasi dari guru mereka dapat memanfaatkan materi pembelajaran ini. Namun, pelajar juga dapat memilih sumber sesuai kebutuhan dan kecepatan pembelajaran mereka. Penelitian deskriptif ini menggali persepsi subjek terhadap proses pembelajaran mereka dalam menggunakan sumber daring. Dua puluh lima mahasiswa senior dilibatkan dalam penelitian ini. Survei diadakan untuk mengetahui pendapat subjek terhadap proses pembelajaran mereka menggunakan sumber daring. Sumber daring yang diberikan kepada subjek dipilih dari berbagai situs yang berhubungan dengan keterampilan utama dan penunjang untuk tes TOEFL iBT karena mereka mengambil kelas Persiapan TOEFL iBT. Semua latihan untuk keterampilan penunjang seperti kosakata, pelafalan, dan tata bahasa juga diberikan untuk mendukung keterampilan utama mereka. Di samping survei, wawancara grup fokus juga dilakukan untuk mengonfirmasi respons subjek dalam survei. Hasilnya mengindikasikan sikap positif subjek terhadap penggunaan sumber daring selama pembelajaran mereka pada semester itu. Penggunaan sumber daring yang mudah dan fleksibel merupakan hal yang menguatkan persepsi positif mereka. Namun, ketidakstabilan koneksi internet menjadi kendala untuk pembelajaran yang lancar dalam mengakses sumber. Temuan lainnya mengindikasikan pembelajaran mandiri saja dengan menggunakan sumber daring tidaklah cukup. Gabungan antara pembelajaran mandiri dan bimbingan pengajar atau tutor nampaknya dibutuhkan jika mereka benar-benar akan mengambil tes TOEFL iBT yang resmi.*

**Kata kunci:** sikap, pembelajaran mandiri, sumber daring

### INTRODUCTION

For the last two years the world has been hit by Covid 19 pandemic and life is not the same anymore. We must live in a new normal condition. Pandemic has changed the way we live, and this includes the way we teach and learn at all levels of education from kindergarten to tertiary level. Both students and teachers including the education institutions have been struggling to cope with this sudden change since it is impossible to conduct onsite classes. However, with the increasing advancement in technology, online learning becomes possible. Online learning, that is used to be one mode of teaching and learning, now becomes the only mode that makes it possible for students and teachers to meet. "The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of online learning and self-directed learning to motivate and engage

students (Maphalla, et. al. 2021). However not all education institutions are ready with the online learning and teaching infrastructure (Pevneva & Edmunds as cited in Clement, et. al., 2021). In developed countries this may not be a big problem, but in developing countries online learning teaching becomes a challenge (Clement, et. al., 2021). In Indonesia this challenge may be more prominent in villages, remote places and in small islands. In big cities this may not be a major problem, but still the stability of internet connection can become an issue at times.

Moreover, not all teachers have sufficient skills to conduct online classes, even though the platforms such as Zoom, Google classroom, Teams, and others may be available at their disposal. Some teachers have to grapple to conduct their classes using unfamiliar platforms and their features. Rather than seeing online teaching as an additional burden, Ionela (2020) points out that online learning could be seen as an opportunity to adjust with this new situation. Furthermore, Ionela suggests teachers to embrace online teaching practice as their own professional development. In the same vein Cope & Kalantzis (2022) said that “Digital media open new opportunities for teachers and learners as a consequence of their remarkable convergence. Sound and image, and by extension speech and text, can be captured, reduced to binary calculation, transmitted or stored, and then re-rendered on demand.” (p.35) Since learning and teaching material can be digitalized, it can be easily accessed online by both teachers and students anytime and anywhere. This flexibility is especially convenient for students who must juggle doing all the given assignments in one semester.

Another problem which is not less challenging is to engage and motivate students to keep learning. Di Pietro et al as cited in Mubarak, et.al. 2021 come up with the downsides of online learning. They state four major conflicts. Students have less learning time; they show stress symptoms; there are changes in their interactions; and they don’t have enough motivation to learn. According to Maphalala, et. al. (2021) students may become confused with this sudden change. The learning process used to be regular and structured as well guided and supervised by teachers onsite, but now students must do everything online. In such situations, students are expected to be more independent and able to take initiative for their learning process. However, Rashid and Asgar’s study in Maphalala, et.al. (2021) shows that the use of digital technology enhances self-directed learning. This means that in independent learning students need to employ digital technology in order to get good results. As for teachers’ role they act more as a facilitator. This is in line with Sadaghian, et. al (2020) who said, “Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) environment provide an ideal support for the teacher as facilitator ...” (p. 70).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the subjects’ attitudes towards learning English using online resources?
2. What supports and hampers the use of online resources in learning?

## METHODOLOGY

The subjects of this study were 25 senior Pharmacy students during the odd semester of 2021-2022 academic year. They took the iBT Preparation class as one of their English courses. The class was conducted virtually via Teams each week for one semester. Since there were four language skills to learn in this one course, each language skill was to learn in three to four sessions only. Besides the exercises done in class, the subjects also had to do online exercises from the recommended websites. There are English learning websites that offer free online exercises such as <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org> that provides all four language skill exercises from level A1-C1, as well as grammar and vocabulary exercises. As for TOEFL practice tests the respondents were suggested to practice from two websites such as [examenglish.com](http://examenglish.com) and [examword.com/toefl-practice](http://examword.com/toefl-practice) . Moreover, <https://www.examenglish.com> also offers the academic word exercises besides TOEFL Practice tests. To experience using online resources, the subjects were instructed to do online exercises on academic vocabulary in Academic Word List group 1-10 every week. Then, they were given three quizzes during the semester. They were also assigned to practice listening from [examenglish.com](http://examenglish.com). They could practice listening to campus conversations and lectures. All these online exercises provide instant correct answers once submitted so that the subjects can get the result right away. For both assignments, the subjects had to report their scores for each exercise by uploading the screenshot in the class folder in Teams platform.

This class had 16 sessions of 100 minutes including two weeks for mid and final test. In fourteen meetings the class covered four language skills such as Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing. It was

of course impossible to do all exercises during the sessions. Therefore, online resources for additional exercises were assigned for the students to do independently after class hours. Additional exercises on academic vocabulary were also given to support the four main language skills.

The study employed a google form survey to glean the subjects' responses on their independent learning using the assigned online resources. There were 10 questions; six questions were closed questions using a five Likert Scale; two questions were closed-ended with given options and two open-ended questions requiring the subjects to explain their reasons for their answers in the two closed-ended questions. To confirm their responses in the survey a focused group interview was also conducted. Both the written survey and the interview were held at the end of the semester.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study comes from the survey conducted via the Google Forms and a focused group interview. The following are the results from the survey. There are a total of ten questions; six questions are closed-ended questions using a five Likert scale; two are closed-questions with given options and two open ended questions to elaborate their answers in the last two closed-ended questions.

1. I prefer learning English using electronic resources  
25 responses

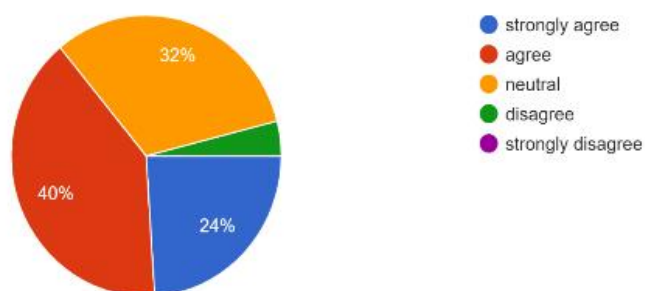


Figure 1. Question 1

From question 1 those who strongly agreed and agreed were 40% and 24%, whereas those who were not against using e-resources were one third of the class (32%). Those who disagree are 4% and none for strongly disagree. This result indicates that the respondents show positive responses towards using electronic resources for learning English.

2. I do the online AWL exercises  
25 responses

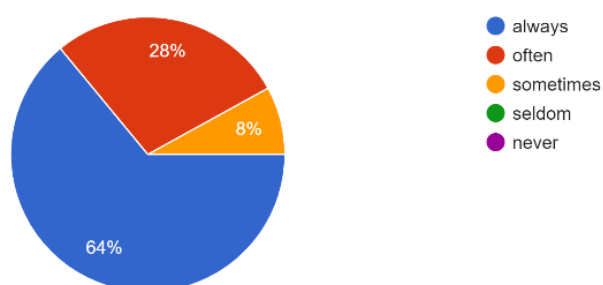


Figure 2. Question 2

Question 2 shows the respondents' frequency in doing the assigned online AWL exercises. More than half (64%) always did the exercises, and one quarter (28%) often did it. Only 8% seldom did it and none did not do it at all. The focus group interview reveals some participants did not do the weekly exercise

regularly; some of them did several exercises at one time to keep up as they were behind the assignment schedule. Some of them admitted that they forgot or they thought they had done it. Some of them did not do the AWL exercise anymore thinking that the assignment was already over after the mid-term test.

3. Doing the online AWL exercises twice (2times) for each group helps me remember the new words more.

25 responses

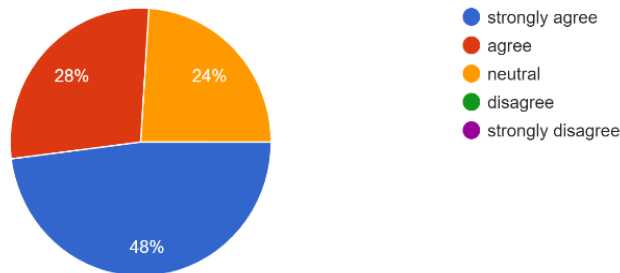


Figure 3. Question 3

Question 3 shows repetition in doing the exercises enhances the respondents' memorization of the learned new words. Those who strongly agreed and agreed made up more than 76% and the other 24 % were neutral. From the beginning the respondents were encouraged to do each exercise more than one time. From the focus group interview some respondents confirmed that doing the same exercise at least twice helped them remember the new words better. However, one participant said she did not better remember the new word itself. When repeating the same list of exercises, the question would appear again in the same order and made her able to guess the answer more correctly.

4. I do the online Listening exercises (conversations & lectures)

24 responses

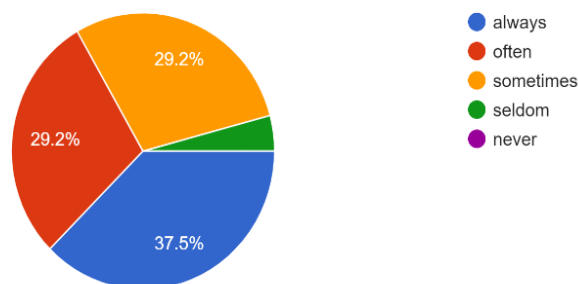


Figure 4. Question 4

Question 4 indicates the subjects' participation in doing the listening exercises on conversation and lectures. Those who always practiced it are 37.5%, those who often and sometimes did it are 29.2% respectively. As for the ones who never did it is only 4.1%. Similar to doing the AWL exercise, the respondents in the interview admitted they could not do the listening exercises regularly and had to do several exercises at one time to help them keep up with the assignment schedule.

5. Doing each Listening exercise twice (2) helps me understand the conversations/lectures better.

25 responses

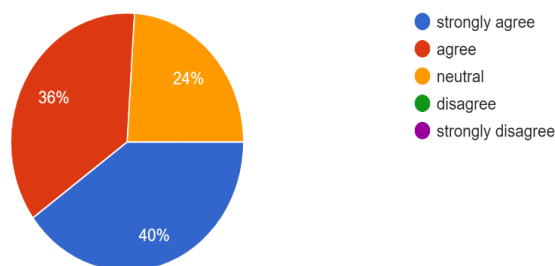


Figure 5 Question 5

Question 5 shows the subjects' perception whether they understood the conversations and lectures better when they did it twice. Those who strongly agreed are 40% and those who agreed are 36%. Those who were neutral are 24%. None disagreed and strongly disagreed with this repeated listening practice. In the interview some respondents found it useful to repeat listening to the same conversations/lectures since it helped them catch the missing parts so that they could understand them better. However, unstable internet connection sometimes disrupted their listening exercises. It was troublesome when they had to start the practice test all over again when they were already in the middle of it.

6. I like learning & practicing academic vocabulary (AWL) using e-resources because... (you can check more than one answer)

25 responses

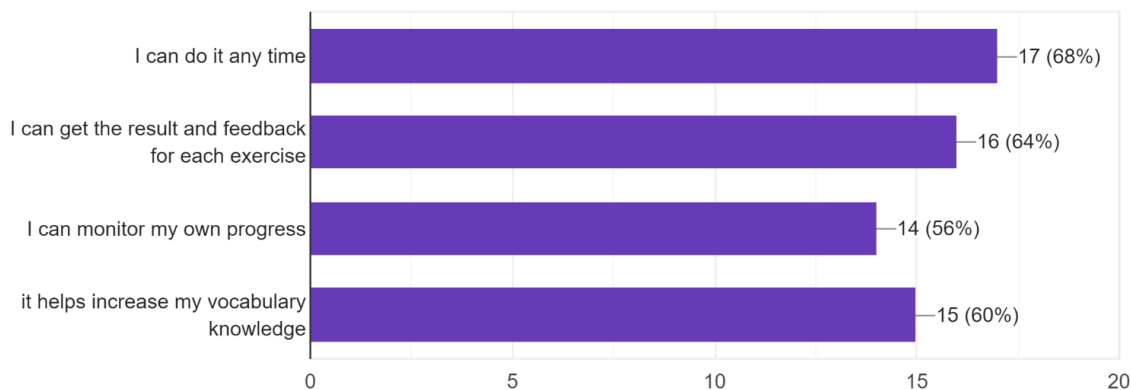


Figure 6. Question 6

Question 6 is a closed-ended question with the given options asking whether the respondents like learning & practicing the academic words from the online AWL. More than half (56-68%) respondents show their positive responses. Being able to do it anytime (68%), getting the result and feedback right away (64%), monitoring their own progress (56%), and helping increase their vocabulary knowledge (60%).

7. I dislike/ do not prefer learning & practicing AWL using e-resources. Write your reasons

I dont want to using e-resources in practicing AWL because it will help me in my vocab knowledge. But sometimes if i dont have clue at all to solve AWL, i using the e-resources to help me find the keywords.

Saya suka belajar AWL menggunakan resources karena membantu saya dalam meningkatkan keterampilan saya

i like

I dislike it because sometimes hampered by bad signal so I must fill the answer repeatedly

I like learning and practicing AWL using e-resources. so I don't answer the reason  
 I think, it's quite difficult to understand for new vocabulary  
 Because it is more easier

Figure 7. Question 7

Question 7 discloses the subjects' responses for disliking doing the AWL exercises. The overall response indicates that the subjects did not have a negative attitude towards practicing using the online AWL. Instead, some of them admitted that it was still difficult to learn new vocabulary; bad signals also became a problem so that they had to repeat doing the exercise.

8. I like learning & practicing Listening using e-resources because... (you can check more than one answer)

25 responses

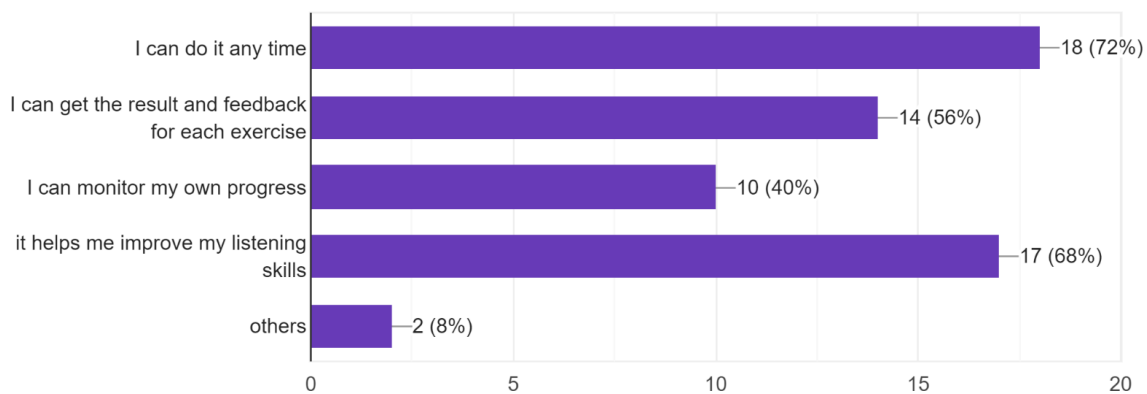


Figure 8. Question 8

Similar to the responses for question 7 having the flexibility to do the exercises at any time gets the higher percentage (72%). Those who liked it because of getting the result and feedback is 56% and being able to monitor their progress is lower, 40%. However, more than half (68%) acknowledged that the listening exercises helped improve their listening skills.

9. I dislike/ do not prefer learning & practicing Listening using e-resources. Write your reasons.

I dont want to using e-resources in practicing Listening because it will help me to understand the sentence.

Saya suka menggunakan e resources karena dapat membantu saya

Jaringan internet yg terkadang tidak stabil

I dislike it because sometimes hampered by bad signal so I must fill the answer repeatedly

I like learning and practicing AWL using e-resources. so I don't answer the reason

I think, it's quite difficult to understand for new vocabulary

Because its more effective

because some practice spent more kuota like practice listening and when the signal is not stable, it will be annoying if you have to wait the spoken to speak again.

Figure 9. Question 9

The responses for Question 9 indicate almost the same responses as questions 7. The respondents did not have particular reasons to dislike the online listening practice. Their concern was more about the unstable internet connection.

10. The exercises given during the semester are too many.  
25 responses

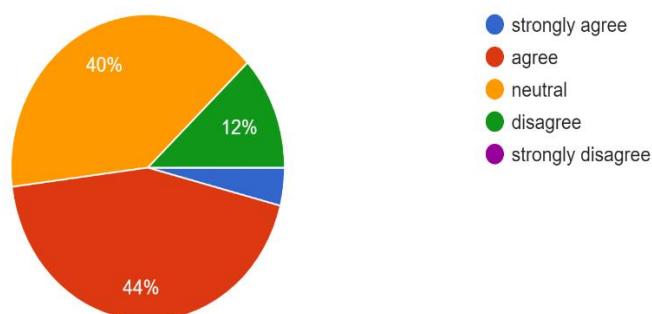


Figure 10. Question 10

Question 10 is to find out whether all the online exercises given in one semester were too many or not. It turns out that almost half (44% and 4%) agreed and strongly agreed that the exercises were too many. However, the other 40% shows a neutral position. Those who disagreed were 12%. None strongly disagreed. From the result it can be inferred that the responses are quite divided. The subjects were actually free to choose the other exercises (aside from the assigned ones). They could choose the ones suitable for their language proficiency level. The interview also found out that doing online exercises independently without any instructors were not enough for them to take the official iBT TOEFL test.

The responses of the main question on the preference in using online resources to learn English show a positive response. More than half (64%) of the respondents admitted their preference in using online resources to learn English. One third (32%) of the participants were neutral; this could mean that they did not really dislike it. As for the assignments on the AWL and listening practice tests the respondents did try their best to do the assignments. From the beginning of the semester the respondents were told that there would be three quizzes along the semester to test their academic word knowledge from the AWL. Moreover, they were instructed to screenshot their scores for each exercise and uploaded in the folder with their names in Teams platform so that the instructor could check who had done it. It was not surprising that this motivated them to do it to get the points added to their final grade. Even though the survey cannot conclusively show that learning academic vocabulary using the online AWL is the best way, still to some extent it helped the subjects to learn new academic vocabulary necessary to support their language skills. With the listening practice the subjects in the interview did confirm that listening more than one time enhanced their understanding on campus conversations and lectures. Giving the online resources enabled them to manage doing the exercises with more flexibility. They could do it any time and repeat them as many times as needed. They could also evaluate their own learning from the instant feedback for each exercise. This is in line with Sadaghian, et. al. (2020) that computer assisted language learning (CALL) supports learners to learn independently. However, the subjects still had problems with internet connection that sometimes lags and disrupts smooth listening.

Growing up in the information era, the subjects of this study are not unfamiliar with the use of internet whether as entertainment or study. Since during the pandemic the only mode of learning was online, the subjects had little problems to adapt to online learning and use online resources. The advancement of technology makes numerous English learning websites and applications that can be accessed for free and user friendly. Thus, online resources have the potential to be used for teaching as well as learning. With sufficient guidance from teachers/tutors and self-motivation from learners, learning English using online resources could work out more effectively, especially if the subjects need to take the official IBT TOEFL Test.

## CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the respondents have positive attitudes towards learning English using online resources. As millennial generation, they are familiar with the use of computers and internet not only to learn English but also other courses. Moreover, online learning became the only mode of learning during the pandemic. The subjects also indicate their preference to do online exercises. Online exercises offer

flexibility in time, place, and instant feedback so that the subjects can track down their own progress. However, unstable internet connection becomes a major problem for the subjects in doing all the exercises smoothly.

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