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(IJEPC)**www.ijepe.com**EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF MICROSOFT
TEAMS AS AN ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM DURING
COVID-19**Nguyen Huu Anh Vuong^{1*}, Le Thi Phuoc Lam²¹ University of Foreign Language Studies, The University of Danang, Vietnam
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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The strict measures of social distance to curb the outbreak of COVID-19 have resulted in the physically prolonged closure of educational institutions. Accordingly, shifting the whole school system to the virtual learning environment via online learning platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams is one of the most prominently favored solutions among the attempts made by governments to guarantee the continuity of the teaching-learning process. The current study aimed at investigating how EFL students perceive the adoption of Microsoft Teams during COVID-19 as well as proposing some suggestions to improve online learning via this platform. The mixed-method design was adopted to fulfil the purposes of the study. The participants include 151 EFL students at a state university in Vietnam. The questionnaire which was developed based on Technology Acceptance Model and the semi-structured interviews were employed as the data collection instruments. The findings indicated that the EFL students' perceptions of Microsoft Teams were generally positive. Also, a large number of suggestions were put forward to educational institutions, teachers and students for better adoption of this online platform in the future.

Keywords:

EFL Students, Online Learning, Microsoft Teams, Technology Acceptance Model, COVID-19

Introduction

Online learning is not new terminology, especially in today's context where technological innovations and advancements have been adapted extensively in the educational field. However, the concept of online-only learning and its prominent roles have just been underscored since the onset of COVID-19. The outbreak of this tragic pandemic has resulted in unprecedented disruptions in all aspects of human lives, including the educational sector. The strict measures of social distances to curb the spread of the virus have brought forth the physically prolonged closure of educational institutions. Hence, the shutdown of face-to-face learning has prompted authorities and academic administrators to find other delivery methods to replace in-person classes. And transforming traditional face-to-face classrooms into virtual ones is one of the most common attempts made by governments to ensure the continuity of learning.

Several preeminent applications and tools have been deployed as online learning platforms to operate the transition process optimally, and Microsoft Teams is recognized as one of the best mediums. This application refers to a digital hub that combines conversations, chats, phone calls, file content, meetings, and applications into one interface (Ilag, 2018). A plethora of studies on the pedagogical benefits that Microsoft Teams offers has been conducted. There is also available research concerning discovering students' perceptions of Microsoft Teams. There remain conflicts in factors impacting the perceptions, the effectiveness of Microsoft Teams compared to other platforms, and especially the intention to continue adopting this platform even if the pandemic could stop. Despite the undeniable benefits that Microsoft Teams offers, there are several problematic issues encountered by students that need to be considered.

Therefore, it is crucial to explore students' perceptions of this platform to propose suitable strategies for its effective adoption in online teaching and learning. Additionally, although the scenario of only-online learning via Microsoft Teams in Viet Nam is still a new experience for students, there are few studies on this topic. However, no researcher has focused on employing the TAM model to evaluate undergraduate EFL students' attitudes towards this platform yet. The above-mentioned reasons motivated us to conduct the research project that aimed at using the TAM model to investigate EFL students' perceptions of the adoption of Microsoft Teams as an online learning platform during COVID-19. To address the purpose, the guiding questions for the study were as follows:

1. How do EFL students perceive Microsoft Teams as an online learning platform during COVID-19?
2. What should be done to improve EFL students' online learning process via Microsoft Teams?

Literature Review

Online Learning

The term online learning has become a focus of research in the education field for ages. According to Urduan and Weggen (2000), online learning is assumed as a subset of distance learning and demands sets of technologies to implement. Yusuf (2005) stated that online learning is one of the most common ways of adopting ICT in education via web-based systems.

While face-to-face classroom settings have been condemned for fostering passive learning, neglecting personal differences and needs, not encouraging problem-solving, critical thinking, (Hannum & Briggs, 1982; Banathy, 1994), the arrival of online learning has been extolled as a break-through approach since it facilitates organizing learning activities in a new way (Webster & Hackey, 1997). Only learning is not exclusively concentrated on the only online contexts but also consists of the comprehensive educational program, computer-aided learning platforms, methods of delivery, genres and formats of media and the use of media across discipline areas (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010). After weighing the benefits and drawbacks of online learning, Bartley and Golek (2004) concluded that the pros of online learning are very genuine. The pros of online learning are very genuine, comprising the highly effective cost, the ease and speed of course materials being updated (Bartley & Golek, 2004) and the improvement of ICT skills among students (Weiner, 2003).

Although online learning is considered a panacea for the crisis of COVID-19, it has been criticized by a large number of scientists and researchers. Grosse (2004) and Lorenzetti (2004) supposed that the time and effort demanded to develop online courses and to learn new technologies depress both educators and learners. Likewise, the amount of money invested in developing or getting licenses for the online platform is enormous. In tune with this, Nkonge and Gueldenzoph (2006), in their study, mentioned the lack of release time for instructors to develop and design their online courses. They also put forward some obstacles to online learning, including inadequate hardware and software, poor Internet connections, and a lack of technical expertise among instructors and learners.

As an Asian country, the transition to online learning in Vietnam has resulted in several difficulties for learners, even EFL students. As EFL students, learners are likely to be familiar with ICT tools, software, and applications as they are required to make presentations and complete project-based assignments. Along with this, the concept of hybrid learning has existed for ages in many universities' curricula in Vietnam. However, the scenario of only-online learning and using a virtual learning platform for synchronous learning are still new experiences and challenges for almost all students.

Microsoft Teams as an Online Learning Platform

Launched by Microsoft in 2017, Microsoft Teams refers to a digital hub that combines conversations, chats, phone calls, file content, meetings, and applications into a single Learning Management System (Ilag, 2018). Buchal and Songsore (2019) revealed that this customizable collaboration platform offers similar but more advanced functionality, such as video conferencing, collaborative conversation, file sharing and upload, compared to other social channels. Microsoft Teams is labelled as an open and appropriate virtual platform for implementing face-to-face, hybrid, and online learning. It allows actual time and instructive communication and collaboration (Poston et al., 2019). Nemeč et al. (2020) declared that Microsoft Teams facilitate synchronous and asynchronous learning and allow lecturers to create an online class so that learners and lecturers can interact and collaborate.

Microsoft Teams is outstanding and instinctive because it appeals to students and can be accessed utilizing technological instruments such as computers, notepads, or mobile phones (Nemeč et al., 2020). Also, Microsoft Teams is available for the web client, desktop client, and mobile apps for iOS devices, Android devices, and Windows Phones and supports the synchronized accessibility of two and more clients simultaneously (Ilag, 2018). Concerning the

shreds of evidence for ease of use and user-friendliness, Microsoft Teams enables students to listen to audio and video files of online lectures and materials during sessions and rewatch the recordings to review and have a deeper understanding of the topic (Taghizadeh & Hajhosseini, 2020; Jose & Blessy, 2022).

Ilag (2018) classified the features of Microsoft Teams into different categories, including conversations and chats; Teams call and meetings; Teams for teamwork; customized Teams; keeping everything secure and SharePoint, OneDrive, and Exchange interaction. Almodaires et al. (2021) recognized Microsoft Teams as a tool for interactive learning and a tool for collaboration, and feedback. The utilization of Microsoft Teams employs virtual sessions as the primary means of delivering online lectures. However, the learning environment not only depends on instance audio, video, chat and content sharing but is also associated with other multitasks. Nemec et al. (2020) stated that Microsoft Teams is probably asserted as an interactive tool due to its features which allow students to complete their homework assignments, quizzes, and group projects, and record lectures to not fall behind the lessons.

The adoption of Microsoft Teams in teaching and learning has been a topic drawing much attention from researchers. Alabay (2018) pointed out that the distance learning process and online examinations via Microsoft Teams had been more effective and successful than traditional ones. Gohiya and Gohiya (2020) examined Indian learners enrolled in online courses through Microsoft Teams and discovered that most of the students were pleasant with online discussion activities and could absorb the lessons plainly. Similarly, Almodaires, Almutairi, and Almsaud (2020) indicated that the adoption of virtual learning platforms such as Microsoft Teams had a critical impact on their self-studying and academic performance.

A qualitative study by Rababah et al. (2020) revealed the advantages and grey areas of using Microsoft Teams from students' points of view. Convenience, time efficiency, and shared learning resources were reported to be the benefits that this learning platform brought; meanwhile, the drawbacks include some troubles related to technology and difficulties when completing particular types of assignments. Also, Rojabi (2020) discovered that even though adopting Microsoft Teams was a new experience for students, their comprehension of the learning materials was improved due to the motivations given by the online interactions through this learning environment.

Wea and Kuki (2021), in their research project, reported students' behavioral intentions to continue employing this online learning platform for their future study and the hopes for some valuable improvements for a more effective and efficient learning environment. A similar study by Kashoob and Attamimi (2021) demonstrated that Microsoft Teams motivated learners to study English via a complicated framework; however, the researched students' level of motivation was not high. The study by Alameri et al. (2020) revealed that students had a positive perspective on Microsoft Teams. Notably, the results indicated that its quality, user-friendliness, and varied functionalities were the key terms that led to Microsoft Teams' recognition as an effective virtual learning platform. Besides, they agreed that this tool played a vital role in fostering interactions and receiving and providing feedback. However, they perceived that when compared to other devices, Microsoft Teams was not appropriate for independent learning and collaborative learning.

Concerning Microsoft Teams' adoption by Vietnamese educational institutions, the study by Tran (2020) showed students' optimistic attitudes toward using Microsoft Teams to implement online learning. Additionally, nine types of barriers when employing Microsoft Teams for writing classes were put forward in the study by Bui (2021). Psychological problems were elaborated on and underscored, along with technical troubles. Another study carried out by Duong and Nguyen (2021) to analyze hindrances encountered by EFL students when enrolling in online classes demonstrated that external variables and problems from the learners' consciousness would influence their learning process via Microsoft Teams. Although Microsoft Teams has been employed widely in Vietnam, there are few studies on this learning platform. Accordingly, the current research aimed at using the TAM model to investigate EFL students' perceptions of the adoption of Microsoft Teams as an online learning platform during COVID-19.

Technology Acceptance Model: Theoretical Framework to Investigate Students' Perceptions of Microsoft Teams

Developed in 1989 by Davis and his colleagues (1989), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a favorable model utilized widely by researchers to evaluate the variables that affect a person's technology acceptance and explain users' acceptance behavior. The original TAM was derived from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). This model contains six constructs: external variables, perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), attitude toward using (ATU), behavioral intention to use (BI) and actual system use (ASU). Davis (1989) posited that PU refers to a person's trust that using technology helps enhance his or her job performance. PEOU is defined as a person's assessment that using technology involves less effort (Davis, 1989). ATU means an individual's positive or negative feelings about carrying out the intended attitudes when applying a given system (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The extent to which certain technology users have developed a plan of intent to continue utilizing or not utilizing a particular technology with their future behavior is referred to as behavioral intention to use (Davis, 1989). Finally, ASU is termed as the extent of a particular technology's usage implementation in terms of frequency and measured volume. Figure 1 demonstrates TAM.

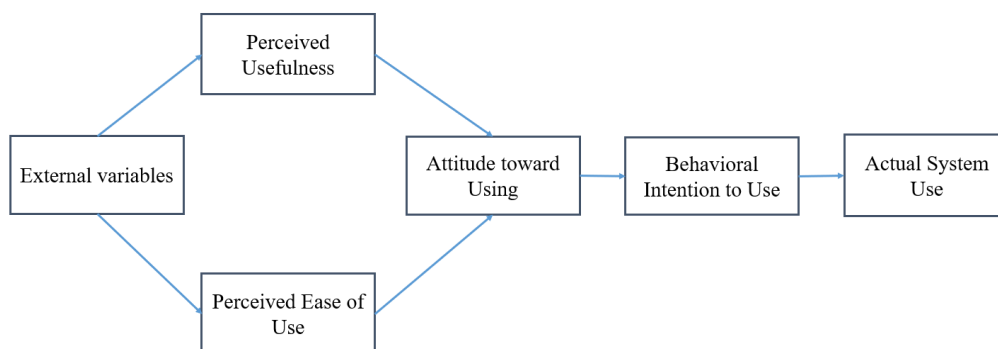


Figure 1: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989)

Chen, Li and Li (2012) evaluated that TAM is more robust and parsimonious and better suited to use in online settings than TRA. TAM aims not just for prediction but also for an explanation, assisting investigators in determining why a system may be unsatisfactory. Its simplicity and ease of administration are other factors that motivate researchers to adopt TAM. With the view

to suiting the context of their studies, researchers eliminated and modified variables to establish the extended versions of TAM. In the current study, the researcher adopted the questionnaire developed by Huang et al. (2012) based on the original version of TAM by Davis (1989) as the fundamental conceptual framework to investigate the students' perceptions of Microsoft Teams as an online learning platform.

Methodology

Research Methods

Mixed method research is defined as an approach to inquiry that associates or combines both qualitative and quantitative constructs. Not only does this type of research help in collecting and analyzing data, but it also betters the overall strength of the study compared to qualitative or quantitative research (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Therefore, to address the research questions, the current study employed the sequential explanatory mix-method design as suggested by Creswell (2013).

Participants

The study was carried out at University of Foreign Language Studies, the University of Da Nang (UFLS-UD), a state university in Vietnam. The population of the study was EFL students ranging from freshmen to seniors who had used Microsoft Teams for at least one semester in their learning program. The participants who were involved in the quantitative data collection phase consisted of 151 EFL students randomly sampled from the population. After that, 20 students were selected from these respondents to participate in the qualitative data collection phase.

Research Instruments

In the present study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered to answer the research questions. The questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary data collection instruments. The questionnaire adapted from the one by Huang et al. (2012) involved 17 items that were developed based on the TAM model. The participants were required to reflect on their extent of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale. Besides, semi-structured interviews were carried out via Microsoft Teams to triangulate the quantitative results and gain in-depth information. The researcher conducted the interviews in English with 20 students randomly selected from the questionnaire's respondents and recorded the answers with their permission.

Data Analysis

In mixed methods research, the type of research strategy determines the data analysis procedure (Creswell, 2009). When using the explanatory sequential mixed method design, researchers can analyze the quantitative and qualitative separately and then compare them. This design also enables the researcher to reinforce the results and authenticate findings (Creswell, 2013).

In the first phase of data analysis, the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires (N=151) were calculated by SPSS. After that, the researchers reported descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and frequency) in tables and described the analysis in detail under the constructs of TAM. Then, the thematic content analysis method was utilized to analyze the qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. The researcher initially examined all the interview answers and transcribed them carefully, and then re-read the data

and wrote them down in the notes. After finishing this process for all data, the researcher compiled a list of all topics, clustered together similar subjects and turned them into codes. These codes were grouped and eliminated based on their relevance to the topic, and then put into the final list. The responses from each participant were combined, and the example quotes were compiled for each theme. Finally, the themes were compared with the quantitative analysis to triangulate and demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the connection between the two stages of data.

Findings

EFL Students' Perception of Microsoft Teams

The results from the quantitative data analysis indicated that the majority of participants had positive perceptions regarding the adoption of Microsoft Teams as an online learning platform during COVID-19. The detailed findings are presented in the following sections in accordance with each construct of the TAM model.

System Characteristics

Table 1: EFL Students' Perceptions of the Adoption of Microsoft Teams under the Construct of System Characteristics

| Items | M | S.D. | Frequency | | | | |
|---|------|------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1. I think that Microsoft Teams can provide learning activities in a real environment. | 3.39 | .97 | 6 (4%) | 19 (12.6%) | 51 (33.8%) | 60 (39.7%) | 15 (9.9%) |
| 2. I think that Microsoft Teams can provide a simulated learning environment. | 3.63 | .18 | 3 (2%) | 10 (6.6%) | 44 (29.1%) | 81 (53.6%) | 13 (8.6%) |
| 3. I think that I can use Microsoft Teams to interact with teachers and peers to learn. | 3.93 | .94 | 5 (3.7%) | 4 (3%) | 22 (15.6%) | 86 (51.1%) | 34 (26.7%) |

As presented in Table 1, responses to the system characteristics were mostly positive. The qualitative data circulated the quantitative one, as some students reflected on their own experience with the system characteristics of Microsoft Teams:

I2: When I want to express my ideas, I type the texts in the chat box or click on the raise hand button, then turn on my microphone. For discussion activities, I often go to the break-out room teachers divided and interact with my peers.

I3: I can still make presentations by sharing the screen and audio when learning online via Microsoft Teams.

*Material Characteristics***Table 2: EFL Students' Perceptions of the Adoption of Microsoft Teams under the Construct of Material Characteristics**

| Items | M | S.D. | Frequency | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 4. I think that online meetings can lead to a better understanding of the lessons. | 3.04 | .91 | 4 (2.6%) | 37 (24.5%) | 68 (45%) | 32 (21.2%) | 10 (6.6%) |
| 5. I think that online meetings can help me immerse in the learning atmosphere. | 3.5 | .93 | 2 (1.3%) | 21 (13.9%) | 45 (29.8%) | 63 (41.7%) | 19 (12.6%) |
| 6. I think that online meetings are useful for learning. | 3.77 | .78 | 2 (1.3%) | 5 (3.3%) | 40 (26.5%) | 82 (54.3%) | 22 (14.6%) |

The descriptive data in Table 2 revealed that the students' attitudes towards online meetings were mainly positive. Many investigated participants assumed that online meetings could help them immerse themselves in the learning atmosphere. Besides, many participants validated the usefulness of online meetings for learning. Notably, concerning the fourth item, a majority of respondents indicated that the online meetings could not lead to a better understanding of the lessons. The interviewees put forward some explanations:

17: As the procedures are similar to face-to-face classes, I do not see any differences in how I absorb the content of the lessons.

19: Online meetings are just the platform that helps make the learning process happen. It does not enhance my comprehension.

Interestingly, the recording function was reflected to solve the troubles caused by the Internet connection. The students found this function was one of the most effective tools of Microsoft Teams.

15: There are many times I cannot focus on the lessons, but thanks to the records, I can keep up with the knowledge.

*Perceived Ease of Use***Table 3: EFL Students' Perceptions of the Adoption of Microsoft Teams under the Construct of System Characteristics**

| Items | M | S.D. | Frequency | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 7. I think that Microsoft Teams can provide clear guidance information. | 3.68 | .80 | 2 (1.3%) | 11 (7.3%) | 35 (23.2%) | 89 (58.9%) | 14 (9.3%) |
| 8. I think that the operation of Microsoft Teams does not require too much time. | 3.61 | .92 | 5 (3.3%) | 14 (9.2%) | 32 (21.2%) | 83 (55.0%) | 17 (11.3%) |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-----|-------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 9. I feel that learning to use Microsoft Teams is easy. | 3.78 | .83 | 5 (3.3%) | 9 (6%) | 28 (18.5%) | 81 (48.9%) | 28 (18.5%) |
|---|------|-----|-------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|

Generally, the results revealed in Table 3 indicated that respondents' perceptions under the construct of Perceived Ease of Use were highly positive. The qualitative data underscored the descriptive results. Nearly all the interviewees said that they only needed 3-4 days to learn how to use this application, as two of them shared:

I6: Microsoft Teams is designed for a low-tech person like me. I need a few minutes to become familiar with its user-friendly interface.

I10: It did not take me much time to read the guidance and get used to the interface and features. I think Microsoft Teams is convenient and easy to use. It allows me to multitask.

Although the students sometimes encountered technological troubles, including Internet connection, electronic device failure modes, and some minor bugs in Microsoft Teams, they found it easy to use this platform in general, as some commented:

I3: When I use Microsoft Teams on my phone and laptop at the same time, the sound will echo.

I5: At times, when I share the screen, the slides are lagged even though the internet connection is quite stable.

I9: I often have problems with my microphone. Despite turning on my mic, my classmates and teachers cannot hear what I am saying, which is rather disrupting.

Perceived Usefulness

Table 4: EFL Students' Perceptions of the Adoption of Microsoft Teams under the Construct of Perceived Usefulness

| Items | M | S.D. | Frequency | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 10. I think that Microsoft Teams can improve my online learning process. | 3.7 | .83 | 4 (2.6%) | 5 (3.3%) | 47 (31.1%) | 76 (50.3%) | 19 (12.6%) |
| 11. I think that Microsoft Teams can enhance my desire to study. | 3.58 | .94 | 3 (2%) | 13 (8.6%) | 54 (35.8%) | 55 (36.4%) | 26 (17.2%) |
| 12. I think that Microsoft Teams can improve my outcomes about learning. | 3.58 | .85 | 2 (1.3%) | 13 (8.6%) | 49 (32.5%) | 70 (46.4%) | 17 (11.3%) |

The descriptive data analysis showed positive results when it comes to participants' perceptions under the construct of perceived usefulness. The result was confirmed by the qualitative data in the semi-structured interview:

I8: When studying online on Microsoft Teams, I was engaged in the lesson more since the teachers provided us with a lot of group and pair work.

Most students indicated that their learning outcomes became better.

I11: I find more confidence in expressing my opinions because teachers usually allow me to write down my ideas in Padlet or Jamboard.

I15: My computer skills and academic results are also improved a lot.

Additionally, two interviewees shared that some uncomfortable experiences when using Microsoft Teams may affect their desire to study:

I3: Sitting in front of the screen for hours triggers health issues such as nausea and backache.

I9: Sitting and talking to the computer for a long time lose my sense of concentration and makes me feel lonely and isolated.

Attitude toward Using

Table 5: EFL Students' Perceptions of the Adoption of Microsoft Teams under the Construct of Attitude toward Using

| Items | M | S.D. | Frequency | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 13. I like using Microsoft Teams for my study. | 3.64 | .82 | 3 (2%) | 9 (6%) | 42 (27.8%) | 82 (54.3%) | 15 (9.9%) |
| 14. I have a positive attitude toward using Microsoft Teams for online learning. | 3.86 | .66 | 2 (1.3%) | 0 (0%) | 33 (21.9%) | 98 (64.9%) | 18 (11.9%) |
| 15. I feel that using Microsoft Teams to learn is a good method. | 3.74 | .77 | 2 (1.3%) | 5 (3.3%) | 42 (27.8%) | 82 (54.4%) | 20 (13.2%) |

Table 5 shows that the students generally had positive attitudes towards using this online platform. They liked employing Microsoft Teams, had a positive attitude toward this platform and felt it was a good method. During the interviews, there were some noteworthy reflections by the students:

I13: The implementation of Microsoft Teams helped ensure the continuity of my learning during the lockdown. Additionally, interviewees underscored the features that Microsoft Teams outweigh other virtual platforms:

I15: Microsoft Teams combines all features into one interface and display the dashboard. The course organization is professional and familiar with standard learning systems at the university. I can also receive notifications of the courses.

*Behavioral Intention to Use***Table 6: EFL Students' Perceptions of the Adoption of Microsoft Teams under the Construct of Behavioral Intention to Use**

| Items | M | S.D. | Frequency | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 16. I intend to continue using Microsoft Teams for my study. | 3.74 | .73 | 1 (0.7%) | 6 (4.0%) | 41 (27.2%) | 87 (57.6%) | 16 (10.6%) |
| 17. I intend to use Microsoft Teams for my study frequently. | 3.42 | .92 | 3 (2.0%) | 19 (12.6%) | 58 (38.4%) | 54 (35.8%) | 17 (11.3%) |

Table 6 illustrates the descriptive data from the questionnaire concerning examined participants' perceptions of behavioral intention to use. It is clear that most EFL students intended to continue using and use Microsoft Teams frequently for their study. The results of the semi-structured interviews consolidated the quantitative data. The interviewees elaborated on some outstanding reasons:

I6: My tuition fees and travel expenses were decreased since the university adopted online learning.

I10: I got used to learning online and prefer it to traditional classes.

How to Improve EFL Students' Online Learning Process via Microsoft Teams

During the semi-structured interviews, the students provided several suggestions for improving online learning via Microsoft Teams. When it comes to their expectations for the university, first and foremost, EFL students hoped that for the courses requiring a large number of practices, the university should split the class into smaller classes to ensure the interactions between teachers and learners, as one student explained:

I10: Sometimes, not all students in the class have the chance to interact with the teacher, so I think it would be better if the class includes fewer students.

Besides, more money should be invested in upgrading supplementary functions for students' accounts, such as recording lessons and break-out room functions so that they could make use of all Microsoft Teams features. One student indicated:

I3: The university should spend more money to buy the licences for students' accounts.

In terms of suggestions for teachers to control the class and maintain discipline, the students recommended that they should check attendance regularly to ensure that students are paying attention to the lessons and ask them to turn on the camera during the lessons, as emphasized by one student:

I18: Asking students to turn on their cameras is my suggestion for the teachers. It is also easier for teachers to interact with the students.

Some students also wished that the lecturers should pay more attention to the length of the lessons. The lectures should have interactive activities employing Jamboard and Padlet more

frequently to keep the students engaged and help them have better ICT skills. Additionally, the lecturers can offer more plus marks to encourage them to express their ideas and make the learning atmosphere more energetic. Two interviewees stated that:

I8: My class often keeps silent during online lessons, but when the teacher promises to give plus marks, everyone becomes more eager.

I11: Plus marks motivate us to volunteer to do the tasks.

Moreover, for a long lesson, the students hoped that there should be break time during the lectures to prevent tiredness and boredom, as explained by the following interviewee:

I3: My eyesight is not good, so I wish I could have a break after staring at the screen for a while.

Regarding the recommendations for students, it was revealed that students should take what their lecturers ask seriously, join the meetings on time, and try to be active during the lessons by volunteering to express their ideas.

I9: When learning online, the interactions are lessened, so I think other students should try to raise their hands as much as possible.

It is also essential that students stay away from distractions and find a quiet space with a stable Internet connection for study. The interviewees stated that the group work which was conducted online is genuinely complicated and requires tremendous effort, so they hope that other students should be more responsible when completing online assignments together.

I4: Some teammates were irresponsible when doing project-based assignments, so we had to complain to the teacher.

I7: Since we cannot meet face-to-face to discuss ideas, I hope that other students will concentrate more when we are in online meetings.

Discussion

Implementing Microsoft Teams as an online learning platform generally gained positive perceptions from most EFL students. They concurred that Microsoft Teams guaranteed their continuity of learning during Covid 19. This platform also provided them with a simulated learning environment in which the pedagogical procedures were similar to the classes in the flesh. These findings were aligned with those indicated by Wea and Kuki (2020) and Almodaires et al. (2021).

Keerthana (2020) assumed that the continuity of the implementation of Microsoft Teams after the lockdown was still a debt. Nevertheless, the present study contradicted this finding when reporting students' expectations to continue using this platform for their study even if the pandemic could stop, which was in accordance with the study by Wea and Kuki (2020). On the whole, these consistencies once again confirmed and emphasized this platform's excellent dominance and positive plots for online learning. The findings also reflected the positive effects of online learning on students, including cost-effectiveness, time-saving, better ICT skills and improved shyness, which was in agreement with those by Bartley and Golek (2004) and Weiner (2003). Additionally, the study verified the views by Ilag (2018) and Buchal and Songsore (2019) in terms of Microsoft Teams' features of assessments.

The piece of results demonstrated detailed explanations of better academic performances and higher outcomes concerning learning. The investigation of Alabay (2018) reflected the same finding. These findings confirmed the conclusions of Gee (2007) on ICT's roles in learning quality. On the other hand, the present study's results conflicted with Rojabi (2020). It was reported in the research that Microsoft Teams could not boost students' desire to learn due to some unpleasant experiences. Furthermore, a fraction of the findings was advocated by Clark (1983), who concluded that media are the vehicles delivering instruction, but they do not have an impact on students' attainment.

Similar to the aforementioned studies' findings, such as the one by Alabay (2021), the current study demonstrated that external variables and problems from the learners' consciousness would influence their learning via Microsoft Teams. Those optimistic attitudes and unfavorable perspectives resulted from some uncomfortable experiences with technological problems. However, EFL students at UFLS-UD supposed that these subjective problems could be curbed due to the effectiveness of the recording lesson function. By contrast, Alameri et al. (2020) proved that a suitable strategic design was more significant than personal context variables. The conflict might result from the fact that the University of Jordan employed three different virtual platforms, so the uniformity of curricula was not ensured; meanwhile, Microsoft Teams was the only adopted platform at UFLS-UD.

The study by Alabay (2021) revealed that pre-service teachers asserted Microsoft Teams as inappropriate for independent and collaborative learning compared to other applications. Nonetheless, the students in the current research widely favored Microsoft Teams rather than other online platforms. This finding was in line with Buchal and Songsore (2019) and Namachivayam (2021). Similarly, Pal and Vanijjia (2020) explained that Microsoft Teams outweighed other platforms because it provided more functions and incorporated all the features into one single application. Zoom or Google Meet provide similar tools but these platforms' system organization does not allow educators to establish a dashboard that comprises all the courses in learners' curriculum.

Last but not least, the study discovered several valuable suggestions from EFL students' viewpoints. Clearly, the fractions of the findings were consistent with previous research and even yielded more in-depth and novel results. Poston and Richardson (2020) assumed that the quality of online courses could be improved by reducing the class size. This finding was duplicated in the present study, and interviewees in the semi-structured shared the corresponding ideas. The most significant issue of online learning was the fear of the lack of interaction. Smaller classes were believed to settle the problems because they facilitated teachers to control the discipline, ensure student interactions, and provide frequent feedback. Also, in small classes, learners had more opportunities to engage in practice activities and flexibly asked for help from lecturers.

The findings suggested that teachers should master the ICT skills to assist their students in overcoming technological troubles and facilitating all features of Microsoft Teams to conduct online teaching. Besides, teachers can integrate other ICT tools and give constructive feedback frequently to keep students engaged in the lessons and avoid demotivating them. It is necessary for teachers to listen to students' wishes and expectations to formulate better teaching strategies. The teachers can also encourage students by giving them plus marks for complicated

questions or valuable contributions during the lessons. These suggestions were aligned with Tu and Phung (2021).

There were some novel discoveries the study obtained. The remarkable role of the recording function and break-out room were emphasized to aid students in grasping knowledge and conquering hindrances of online learning. Students put forward the idea of requiring students to turn on their cameras all the time to maintain discipline and prevent them from distractions. Additionally, they proposed their expectations about the teacher's time management and presented why they expected that. On top of that, some sensitive and unmentioned aspects such as punctuality and the responsibility of their peers for collaborative work were also underscored.

Conclusions

The investigation yielded an array of absorbing results. The findings revealed the positive perceptions of EFL students at UFLS-UD of Microsoft Teams as an online learning platform during COVID-19. Their behavioral intention to use is expected to motivate educational institutions to consider adopting hybrid learning via this platform even during the post-Covid 19 period. The study also suggested several suggestions that should be used to improve the online learning process via Microsoft Teams. The majority of students suggested that there should be an upgrade in the recording and break-out room function. Many respondents argued that lecturers should ask students to turn on the camera during the lessons and check their attendance regularly. Lastly, it was supposed by the investigated interviewees that students should be well-prepared for the lessons and be responsible for group work.

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