Adapting to Post Pandemic Learning: Re-visiting Online English Course for Non-Academic Staffs

Kartika Nuswantara[1], Umi Trisyanti[2], Endang Susilowati[3], Sukriyah Kustanti[4], M. Syaifulloh[5]

{kartikanuswantara.its@gmail.com[1], umi@mku.its.ac.id[2],endangits18@gmail.com[3], antienmoerad01@gmail.com[4], saiful@mku.its.ac.id[5]}

Department of Development Studies, Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember Surabaya
Kampus Sukolilo Surabaya-Indonesia

Abstract An English course for non Academic Staff was designed for online learning mode due to COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless the importance of the course, highdrop-outs were inevitable. The study used descriptive quantitative methods that included a survey to elicit opinions from participants about the program and a Vocabulary Levels Test to assess if the course increased vocabulary knowledge. Responses from the participants would provide information for further use of the program in both modes, offline and online learning that would be carried out in the post pandemic. The program was well-tailored and implemented; however, there is a discrepancy in the results of the VLT tests. There is no significant different between the pre- and post-test. However, The current study demonstrated the implementation's efficacy, making the program recommendable to be continued in the post-pandemic age. However, future research needs to look further into the scores because the differences were not statistically significant.

Keywords: Online learning, post pandemic, high drop-outs, Vocabulary Levels Test

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had changed people's lifestyles. Before the pandemic, people tended to work outside the home, had relatively less time at home, and were less inclined to think of doing all work from home. In the new lifestyle, people made many changes in order to halt the spread of the virus, such as avoiding crowds, staying at home, "social distancing," doing more through the Internet, and transforming their homes into offices so they could work from home through the Internet.

The pandemic could be a blessing in disguise. Some aspects of living remotely are attractive. Despite a sluggish start, people have become more productive as they multitask, doing both office work and household chores at the same time [1], [2]. Working from home has created more flexible, manageable work schedules that blend office and household. Workers can still maintain connections with clients, colleagues, partners, or friends through unlimited online meetings, which they can schedule for any convenient time without concern for traffic, weather, or other factors beyond their control. To some extent, this has reduced anxiety and other psychologically detrimental effects of the pandemic. The positive effects of the pandemic have helped people to survive a difficult situation[3].

ICON LATERALS 2022, November 05-06, Malang, Indonesia

DOI 10.4108/eai.5-11-2022.2329456

Several studies have demonstrated that using an online or hybrid format instead of a traditional face-to-face format improves student learning results in a statistically meaningful way. Improved learning as evidenced by test results, student engagement with the course material, improved perceptions of learning and the online format, a stronger sense of community among students, and a decrease in withdrawal or failure are just a few of the positive learning outcomes [4]–[8]. While studies on English as a Second/Foreign Language have confirmed the crucial role of the vocabulary size in the language performances, including reading comprehension and speech fluency [9]–[11], there is a lack of evidence that such learning modes can be better performed for helping the students improve their vocabulary size. Additionally, academic success and vocabulary size are closely related [9]

2. Literature Review

2.1 An English Course Tailored for University Staffs

University staffs need English language proficiency to perform some university tasks. Most universities now seek international recognition and participate in international networks. Not to mention, staffs of non-academic affairs now handle correspondence and provide information for overseas guests, use documents in other languages, participate in recruiting foreign students, and assist foreign students outside classes. Universities offer programs for staffs exchange and internship abroad if they have a good command of English. These tasks are now unavoidable; if staff lack the English proficiency to do them, their careers are in jeopardy, as well as their university's internationalization program. Unfortunately, not all staff have this level of English language proficiency, and they need support and opportunity to improve them.

Before the pandemic, universities provided varied Professional Development (PD) programs so that administrative staff could keep up with rapid changes in the university sector, but staff have had difficulty attending them. Then PD programs all ceased due to the pandemic. Those staff had to adjust to working from home over the internet to continue doing administrative tasks.

2.2 Course Design and Implementation

In response to this situation, a team designed a course for university staffs to acquire English language skills for university administration, converting an offline English course into an online course.

Existing research indicated that it would be effective. It was observed that number of distance courses was mushrooming in many universities across the nation because online hosting was not only now affordable, but it could promote critical thinking, enhanced reflection, self-regulation, professional development, and effective instructional techniques [6], [7], [12]. Additionally, online learning can stimulate strong, constructive learning experiences through shared knowledge, social support, and self-regulated learning [12], [13]. Despite all these merits, the notion of an online learning English course was still new for most staff, who were accustomed to conventional courses where they could interact intensely with tutors and peers in class, and where they did not need to work independently because they could share difficult tasks and discuss them with others.

The course adopted a closed cohort model in which all participants in a cohort complete all their coursework together from beginning to end [12], [13] . The course used an online platform that had already been provided by the institution, namely Moodle. Being asynchronous and a closed cohort, participants completed tasks at the same time, indicating their ability to self-regulate their learning.

The course is mainly aimed to enrich participants with receptive vocabulary that was presented in various contexts. This is important to help participants laveraging their vocabulary level as a key element of language proficiency is vocabulary, which forms a significant part of how effectively learners talk, listen, read, and write. Without an extensive vocabulary and methods for expanding it, learners frequently fail miserably of their potential and may become disenchanted with the opportunities for language learning that are all around them, such as radio listening, native speaker listening, using the language in different contexts, reading, or watching TV[14]. Therefore, the course activities were tailored to enable participants to take information from multiple written sources and to perform tasks for which they had to integrate several discrete skills. Reading texts were chosen from online articles on workplace communication and responding to workplace problems, university management, and technology at work.

The reading of a chosen text and the viewing of a video served as the starting point for the exercises, which aimed to teach participants how to read effectively by using techniques like skimming, scanning, and critical reading. Each reading was followed by an activity that would help the participants learn new words and their meaning by retrieving them from a variety of tasks, including quizzes, spoken performances, vocabulary building exercises, and writing exercises. The goal of every activity was to increase vocabulary recognition since it was intended that participants would become more adept in English if their vocabulary had significantly increased by the conclusion of the course.

To see if the course can really accomodate improved vocabulary levels, a Vocabulary Level Test [15] was used to measure the vocabulary size prior to the course and again it was distributed at the end of the course.Measuring the vocabulary level tes tis believed by some previous reserachers to have predictive power toward the proficiencey of the participants [16], [17]

The course had been launched and registered by ninty-three administrative staffs from different universities. However, there were only forty completed all four modules; therefore, to gauge the course implementation, those forty participants were taken as the subjects of the study. The course was comprised by four modules that must be completed in four weeks, in October 2020, and was based at Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember in Surabaya, Indonesia.

During course implementation, the course facilitators' main tasks were to open and close each module, interact with participants to motivate them to complete tasks promptly, assist participants as needed, and give feedback on the performance of tasks throughout the LMS.
From the number of participants enrolling this online course, it was less than half could continue until the end of the program. High drop-outs have identified by [18], [19] as common issues in any form of online learning mode. Problems with instructors' online teaching abilities, online course materials, students' motivation, readiness for distant learning, technological support, and

workloads are frequently identified as barriers preventing students from finishing the course. Social interaction and autonomy have been found to be difficult for Indonesian participants to pursue in this situation. [20] This research aims seeking potential factors that may have encouraged forty out of ninety-four individuals to continue with the course to the end.

3 Research Objectives

Expressed operationally, this study sought to answer the following questions about the field trial of the online English course:

1. How did participants react to the course?
    a. How did participants rate their effort to complete course tasks and projects?
    b. How did participants rate the contribution of the course to their language learning?
    c. How did participants rate the online system (i.e. Moodle)?
    d. How did participants rate the facilitators' role in the online course?
    e. How did participants rate the course content?
2. How did the results of the vocabulary size test and the achivements performed by the participants?
    a. Was there any significant increase in vocabulary size before and after the course?
    b. Could participants satisfactorily perform the achievents (comprised form the completions of the tasks and projects) designed to help them improve vocabulary size?

4 Research Method

This is a descriptive study by nature, as it is aimed to describe the the existing phenomenon encoutered in the case of online learning English course for non academic test develeoped by Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember in Indonesia. At the first place, a survey was used to collect data and a questionnaire designed to gauge participants' reaction to the program. It followed the two main and the other five sub-questions above, treated as variables, and used a Likert scale to rate responses:

1. The first variable is the participants' efforts and commitment to complete the course. This was gauged through the way they completed the given tasks and the project. The course required participants to develop their skills in regulating their own learning and working within time limits.
2. Second, the contribution to learning refers to whether participants increased their English vocabulary and their English language skills.
3. The next variable rated the suitability of the online platform to participants' expectations.
4. Another variable was the facilitator's skills, responsiveness, and effectiveness in the learning process.
5. The last variable was the course content. How did participants react to the content? What did they think needs improvement?

Each variable was expressed as a series of Evaluation Indicators, each of which was assigned an ordinal number and a code to identify it with its variable:

TU: Participants' efforts and commitment
CL: Contribution to learning

COS: Suitability of the online platform
F: Facilitator
CC: Course content

Then, the next stage, using one group experimental, vocabulary size of the participants was investigated by measuring their vocabulary size before and after the course. English vocabulary knowledge was measured using Vocabulary Level Test (VLT), a set of vocabulary tests adopted from Webb, Sasao, & Ballance [21] was used. This is a standardized test of vocabulary size, and comprised five wordlist levels (i.e., 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, and 5000). It measured the written receptive (passive) vocabulary knowledge, which is the vocabulary mainly required for reading. Before commencing the course and at the end of the course, participants took the vocabulary test to indicate the size of their receptive vocabulary.

5 Results and Discussion

This section elaborates the results of the survey and vocabulary size test in order to show if the English materials developed for university non academic staffs are worth considering to be further implemented amid post pandemic time. Accordingly, the sections are devoted to give answers to the three main questions raised in the objectives of the study.

5.1 Results

Participants' reactions to the course

To get the answers, a survei had been distributes to gain participants' reaction to the course based on the five variables as mentioned before in the objectives of the study.

Firstly, to serve the validity and reliability of questionnaire data, the researchers used a Pearson correlation, and it showed that the significance value (Sig.) < 0.05, whereas the reliability was tested and yielded a Cronbach's alpha was > 0.60. It was concluded that the instrument is valid and reliable for data collection.

The reactions toward the course was reflected by five variables, namely the amount of effort, contribution to learning, online course system, skills and responsiveness of the facilitator, and course content. They are described based on the average value (mean) of each indicator, and can be categorized as follows:

The five variables are described based on the average value (mean) of each indicator, and can be categorized as follows:

$$classinterval = \frac{max - min}{numberofclasses} = \frac{6-1}{6} = 0.83$$

The scale used in this study is from 1 to 6, so the class interval is 0.83, resulting in the following categories:

Very poor: $1.00 < mean \leq 1.83$
Poor: $1.83 < mean \leq 2.67$
Fairly good: $2.67 < mean \leq 3.50$
Good: $3.50 < mean \leq 4.33$
Very good: $4.33 < mean \leq 5.17$
Excellent: $5.17 < mean \leq 6.00$

The results of the description on each indicator of the course are presented in Table 1 below:

Code	Course Reaction Indicators	Min.	Max.	Mean	Category
TU	1. Effort for doing the tasks	1	6	3.65	Good
TU	2. Effort for completing the tasks	1	6	3.62	Good
TU	3. Routine doing tasks	1	6	3.43	Fairly good
TU	4. Participation in the facilitator's WAG[1]	1	6	3.11	Fairly good
TU	5. Persistence in completing tasks	1	6	3.89	Good
CL	1. Pre-course English skills	1	6	2.54	Poor
CL	2. Post-course English skills	1	6	3.35	Fairly good
CL	3. Pre- course Mastery of Vocabulary	1	6	2.46	Poor
CL	4. Post-course Mastery of Vocabulary	1	6	3.30	Fairly good
CL	5. Benefits for language skills development	1	6	3.54	Good
CL.	6. Course benefits for vocabulary enhancement	1	6	3.57	Good
COS	1. Suitability of course for learning expectations	1	6	3.38	Fairly good
COS	6. Time flexibility	2	6	3.68	Good
F	1. Stimulation of interest	2	6	3.81	Good
F	2. Availability to assist learning	2	6	4.05	Good
F	3. Precise assessment and Feedback	2	6	4.16	Good
CC	1. Clarity of learning objectives	3	6	3.89	Good
CC	2. Suitability of learning objectives	2	6	3.70	Good
CC	3. Content management	3	6	3.95	Good
CC	4. Suitability of topics for reading materials	2	6	3.97	Good
CC	5. Sufficienct learning loads	2	6	3.92	Good
CC	6. Stimulation for active involvement	1	6	3.68	Good
CC	7. Clarity of task instructions	1	6	3.84	Good
CC	8. Utility of the video	1	6	3.92	Good
CC	9. Suitability of the project	2	6	3.95	Good
Overall Mean = 3.61					

Tabel 1. Descriptions of course reaction indicators

[1] *WAG: Whatsapp group.*

The results of the course reaction indicators as a whole produced an average value of 3.61, which is high (3.5 - 4.33), indicating that respondents gave a favorable assessment of the course. The three indicators for evaluating the course that were rated and received high category are *precise assessment and useful feedback (F.3), facilitators always available and helpful (F.2), and reading materials with appropriate topics (CC.4).*

The description of each indicator based on the average value can be more clearly illustrated in the bar chart as follows:

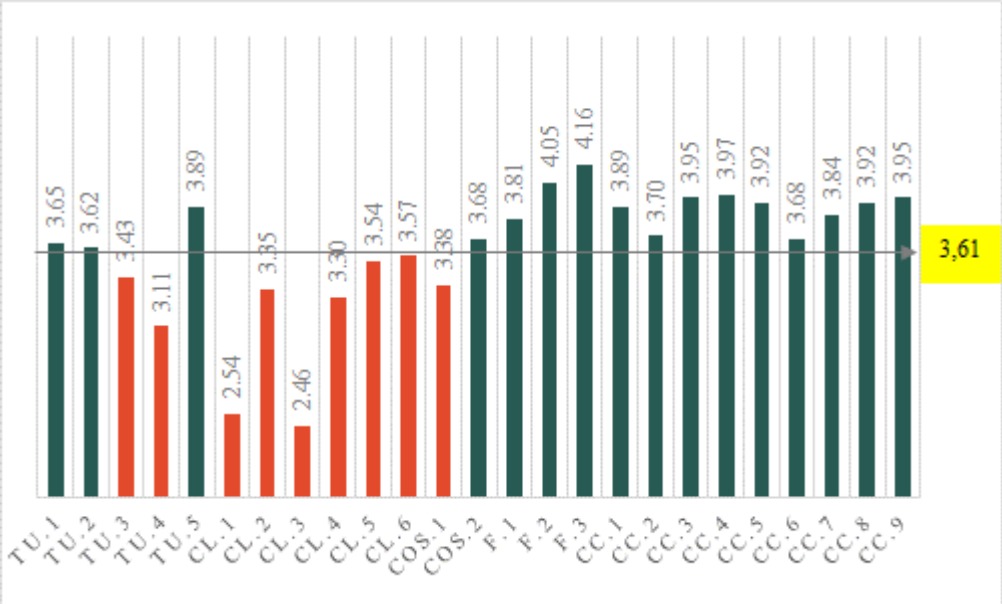

Fig 1. Graph of the evaluation results of the online course on each indicator

Figure 1 [1] shows that nine evaluation indicators for the online course that low (below the middle value of 3.61), namely:

TU 3. Routine tasks

TU 4. Participation in the facilitator's WAG

CL 1. Pre-course English skills

CL 2. Post-course English skills

CL 3. Pre-course Mastery of vocabulary

CL 4. Post-course Mastery of vocabulary

CL 5. Benefits of courses for English language skills development

CL 6. Benefits of the course for vocabulary enhancement

COS 1. Suitability of the online course with learning expectations

Furthermore, the description results on each online course variable are presented in Table 2 below:

Evaluation Indicators	Mean	Category
Amount of Effort (TU)	3.54	Good
Contribution to Learning (CL)	3.13	Fairly good
Course Online System (COS)	3.53	Good
The Facilitator (F)	4.01	Good
Course Content (CC)	3.87	Good
Overall Mean	3.61	Good

Table 2. Description of the online course variables

The description of the course reaction on each variable based on the average value can be more clearly illustrated in the bar chart as follows:

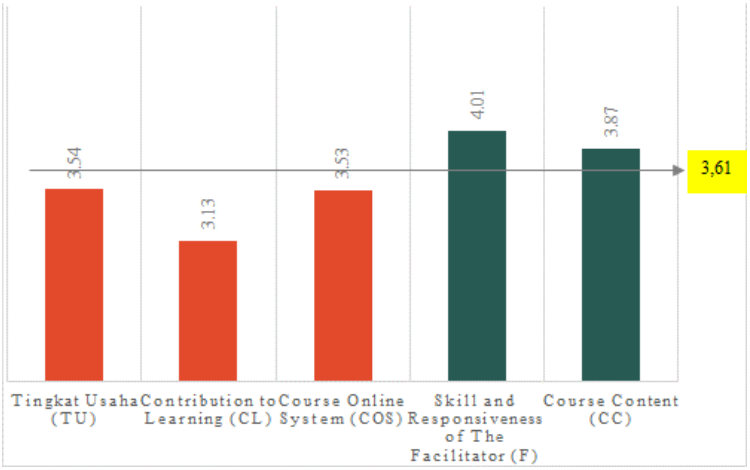

Fig 2.Graph of the course reaction results of the online course on each variable

Figure 2 [2] shows that that three variables are still low (below the middle value of 3.61), namely the level of effort, contribution to learning, and the online course system.

Participants' Vocabulary Size Tests and their course achievement

Vocabulary Size Test results

Table 1 depicts the Vocabulary Size Test results including both tests, pre-test (distributed prior to course) and post-test (distributed after the course).

Vocabulary Level Test	Pre Test			Post Test		
	Min.	Max.	Mean	Min.	Max.	Mean
L1000	11	30	26.61	5	30	24.97
L2000	8	30	25.34	6	30	24.42
L3000	10	27	19.58	6	30	20.79
L4000	4	28	19.21	5	30	20.76
L5000	9	30	20.53	5	30	21.16
Total Vocabulary Size	**53**	**141**	**111.26**	**27**	**150**	**108.21**

Table 3. Vocabulary Size Test Results

Table 3 [3] describes the total vocabulary size between pre and post-test. The total Vocabulary Size in Pre-Test, 111.26 is higher than Post Test, 108.2. Thus, the vocabulary size in post-test decreases 3.05. The following graphic (Figure 3 and 4) shows the trends of the vocabulary size in each level and the trend between pre and post-test.

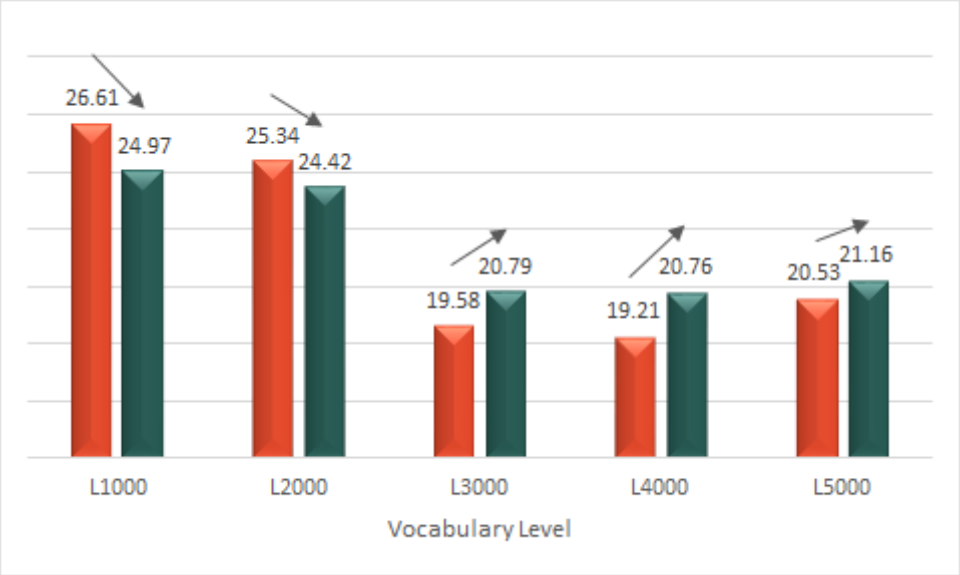

Fig. 3. Trends of vocabulary size in each level

Figure 3 shows that two levels had a decreased score during the post test, namely L1000 and L2000, with a decrease in the score of 1.64 and 0.92, respectively. Furthermore, three levels had an increase in the score during the post test, namely L3000, L4000, and L5000, with an increase in their respective scores of 1.21, 1.55, and 0.63.

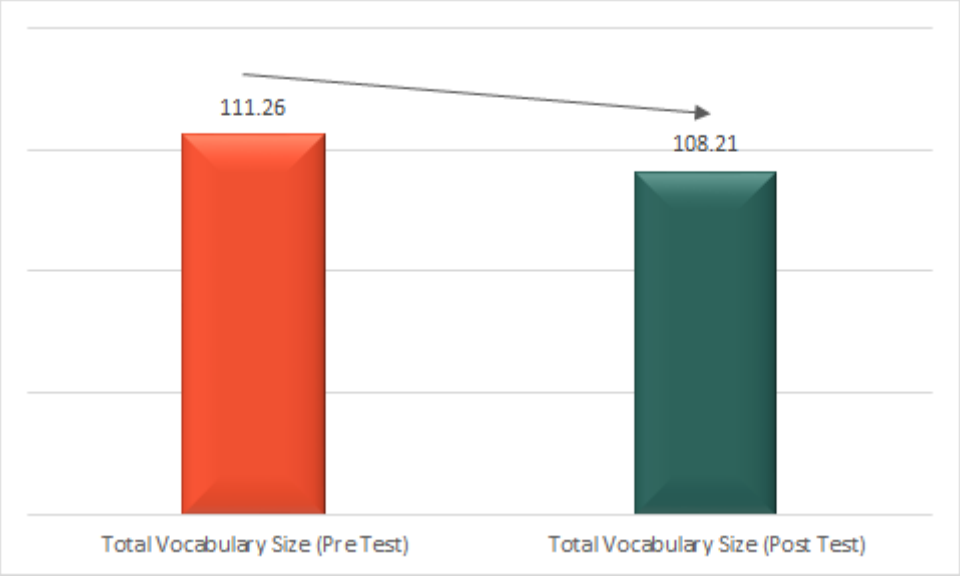

Fig 4. Trend of the total of Vocabulary Size

Figure 4 shows the total vocabulary size decreased during the post test, with a decrease in score of 3.05. Furthermore, to determine the significance of differences in the vocabulary level score and vocabulary size pre-test and post-test, the paired sample t test technique was used, as follows:

Paired Samples Test		Sig.	Description
Pair 1	L1000 (Pre Test) - L1000 (Post Test)	0.105	Not significant
Pair 2	L2000 (Pre Test) - L2000 (Post Test)	0.189	Not significant
Pair 3	L3000 (Pre Test) - L3000 (Post Test)	0.114	Not significant
Pair 4	L4000 (Pre Test) - L4000 (Post Test)	0.085	Not significant
Pair 5	L5000 (Pre Test) - L5000 (Post Test)	0.971	Not significant
Pair 6	Vocabulary Size (Pre Test) - Vocabulary Size (Post Test)	0.391	Not significant

Table 4. *Paired sample t test* Pre Test dan Post Test.

The results of the paired sample t test on the six test pairs showed that all of them produced a significance value greater than 5%, so it was decided that the difference in the pre-test and post-test scores was insignificant. Thus, it can be concluded that the post-test cannot produce a better vocabulary level score and vocabulary size than the pre-test.

Participants' achievements

Table 5 below shows the results of participants' achievements based on a four-point rating scale.

Participants' Achievements	Min.	Max.	Mean	Rank
Forum: Discussing an email for program collaboration (Real)	3	4	3.81	5
Forum: Discussing Issues at University: Problems, Strategy, and Solution (Real)	3	3	3.00	6
Forum: Discussing Issues at Workplace Based on Texts (Real)	4	4	4.00	1
Forum: Discussion- Reading Practice 3: Word Recognition (graded activity) (Real)	2	3	2.91	8
Forum: Discussion: Practicing Critical Reading (Graded) (Real)	3	4	3.96	4
Lesson: Reading Technique: Scanning (Part 2) (Real)	2	3	2.97	7
Lesson: Writing An Email- The Layout (Real)	4	4	4.00	1
Lesson: Writing Practice: Reflection n Results of Reading Activities (Graded) (Real)	4	4	4.00	1
Overall mean: 3.58				

Tabel 5. Descriptions of participants' achievements (4 point rating scale)

The description of participants' achievements (4 point rating scale) resulted in an overall average score of 3.58. The highest achievement indicators for participants were the forum: discussing issues at workplace based on the texts (real), lesson: writing an email-the layout (real), and lesson: writing practice: the reflection of the results of your reading activities (graded) (real), with an average value of 4.00 each. Furthermore, the indicator of achievement participants that was rated the lowest was forum: discussion-reading practice 3: word recognition (graded activity) (real), with a mean value of 2.91.

The bar chart below more clearly illustrates each program success indicator based on the based on the average value of participants' achievements in a four-point rating scale:

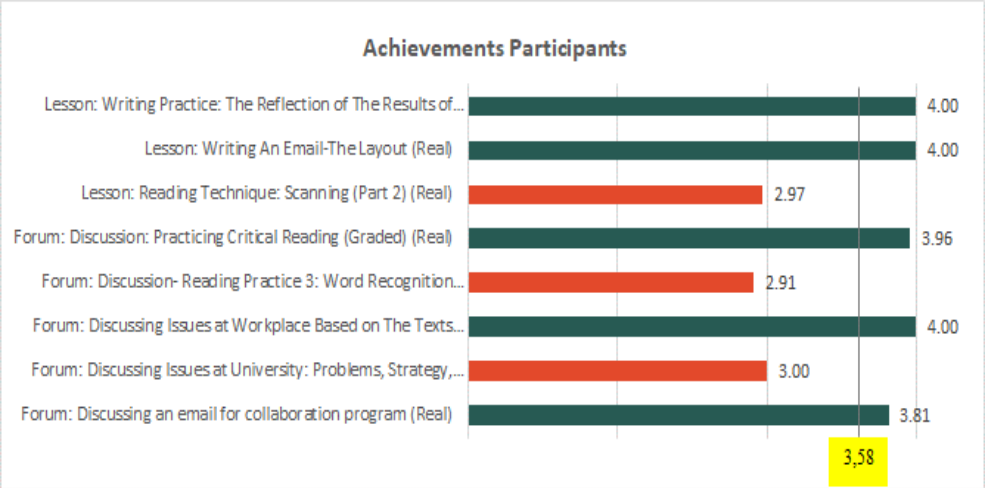

Figure 5. Achievements of the participants (4 poin rating scale)

Figure 5 shows that there are three indicators of program success based on achievements participants (4 point rating scale), which are considered below the overall average, namely:

- Forum: Discussing Issues at University: Problems, Strategy, and Solution (Real)
- Forum: Discussion- Reading Practice 3: Word Recognition (graded activity) (Real)
- Lesson: Reading Technique: Scanning (Part 2) (Real)

The results of the description of program success based on participants' achievements (10 point rating scale) are presented in Table 6 below:

Achievements Participants	Min.	Max.	Mean	Rank
Assignment: Practicing All Reading Techniques: Skimming, Scanning, and Contextual Guessing (Real)	7.9	10	9.74	6
Assignment: Project 2 (Real)	7.5	10	9.79	5
Assignment: Project 3 (Real)	8	10	9.74	7
Assignment: Project 4 (Real)	9	10	9.93	2
Assignment: Project Module 1 (Real)	7	10	9.39	10
Quiz: Practice: Useful Phrases for Presentation (Real)	1.25	10	8.79	13
Quiz: Reading Practice 1: Skimming (Real)	1.25	10	7.00	14
Quiz: Reading Practice 2: Scanning (Part 1) (Real)	2	10	9.14	11
Quiz: Reading Practice 4: Independent reading (Real)	4	10	9.58	9
Quiz: Reading Practice: Cynthia's Situation (Real)	5	10	9.82	4
Quiz: Reading Practice: Laura's Situation (Real)	8	10	9.94	1
Quiz: Social Media: Connecting With the Audience (Real)	3.75	10	9.63	8
Quiz: Using Contextual Guessing: University Management (Real)	2	10	8.94	12
Quiz: Writing An Email: The Prompt (Real)	6.67	10	9.89	3
Overall mean: 9.38				

Table 6. Descriptions of achievements of the participants *(10 point-rating scale)*

The results of the program's success descriptions based on participants' achievements (10 rating scale points) resulted in an overall average score of 9.38. The indicator of achievement participants who was rated the highest was Quiz: Reading Practice: Laura's Situation (Real), with an average score of 9.94. Furthermore, the lowest participant achievement indicator was Quiz: Reading Practice 1: Skimming (Real), with a mean value of 7.00.

The description of participants' achievements on a tenpoint rating scale based on the average value can be more clearly illustrated in the bar chart as follows:

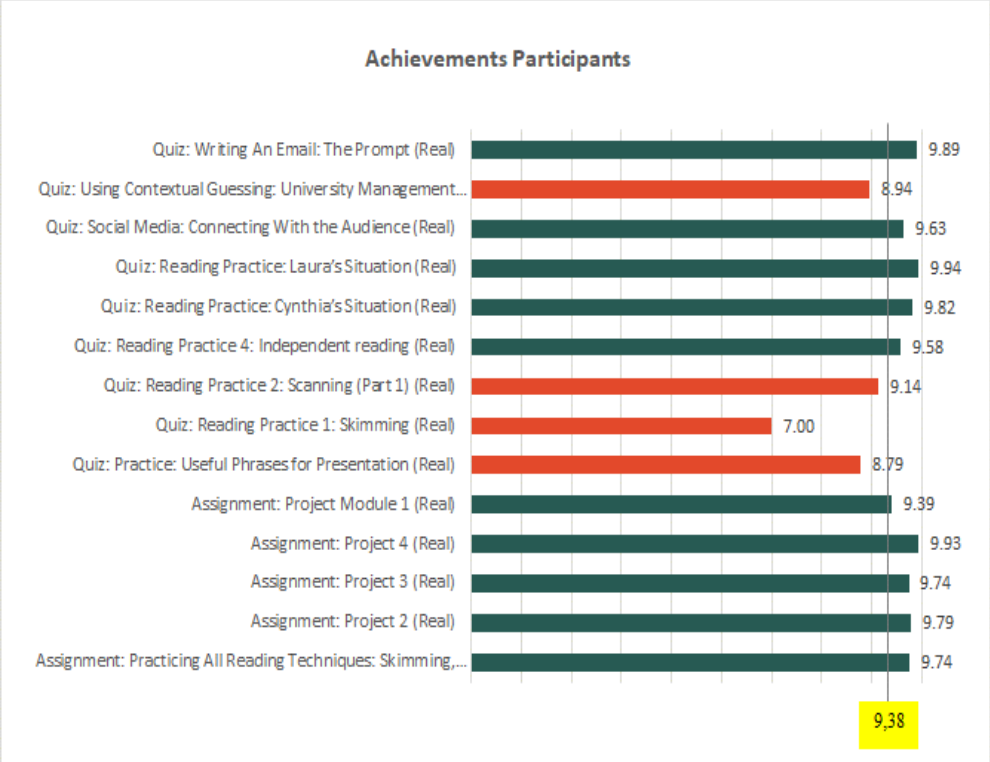

Fig 6. Graphs of Achievements of the Participants (10 poin rating scale)

Figure 6 shows four indicators of program success based on participants' achievements (10 point rating scale), which were below the overall average, namely:

Quiz: Practice: Useful Phrases for Presentation (Real)

Quiz: Reading Practice 1: Skimming (Real)

Quiz: Reading Practice 2: Scanning (Part 1) (Real)

Quiz: Using Contextual Guessing: University Management (Real)

Discussion

5.2 Discussion

Participants' reactions to the course

Participants' reactions to the course indicated that it has some positive aspects that should be maintained. Of the five variables, two variables namely *facilitators* and *course contents* were found to be satisfying. The program satisfied participants' expectations in the way that facilitators provided assessment and feedback, stimulated interest, and assisted participants. This implicitly demonstrates how participants want to be treated. They seem to want facilitators to maintain interaction during online learning and stimulate their interest [3], [22]

Participants responded positively to the *course content*, suggesting that content was suitable for continued implementation. However, the finding reveals a discrepancy between course contents (CC) and course contributions to learning (CL). In contrast to the course contents that were valued as good, the contribution to learning is only fairly good, or perhaps even the lowest value. This contrasts with evidence from several other studies suggesting that the quality of instructional materials will positively correlate with the academic performance of learners (Abdi, 2017; Bukoye, 2019; Modesta, 2013). Ideally speaking, the positive response to the course content should be similar to responses to contributions to participants' learning. This finding needs further investigation into the factors leading to this discrepancy.

Despite receiving a lower than the average value, the online platform (Moodle) was still rated quite highly, indicating that Moodle could be retained for future implementation.

Finally, regarding participants' effort in completing the program, participants performed well when is it was clearly expected but they seemed be less committed to routines and tasks that required persistence. This is consistent with the findings of previous researchers about the attributes of Indonesian learners in learning autonomously [20]. As cited by Ginting[20], Indonesian learners demonstrated a lower degree of autonomy in the way they completed tasks. This common finding suggests that future research in online learning should further consider the role of autonomy as a factor determining success.

Participants' Vocabulary sizes and their course achievements in completing course tasks and project

The pre and post-test results and the scores of the tasks and projects supported several conclusions. First, the course did not help participants to improve their general vocabulary size. Quite bizarrely, participants'vocabularies decreased in the lower levels (i.e., 1000, and 2000 word-levels) but slightly increased in the last three levels (i.e., 3000, 4000, and 5000 word-levels). All and all, the size of participants' vocabularies did not improve during the course, and the course cannot be used to improve vocabulary size.

The other result is derived from the result of participants' achievement in completing the tasks and projects during the course. Some items, including assignments and quizzes, were rated using a ten-point rating scale. These resulted in a 9.3 average, which was quite successful. It suggests that students did not find the assignment and the quiz to be difficult. In the same vein, the tasks that were assessed using four-point rating scale (discussion forum and lesson-based tasks) give a result of 3.58 out of 4, which indicates that participants felt they could successfully contribute to the discussion forum and complete lesson-based tasks.

6 Conclusion

The findings of the present study have common ground with previous research on the implementation of online learning in Indonesia. In further implementation, course content and the way facilitators manage the course can be retained.

However, some factors need further investigation, such as the factors causing the contribution to participants' learning, the role of student autonomy in learning and its correlation with student success. Moreover, the course needs improved methods of vocabulary enhancement. The causes of dropout rate should be examined in further similar studies. In this course, 57% (53 from 90 enrolees) dropped out even though it was part of their employment. This particularly reflects the first variable, that is, participants' effort and commitment to complete the course.

The present study had limited scope to diagnose applicants' language proficiency. Instead of a vocabulary test, applicants should be tested for specific proficiency levels prior to the course. This would enable more accurate description of their development during the course. It could also enable improved selection, which would increase the homogeneity of the cohort so that activates could be better targeted to prevailing proficiency levels. Last, this study used only quantitative data, and more qualitative data are necessary to explore factors contributing to successes and weaknesses.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Department of Development Studies of Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (ITS) Research Grant [grant number**: 1770/PKS/ITS/2022**].
We would thank to Dr. Daniel Ginting from Ma Chung University, Dr. Ross Woods from Worldwide University, Los Angeles, CA, USA; Ms. Niki Raga Tantri from Hebei Foreign Studies University Shijiazhuang Shi, Hebei Province, China for their contributions in the process of developing the program.

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