

EFL teachers' online teacher professional development experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic: Practices and perceptions

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Manuscript received March 8, 2021, revised June 2, 2021, first published November 1, 2021, and available online November 7, 2021. DOI: 10.22373/ej.v9i1.9127

Recommended APA Citation

Atmojo, A. E. P. (2021). EFL teachers' online teacher professional development experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic: Practices and perceptions. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 9(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v9i1.9127>

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the EFL teachers' practices and perceptions of online teacher professional development (OTPD) experiences to improve their competencies for teaching online language learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. 42 EFL teachers voluntarily became the participants through invitation. All participants were requested to give responses on a questionnaire. Eight participants were then invited for an individual semi-structured interview. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the questionnaire data, whilst qualitative coding was used to analyse the interview data. The results reveal many important findings regarding EFL teachers' practices and perceptions of experiencing OTPD amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings are beneficial to help OTPD designers and providers, policy makers, and school leaders provide OTPD which best fits EFL teachers' needs, preferences, and teaching contexts.

Keywords: *EFL teachers; Online language learning; Online teacher professional development; Professional development; COVID-19 pandemic*

1. Introduction

Over recent decades, excellent teaching and professional development (PD) aimed to improve student learning outcomes have become important and relevant for teachers (Powell & Bodur, 2019). The development of teacher quality is essential to enhance the quality of education (Borg, 2018). However, problems related to PD arise within the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) context. These problems

come from the lack of knowledge about the planning of PD, the unknowingness about the different types and quality of PD, and the ignorance of local EFL teachers' thoughts about PD initiatives (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019).

Nowadays, it has been well-informed that the COVID-19 pandemic spreads throughout the world and brings impacts on education. Teachers must then be prepared to deal with the postponement of face-to-face classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic or other emergencies (Moorhouse, 2020). Fortunately, the advancement of technology makes teaching and learning a second or foreign language online possible, gradually without face-to-face meetings (Shin & Kang, 2018). Teachers are then migrating to online learning to maintain students' engagement in learning. It significantly increases teachers' workloads since it is not only about moving teaching materials into an online learning environment, but also about employing required applications (Allen, Rowan, & Singh, 2020).

These shifts to teaching basically depend on teachers' support and involvement (Adnan, 2018). The switch from face-to-face classes into online learning requires teachers to acquire new roles and competencies. Teachers are necessarily equipped with knowledge and skills to successfully perform teaching through online technologies. PD is critical to assisting online teachers in mastering new pedagogies, adjusting to new roles, acquiring necessary competencies, and reconstructing their identity in an online learning environment (Adnan, 2018).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, language learning is forced to be fully online in a completely unpredictable situation. Lots of problems related to online language learning appear from students, teachers, and students' parents. Teachers have to improve their qualifications and equip themselves with the required knowledge and skills to enhance the quality of their teaching performance in the online learning environment. Thus, research on professional development regarding the use of technology in language learning is recommended (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Although research and best practices related to online language learning are numerous, references about how to prepare language teachers for teaching in an online learning environment and the competencies required for teaching in this environment are rarely found (Compton, 2009). In spite of the recent online learning movement and expanding interest in OTPD, a lack of knowledge about how teachers perceive online PD experiences, how they implement what they have learned, and what experiences they prefer still exists. To obtain insights and guidance for providing online PD, research addressing the aforementioned lack of knowledge is encouraged (Parsons et al., 2019).

In view of the importance and many challenges faced by EFL teachers in teaching within an online learning environment amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its prospects for future education, this research attempts to discover EFL teachers' practices and perceptions of their OTPD experiences to improve their competencies in teaching through an online learning environment amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Drawing on questionnaire and interview data from a group of secondary

school teachers, this research contributes novel findings to the fields of teacher professional development (TPD), online teacher professional development (OTPD), and online language learning (OLL) about how EFL teachers develop their competencies for teaching within an online learning environment amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. It sheds some light on the required skills, types of activities, needed facilities, frequency, and impacts of the OTPD on the EFL teachers' competencies for teaching online language learning.

Eventually, this research tries to investigate the EFL teachers' practices and perceptions of their OTPD experiences to improve their competencies for teaching online language learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. This research is situated in Indonesia, which ranks in the second place among linguistically diverse countries globally. Indonesia has become one of the most prospective markets for English language teaching (ELT). English is also taught as a compulsory subject in secondary schools (Zein, 2019). In fact, English is often employed in classrooms, but rarely used in daily communication. It is determined as a foreign language in Indonesia. If EFL teachers ignore their proficiency after receiving formal training and education, their proficiency can gradually decrease as time goes by (Wulyani, Elgort, & Coxhead, 2019). This research brings implied benefits for teacher professional development organizers about how OTPD should be provided to enhance EFL teachers' competencies for teaching online without face-to-face meeting. Therefore, this research is led by two research questions as follows: (1) How do Indonesian EFL teachers engage themselves in OTPD to improve their competencies for teaching online language learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic? (2) How do Indonesian EFL teachers perceive their OTPD experiences in improving their competencies for teaching online language learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. Literature review

Professional development (PD) is basically perceived as teachers' common growth. It usually caters to a long-term goal and helps teachers grow their understanding of teaching and themselves as teachers (Richards & Farrell, 2005). PD consists of many activities designed to improve teachers' competence. It is very strategic to improve teachers' quality. It is also possible to be undertaken in many forms, starting from informal, simple, and individual activities such as reading professional articles to formal, well-organized, and large-scale activities held by institutions and organizations such as Ministries of Education (Borg, 2018).

Recently, online PD is increasingly flourishing. Thriving technologies enable novel and various forms of PD (Parsons et al., 2019). The advancement of technology has allowed language teachers all over the world to obtain professional development credentials and academic degrees online (Shin & Kang, 2018). Online teacher professional development (OTPD) is then prospective for enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies through flexible, low-cost, and large-scale

alternatives on a wide-range of topics. It refers to teacher professional development provided in the form of courses, seminars, workshops, discussions, resources, and other forms within an online environment, synchronously, asynchronously, or blended through websites, blogs, wikis, podcasts, social media, and other platforms. However, excellent outcomes are not guaranteed by just having access to OTPD. Technology will not be effectively employed if it is only utilized as a medium of delivery and ignores effective design or implementation principles (Powell & Bodur, 2019).

3. Method

3.1. Research context and design

This research employed a mixed-method approach by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This approach was selected in order to scrutinize this phenomenon under both quantitative and qualitative perspectives to obtain more comprehensive insights.

3.2. Participants

The participants were 42 EFL teachers at both state and private secondary schools in Indonesia. At minimum, all the teachers own a bachelor degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Some of them have also pursued teacher professional education programs and obtained master's degrees. Their teaching experiences range from 1 to 30 years. 42 EFL teachers (called T1–T42) volunteered to become participants in this research through an invitation. There were 50 invitations. However, 8 of the invitations were rejected. All the participants had signed consent before this research was carried out.

3.3. Data collection

The participants were requested to give responses on a questionnaire including a list of questions (8 closed-ended items and 2 open-ended items) regarding their practices and perceptions of OTPD experiences to enhance their competencies for teaching online amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. As a follow-up, eight of the 42 participants (i.e., T7, T12, T18, T21, T28, T33, T36, and T41) were involved in a semi-structured interview individually since they provided valuable information in their responses toward the questionnaire which were feasible for further inquiry. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes for each participant. The participants were asked to share and explain in detail their practices and perceptions of OTPD experiences, which they undertook as an attempt to improve their competencies for teaching online amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the participants were also guided to reflect on the impacts brought about by the OTPD and the valid reasons behind them. The interviews were recorded in audio format and made into transcripts to allow data analysis.

3.4. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyse the questionnaire data, whilst qualitative coding was employed to analyse the interview data. In light of the research questions and current literature about OTPD (e.g., Powell & Bodur, 2019), the interview data were conscientiously reviewed and significant codes reflecting the EFL teachers' practices and perceptions of their OTPD experiences aiming to improve their competencies for teaching online amidst the COVID-19 pandemic were recognized. The impacts of OTPD and the valid reasons along with the most impactful activities were also reported to discover the EFL teachers' perceptions deeply. The interview data analysis results were obtained after making comparison, revision, and integration to discover key themes. The results of questionnaire and interview data analysis were finally displayed and discussed in details to give answers on each research question as follows: (1) How do Indonesian EFL teachers engage themselves in OTPD to improve their competencies for teaching online language learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic? (2) How do Indonesian EFL teachers perceive their OTPD experiences in improving their competencies for teaching online language learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic? To ensure the validity of this research, methodological triangulation was employed by carrying out the interviews after the questionnaire had been responded to by all the participants (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

4. Findings and discussion

This section presents the research results into two key themes regarding the EFL teachers' practices and perceptions of their OTPD experiences to improve their competencies for teaching online language learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the questionnaire are reported in descriptive statistics. Drawing on the interview data, the most typical excerpts are selected to represent each key theme.

4.1. EFL teachers' practices to engage themselves in OTPD

Drawing on the questionnaire data, the EFL teachers engage themselves in various OTPD activities, ranging from informal activities such as having informal conversations with colleagues through the internet or mobile network, to formal activities such as participating in a webinar. There are a total of 18 activities offered in the questionnaire. In detail, what activities carried out by the 42 EFL teachers are presented in the following chart.

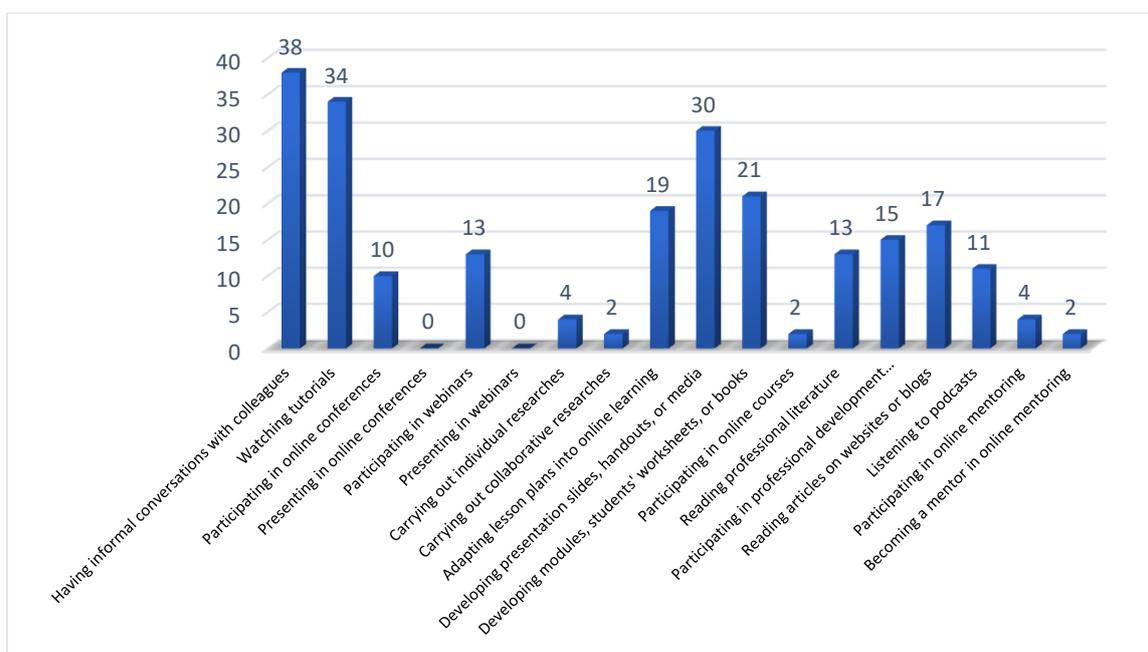


Chart 1. The EFL teachers' OTPD activities

Based on chart 1, it can be seen that having informal conversations with colleagues becomes the most preferred activity carried out by 38 EFL teachers, followed by watching tutorials done by 34 EFL teachers, and developing presentation slides, handouts, or media performed by 30 EFL teachers. On the contrary, none of them became presenters at online conferences or webinars. Other low participation-rate activities are carrying out collaborative research, participating in online courses, and becoming a mentor in online mentoring carried out by only 2 EFL teachers each activity. The EFL teachers can carry out more than one activity to engage themselves in OTPD, as it is also stated by them in the interviews.

What I have done so far to develop myself professionally to teach within an online learning environment is seeking references on how to teach online effectively by watching videos or tutorials on YouTube, participating in online conferences and webinars, and reading some online literature from blogs and journals. Then, I implement what I have learned by remaking my lesson plans and teaching materials (T33).

There are some problems faced by EFL teachers in carrying out OTPD activities. The presence of problems obstructs OTPD to be successful. This issue needs to be identified and reflected on in order to seek solutions. The problems faced by EFL teachers can be summarized as follows: (1) internet connection instability; (2) limited time; (3) limited internet quota; (4) limited interaction; (5) colleagues' limited knowledge; (6) difficulty in asking questions regarding videos or tutorials; and (7) limited facilities and infrastructure.

I have limited time to have informal conversations with my colleagues since we have our own activities and businesses. I also experience limited interaction when communicating through an online environment, since we cannot have physical practice to use online learning applications together. In addition, a problem occurs when we have informal conversations with colleagues and we have questions about the same issue. As a result, we cannot learn from each other. The last problem I ever experience is getting difficult to ask questions about something which I do not understand from videos or tutorials on YouTube (T28).

The EFL teachers carry out OTPD activities at certain times and on certain occasions. There are times when they start doing OTPD activities and when they carry out these activities last time. It is also important to know how often they carry out OTPD activities to discover the frequency of their OTPD activities. The frequency of OTPD activities is presented in the following chart.

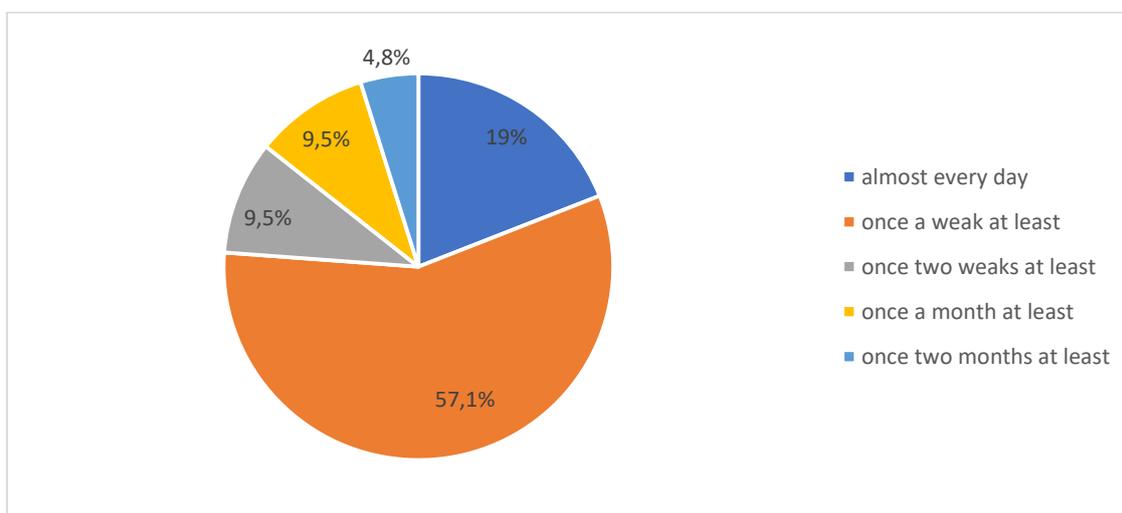


Chart 2. The frequency of OTPD activities

It can be seen from Chart 2 that 57.1% of the EFL teachers carry out OTPD activities once a week at least. 19% of them engage themselves in OTPD activities almost every day. 9.5% of them participate in OTPD activities once every two weeks or once a month at least. 4.8% of them undertake OTPD activities once every two months at least. Meanwhile, none of them engages in OTPD activities more than once every three weeks. Moreover, EFL teachers start to engage themselves in OTPD activities to improve their competencies for teaching online language learning, as presented in the following chart.

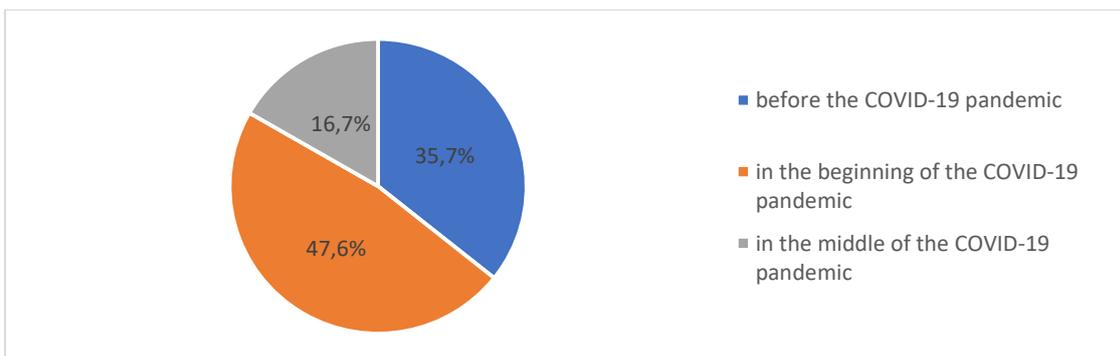


Chart 3. The starting times of the EFL teachers' engagement in OTPD activities

Based on Chart 3, it is shown that 47.6% of the EFL teachers participated in OTPD activities at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. 35.7% of them engaged themselves in OTPD activities before this pandemic. The rest, 16.7% of them, carry out OTPD activities in the middle of this pandemic.

4.2. EFL teachers' perceptions of their OTPD experiences

EFL teachers have some perceptions regarding their OTPD experiences. Their perceptions of OTPD experiences are beneficial in providing OTPD which best fits for EFL teachers since it relies on their needs, preferences, and teaching contexts. Informed by the categorization of skills required for teaching online (Albrahim, 2020), the EFL teachers' perceptions of what skills which they need to improve for teaching online are sought. The skills which need improvement are presented in the following chart.

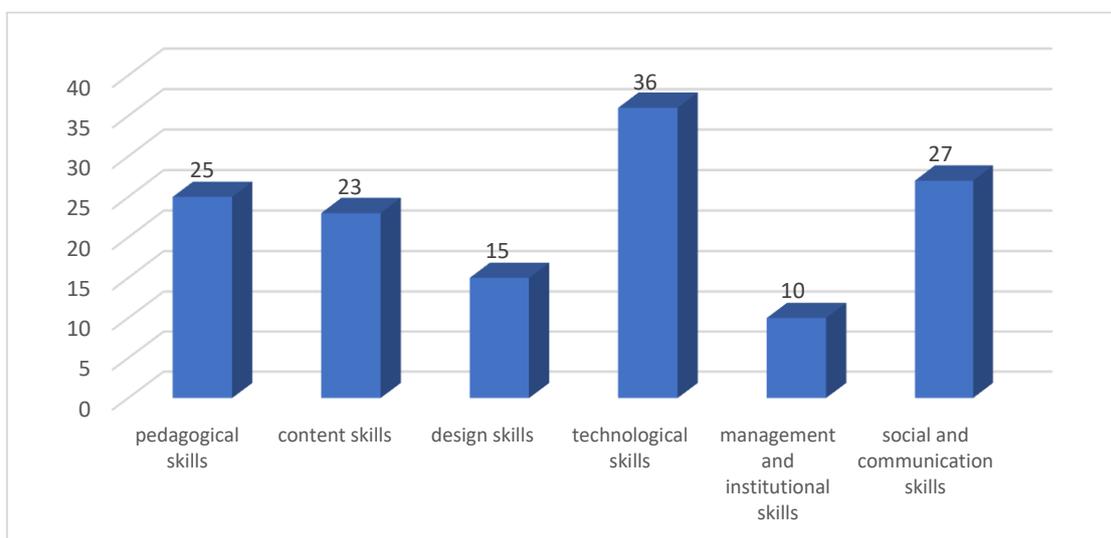


Chart 4. The skills needed to improve

EFL teachers perceive that they need to improve their skills for teaching online. Every teacher may want to improve more than one skill. 36 EFL teachers perceive that they need to improve their technological skills. 27 EFL teachers want to improve their social and communication skills in online learning environment. 25 EFL teachers are

interested to improve their pedagogical skills for teaching online. 23 EFL teachers consider that they need to improve their content skills. 15 EFL teachers perceive that their design skills need to be improved. Meanwhile, 10 EFL teachers determine that they need to improve their management and institutional skills.

After participating in some OTPD activities based on their own experiences, the EFL teachers have perceptions about what skills are successfully improved. It is important to know the gap between the skills which need improvement and the skills which are successfully improved. To this end, the skills which are successfully improved are presented in the following chart.

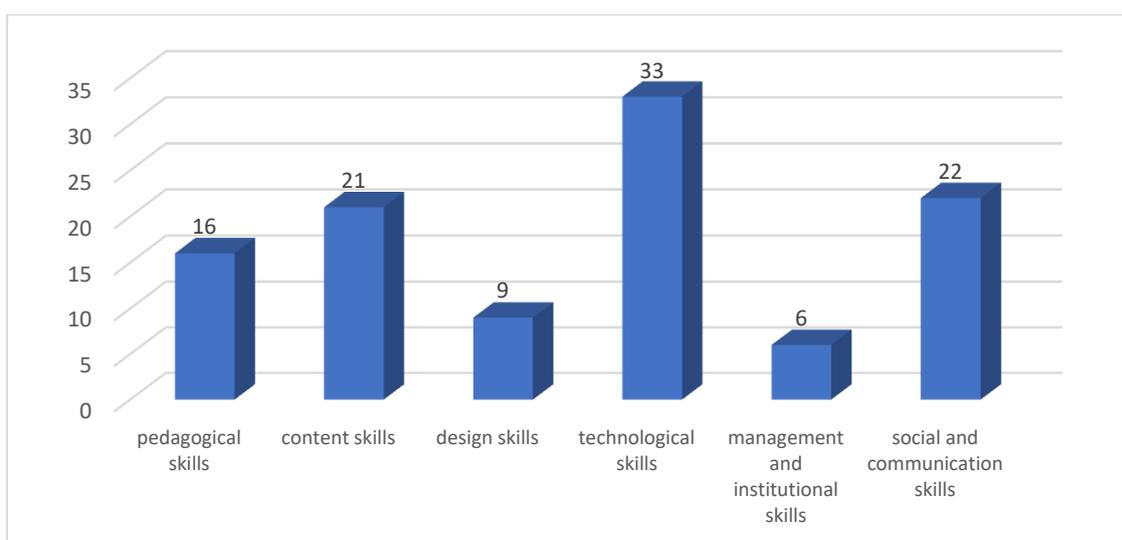


Chart 5. The skills successfully improved

The EFL teachers perceive that their skills for teaching online are successfully improved after engaging themselves in OTPD activities. Every teacher may successfully improve more than one skill. 33 EFL teachers believe that they successfully improve their technological skills. 22 EFL teachers perceive that their social and communication skills in an online learning environment are successfully improved. 21 EFL teachers find that they successfully improve their content skills. 16 EFL teachers believe that their pedagogical skills for teaching online are successfully improved. 9 EFL teachers perceive that their design skills are improved successfully. Six EFL teachers have discovered that they can successfully improve their management and institutional skills. Comparing between the skills needed to improve and the skills successfully improved, it can be concluded that the EFL teachers' expectations to improve their skills for teaching online are not optimally facilitated yet. It can be seen that all the graphics in Chart 4 are higher than all the graphics in Chart 5, meaning that the rates of successfully improved skills are below the rates of needed or targeted skills to improve.

Besides improving the EFL teachers' skills for teaching online, OTPD brings several impacts as follows: (1) The EFL teachers can make or provide online teaching media such as audios and videos; (2) The EFL teachers have more chances to share and

discuss with colleagues; (3) The EFL teachers can use some more online learning applications; (4) The EFL teachers can improve the quality of online teaching materials; (5) The EFL teachers can improve the quality of online assessment; (6) The EFL teachers can adjust the online learning based on their students' conditions; (7) The EFL teachers can make new friendships; (8) The EFL teachers' motivation for teaching online increases; (9) The EFL teachers become more diligent to read professional literature; (10) The EFL teachers become more creative and innovative to teach online; and (11) The EFL teachers' curiosity increases. It can be traced from the EFL teachers' statements in the interviews.

I am more curious to try and explore other online learning applications. My skill at utilizing online teaching media has also increased. I find my creativity in creating online teaching materials improves too. As a result, the quality of online teaching materials is enhanced. Besides, my motivation to teach online also increases (T28).

Amongst the 16 OTPD activities performed by the EFL teachers, it is important to know which activities are impactful in improving the skills for teaching online. Each teacher is only allowed to vote one activity as the most impactful activity for him and the impactful OTPD activities are finally sought. The impactful OTPD activities are presented in the following chart.

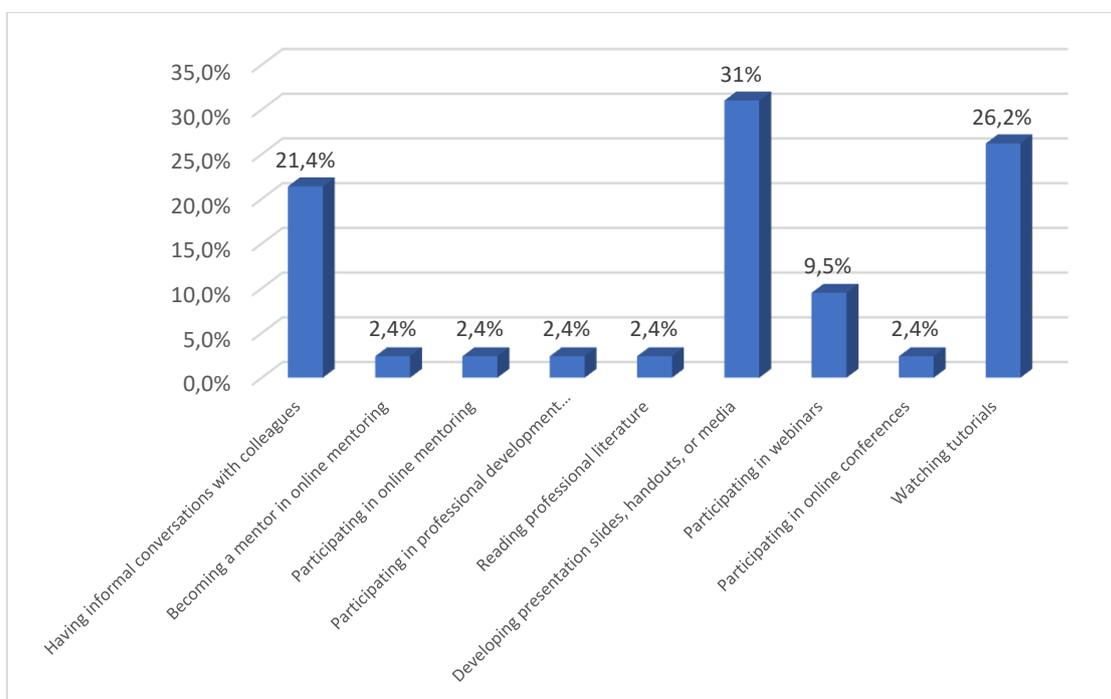


Chart 6. The impactful OTPD activities

EFL teachers have different ideas about which activities will help them improve their online teaching skills. The most impactful activity perceived by EFL teachers is developing presentation slides, handouts, or media. It is perceived as the most impactful

activity by 31% of EFL teachers. The second impactful activity is watching tutorials, as perceived by 26.2% of the EFL teachers. Third, having informal conversations with colleagues is perceived as an impactful OTPD activity by 21.4% of the EFL teachers. Meanwhile, participating in webinars, which have become popular nowadays, is found to be impactful by 9.5% of the EFL teachers. The other five OTPD activities are only voted on by 2.4% of the EFL teachers.

The impactfulness of OTPD activities may depend on some influencing factors. It is important to know why these OTPD activities are impactful in improving EFL teachers' skills for teaching online. This finding can give insights into designing impactful OTPD activities and contribute to the knowledge of OTPD activities principles and designs. The key factors influencing the impactfulness of OTPD activities are presented in the following chart.

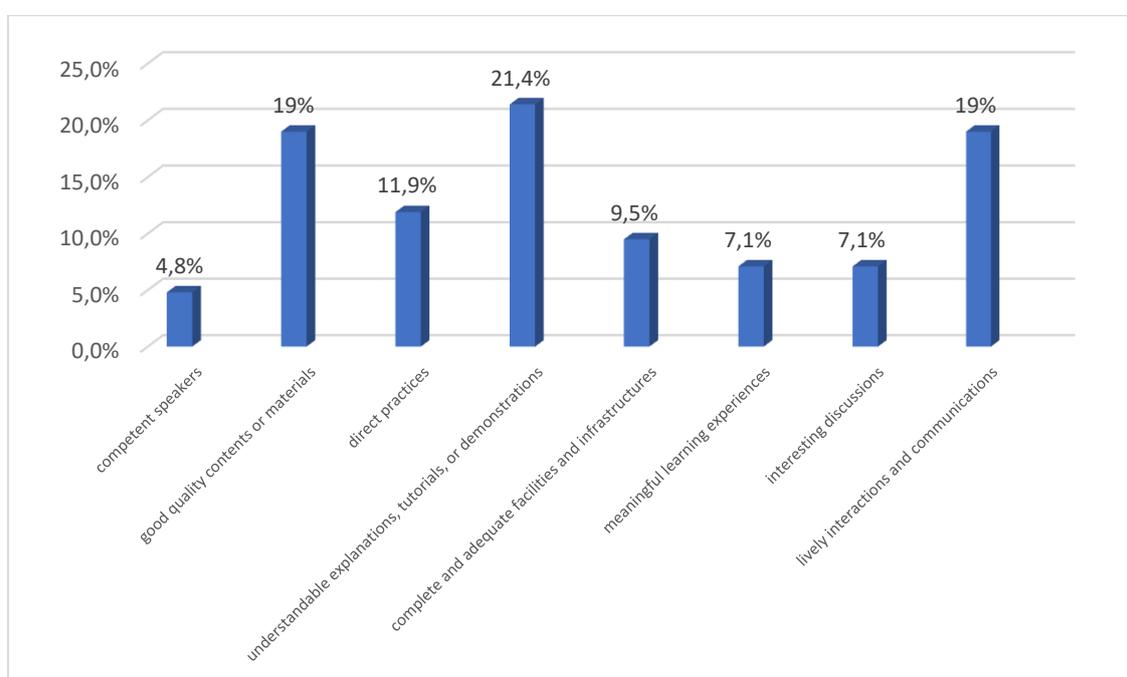


Chart 7. The key factors influencing the impactfulness of OTPD activities

Based on Chart 7, the key factors influencing the impactfulness of OTPD activities are observable. It can be seen that understandable explanations, tutorials, or demonstrations are the most influential amongst the key factors. It is perceived as the most influential key factor by 21.4% of EFL teachers. There are two key factors which are equally influential. They are good quality content or materials, and they have lively interactions and communications. These two factors are voted on by 19% of the EFL teachers each. Direct practices are also influential enough and were voted on by 11.9% of the EFL teachers. Meanwhile, complete and adequate facilities and infrastructure are perceived to be influential by 9.5% of EFL teachers. Other factors, namely meaningful learning experiences and interesting discussions, are voted by 7.1% of the EFL teachers each. Lastly, competent speakers are believed to be influential by 4.8% of EFL teachers.

These results are supported by the EFL teachers' statements in the interviews, as they viewed that,

Meaningful learning experiences and interesting discussions are very influential on teacher professional development. They are done by trying to use online learning applications and having discussions with colleagues which make us familiar with the applications. Interactions and communications are also important. I always communicate with my colleagues immediately to ask about something which I do not understand. My colleagues also contact me to ask something which they do not know. So, we communicate and share knowledge with each other (T28).

Besides the key factors, the impactfulness of OTPD activities is affected by some valid reasons as follows: (1) The EFL teachers can watch the tutorials repeatedly; (2) The EFL teachers get easy and have no burden to share and discuss problems and solutions with colleagues; (3) The EFL teachers attempt to create their own online teaching materials; (4) The EFL teachers try to make their own online teaching media; (5) The EFL teachers try to make their own online assessment; (6) The EFL teachers explore several online learning applications; (7) The EFL teachers explore some online learning resources such as YouTube; (8) The EFL teachers are actively involved in the discussion forums of professional development communities; (9) The EFL teachers are willing to try and learn something new; (10) The EFL teachers become familiar with teaching within online learning environment; and (11) The EFL teachers obtain applicable knowledge and skills for teaching online. It can be seen from the EFL teachers' statements in the interviews.

As a teacher, I am still eager to learn and try something new such as educational technologies or teaching methods for teaching online to make my online learning classes more interesting. Moreover, I often watch tutorials on YouTube and I can repeatedly watch them to improve my competencies for teaching online (T41).

Overall, there are three general perceptions regarding OTPD. The EFL teachers perceive that (1) the OTPD activities are interesting; (2) the OTPD brings positive impacts on improving the EFL teachers' competencies for teaching online and enhancing the quality of online learning in several aspects; and (3) the OTPD is less satisfactory since there are some aspects which need improvement. It is inferred from the EFL teachers' statements in the interviews, as they agreed that, "OTPD brings many positive impacts. I have become more knowledgeable about online learning and more skillful at employing online learning applications and online teaching media." (T12)

For better OTPD in the future, there are three aspects which need to be improved. Those aspects are: (1) discussions; (2) interactions and communications; and (3) facilities and infrastructures. Some EFL teachers in the interviews mentioned that "there is an aspect which needs improvement, namely discussions. More interesting

discussions can give me ideas for teaching online, resulting in good quality learning.” (T7)

Further, they added that “I think interactions and communications must be improved. Informal conversations among teachers must be well facilitated in terms of interactions and communications. It is to strengthen their cooperation to improve the quality of their online learning classes (T12)” and “We need more adequate facilities and infrastructures which support OTPD (T36).”

The results presented above have discovered many important findings related to OTPD in the context of online learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings about how the EFL teachers engage themselves in OTPD and other related OTPD practices as well as the EFL teachers’ perceptions of their OTPD experiences have been reported. The findings are arranged based on key themes which are supported by interview excerpts and descriptive statistics to provide more comprehensive insights about what the EFL teachers have done with OTPD to prepare themselves to teach within an online learning environment and what their perceptions are. The findings of this research will be very beneficial for OTPD evaluation and improvement. This research is also meaningful in terms of investigating the EFL teachers’ needs, preferences, and voices. It especially happens in Indonesia where PD is carried out without taking care of the EFL teachers’ voices (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). At this point, it can be said that this research is the first academic publication addressing OTPD issue for improving EFL teachers’ competence to teach within the online learning environment in Indonesia.

This research is important because teaching online is not the same as teaching in a face-to-face class. EFL teachers must be well-prepared to teach in an online environment (Philipsen, 2019). It is why several PD strategies need to be planned, created, and implemented to provide opportunities for EFL teachers to have professional preparation regarding teaching within an online learning environment (Philipsen, Tondeur, Roblin, Vanslambrouck, & Zhu, 2019). However, teachers’ roles and competencies required for teaching online often have had little influence on PD programs whereas they deal with teachers’ needs, individual dispositions, social demands, and particular teaching contexts (Baran, Correia, & Thompson, 2011). Fortunately, this research encounters this issue by gaining information on EFL teachers’ needs, preferences, and voices within the secondary school context. It does not only investigate how EFL teachers engage themselves in OTPD, but also how OTPD should be designed to best fit them.

Some previous research on PD has existed. The previous research is available in both online and offline PD modes. However, there is no research addressing the OTPD issue of improving EFL teachers’ competence to teach online language learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic or other emergency states. Most research addresses offline and online PD for improving EFL teachers’ competence to teach face-to-face classes. Research concerning offline or online PD for improving EFL teachers’ competence to

teach online language learning is still limited, especially in the context of pandemics or other emergency states. To this end, the findings of several previous studies ranging from 2015 to 2020 are presented to situate the findings of this research, which are distinctive and contribute to the body of knowledge.

In offline PD and face-to-face teaching contexts, EFL teachers engage themselves in PD through doing daily work (teaching and its related activities), pursuing degrees in higher education institutions, having membership in professional associations, participating in PD events, doing informal self-studies, and presenting at PD events (Alibakhshi & Dehvari, 2015). EFL teachers are also known to carry out several offline PD activities, with three dominant activities mentioned as reading books or journal articles on language teaching, participating in a conference, and participating in a course. It is commonly found in this form regardless of industry, region, or first language (Macalister, 2018). EFL teachers need PD activities such as seminars, training, workshops, or focus group discussions to facilitate them in designing class activities according to technology assisted pedagogy (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020). In addition to offline PD activities, EFL teachers self-directedly carry out several OTPD activities such as chatting, engaging themselves in PD communities, getting their ideas posted on social media, browsing through websites, reading articles, participating in online courses, presenting in webinars, and adapting or adopting teaching materials from the internet. Their OTPD experiences are primarily focused on acquiring knowledge and skills, with some knowledge or resource sharing thrown in for good measure (Utami & Prestridge, 2018). In a survey of 156 EFL teachers, 145 teachers select web-browsing, 116 teachers choose sharing with colleagues, 93 teachers prefer experience reflection, 46 teachers pick reading books or e-books, and 15 teachers choose conducting research. It indicates that most EFL teachers choose web-browsing as their PD activity and only few EFL teachers choose conducting research (Utami, 2019).

Offline PD is perceived to have some impacts on EFL teachers. These impacts are noticed as obtaining new knowledge and skills, giving influence on classroom practices, and revisiting beliefs about teaching (Sokel, 2019). By experiencing OTPD self-directedly, it gives EFL teachers a big chance to obtain new knowledge and skills, keep up-to-date with innovations, and work together with colleagues from other countries. Online PD communities which are subject specific or pedagogical specific can function as further learning environments. Web browsing also gives advantages in terms of what is available in the world (Utami & Prestridge, 2018). Globally, various online spaces and social media sites are very valuable as being the venues where teachers enhance themselves professionally. Teachers must be aware of these opportunities and take advantage of them by participating in online PD communities and social media sites (Khan, 2018).

Actually, three factors are perceived to be the key factors of successful PD. The key factors influencing offline PD to be successful include coherence (the relatedness

between theory and practice), collaboration opportunities with colleagues, and teachers' active engagement (Sokel, 2019). Moreover, several factors which influence EFL teachers' engagement in PD activities are time, family responsibility, age, ability, effect-relevance, school culture, and personal motivation. Among these factors, time, family responsibility, effect-relevance, and personal motivation are perceived to be dominantly influential. It implies that EFL teachers should have more time and personal motivation to perform better in PD activities. They should be able to handle their family responsibilities. They should also be given effect-relevance factors such as certificates of participation and financial incentives to motivate them in carrying out PD activities (Utami, 2019).

In fact, providing teachers with all the requirements for carrying out PD, such as time, support, infrastructure, and others, is not always easy. Many institutions must deal with great problems to fulfill PD requirements. Given current institutional conditions, it is still unclear how teachers can improve their professional skills for teaching in an online learning environment (Philipsen et al., 2019). Similarly, enhancing human resources should be followed by improving internet facilities (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020).

Despite the findings of the previous research, this research discovers many different findings which are not available in the previous research. This research has presented findings on many things including the OTPD activities carried out by the EFL teachers, the facilities and infrastructures needed to carry out OTPD activities, the problems faced when carrying out OTPD activities, how OTPD activities give impacts to the EFL teachers, the key factors and other valid reasons influencing the impactfulness of OTPD activities, the impacts of OTPD activities, the general perceptions of OTPD experiences, the aspects of OTPD which need improvement, the skills needed to improve for teaching online language learning, the frequency of carrying out OTPD activities, the starting times of the EFL teachers' engagement in OTPD activities, the impactful OTPD activities, and the skills which are successfully improved for teaching online language learning. However, the previous researches only reveal some findings which are also found in this research such as the carried out PD activities, the impacts of PD activities, the key factors of successful PD, the problems hindering engagement in PD activities, and the aspects of PD which need improvement. In short, it can be said that this research has novelty in terms of new findings revealed and different context (PD in online mode, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and for teaching online language learning purpose in secondary schools). This research gives contributions to the body of knowledge.

5. Conclusion

Given hard times amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, many secondary schools in Indonesia are shifting to online learning. This policy has an impact on all teachers, including EFL teachers. In fact, EFL teachers still lack competence in teaching online

language learning. Thus, they need to engage themselves in PD. However, the COVID-19 pandemic makes them stay at home and work from home, leading them to improve their competence in teaching online language learning through OTPD. This research addresses this empirical gap by investigating this issue and providing valuable findings related to the practices of OTPD and perceptions of OTPD experiences. Besides five findings which are similar to the previous researches, this research reveals some new findings which are not available in the previous researches such as the facilities and infrastructures needed to carry out OTPD activities, the skills needed to improve for teaching online language learning, the starting times of the EFL teachers' engagement in OTPD activities, the frequency of carrying out OTPD activities, the impactful OTPD activities, other valid reasons influencing the impactfulness of OTPD activities, the general perceptions of OTPD experiences, and the skills which are successfully improved for teaching online language learning.

The findings of this research are helpful to assist OTPD designers and providers, policy makers, and school leaders for providing OTPD which best fits the EFL teachers' needs, preferences, and teaching contexts since this research also gains information on the EFL teachers' needs, preferences, and voices regarding OTPD. Given the most appropriate OTPD, the EFL teachers are expected to perform better in the future OTPD and achieve better improvements in all targeted skills to improve. Having successfully improved their competence for teaching online language learning, the EFL teachers can refine their online teaching practices which lead to the improvement of students' learning outcomes.

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