

A Study on The Perception and Acceptance of UiTM's Undergraduates Towards Open and Distance Learning Method in Mandarin Language Teaching and Learning During COVID-19 Movement Control Order Period

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Abstract

The unexpected transformation from traditional face-to-face classes to Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode, due to the implementation of Movement Control Order (MCO) caused by COVID-19 pandemic, has deeply affect the basic Mandarin learners in higher education institutes. After studying Mandarin level 1 through face-to-face classes for only three weeks, students were forced to adjust and adapt to ODL mode within a short amount of time. This situation would inevitably affect their learning quality and progress during the MCO period. Hence, a study on the students' perception and acceptance towards ODL under this circumstance is crucial as a pilot test, to establish a better understanding on the possibility of ODL's sustainability as a necessary component in learning Mandarin henceforward. Such study will also help to apprehend and further satisfy students' requirement on studying Mandarin through ODL, so that it will become an ideal complement, or even a more preferred main option compared to the conventional teaching activities.

Keywords: *Students' perception and acceptance, Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Mandarin language, Movement Control Order (MCO)*

Introduction

The implementation of distance learning can be traced back to year 1969 and continues even until today (Dzakiria, 2010). For all these years, there are many who urge for the transformation of the local higher education system from traditional face-to-face teaching and learning method to online teaching method and blended learning method that are technology-focused and social platform-focused, in which both methods are also in keeping with the high dependency on technological development and advancement of our modern society. However, the actual responses were unfavorable, where there was no sign of large-scale and comprehensive transformation being put into practice, especially in linguistic field such as foreign language education. Due to the particularity of foreign language education's syllabus, teaching and learning, homework assignment, etc., where the guidance and assistance from lecturer are highly demanded in the process, the comprehensive transformation are hence limited and tardy. Besides, online teaching of foreign language has always been a controversial subject. Many foreign language professionals and teachers are against the

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implementation of online teaching in the respective field, as they consider the field as being overly “technology driven” at the expense of theory, research and pedagogy (Hubbard, 2009, pg. 2). Spodark also noted that “face-to-face coursework is best for introductory language levels”. Blake (2009) commented that foreign language instructors have at times been hesitant to deliver courses online because second language learning depends on live conversation/interaction for refining cultural and grammatical acumen, especially for improving oral proficiency.

However, the current situation has changed tremendously due to the spread of COVID-19 and the enforcement of Movement Control Order (MCO) by Malaysian government in March 2020. To safeguard the health of staff and students, while ensuring the learning continues uninterrupted even with the suspension of classes, higher education institutes are obliged to implement Open Distance Learning (ODL) comprehensively with immediate effect for three-months period, within only a short preparation period given. This caused many to experience low readiness in terms of psychology, mentality, and online teaching materials as well. Even though ODL provides new direction to both lecturers and students, where it combines the flexibility and openness of teaching & learning methods, with the diversity of resources available online, both sides may face a variety of obstacles and problems in the teaching and learning process if ODL is poorly executed. Hence, as ODL is undeniably helpful in solving the problem of teaching and learning during MCO period, students’ perception and acceptance towards ODL post a variety of challenges to its’ successful implementation, especially during the MCO period.

Therefore, this study aims to probe students’ perception and acceptance towards the effectiveness and approachability of ODL in a basic Mandarin course. Based on the data gathered from questionnaire, the study shall attempt to discuss and analyze the factors that contribute to students’ perception and acceptance. Relevant improvement plans shall also be suggested after the analysis, in hope that it will reduce unnecessary obstacle and error in preparation work, as well as to enhance the quality of teaching and learning through ODL in Mandarin language course.

Problem statement

The sudden transformation from traditional face-to-face classes to ODL mode, due to the implementation of MCO caused by COVID-19 pandemic, has deeply affect the basic Mandarin learners in higher education institutes. After studying Mandarin level 1 through face-to-face classes for only three weeks, students were forced to adjust and adapt to ODL mode within a short amount of time. This situation would inevitably affect their learning quality and progress during the MCO period. According to Allam, S. N. S., Hassan, M.

S., Mohideen, R. S., Ramlan, A. F., & Kamal, R. M. (2020), a totally different mode for ODL where students started their learning activities from home with no physical social interaction with lecturer and group-mate to perform course assessment can affect academic performance. Hence, a study on the students' perception and acceptance towards ODL under this circumstance is crucial as a pilot test, to establish a better understanding on the possibility of ODL's sustainability as a necessary component in learning Mandarin henceforward. Such study will also help to apprehend and further satisfy students' requirement on studying Mandarin through ODL. This shall ensure ODL to become an ideal complement, or even a more preferred main option compared to the conventional teaching activities in the future.

Significance of the Study

Students' perception and acceptance towards ODL method in learning Mandarin have a distinctive impact on the overall success and effectiveness of the implementation of ODL in teaching & learning. Therefore, the significance of this study is based on the survey result gathered through a questionnaire, that focused on the students' perception and acceptance on different criteria of ODL experiences, including their interactions, observations, opinions, feedbacks, commentaries, and satisfaction. The outcome derived from this study will hopefully provide a meaningful and actionable insights for students, lecturers, HEI managements, curriculum designers and ODL course coordinators, to produce solid and feasible improvement plans on the implementation of ODL in Mandarin education.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- identify if ODL method provides ubiquitous advantage in Mandarin language learning during or post-MCO period.
- inspect students' perception on the usage of ODL method in Mandarin language teaching and learning.
- investigate students' acceptance on the key criteria of ODL method in Mandarin language teaching and learning.

Based on the above objectives, the following research questions were formulated and properly treated.

1. Is ODL method a success and effective way to construct ubiquitous Mandarin language teaching and learning environment during or post-MCO period?
2. How do the students perceive ODL method in Mandarin language teaching and learning?
3. What are the key criteria of ODL method in Mandarin language teaching and learning that students accept or reject?

Literature Review

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) can be defined in several approaches. According to Khvilon, E., & Patru, M. (2018), open and distance learning systems can usually be described as made up of a range of components such as: the mission or goal of a particular system, programmes and curricula, teaching/learning strategies and techniques, learning material and resources, communication and interaction, support and delivery systems, students, tutors, staff and other experts, management, housing and equipment, and evaluation. According to Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) (2019), ODL refers to the provision of flexible educational opportunities in terms of access and multiple modes of knowledge acquisition. Flexible educational opportunities mean the availability of choices for educational endeavors anywhere, anytime and anyhow. Access means opportunity made available to all, freeing them from constraints of time and place and multiple modes mean the use of various delivery systems and learning resources. Therefore, the main reason for implementing ODL is to provide learning opportunity for those who are unable to physically attend a conventional classroom. ODL allows the teaching and learning be conducted under the physical distant separation of lecturers and students, with the utilization of technology to systematically organize educational resources and teaching materials.

According to Baldwin (2017), there are seven principles for good practice that can be used in distance learning for higher education. These principles for good practice can be divided into the following, namely: encourages student-faculty contact, encourages cooperation among students, encourages active learning, gives prompt feedback, emphasizes time on task, communicates high expectations, and respects diverse talents and ways of learning. These guidelines represent a philosophy of quality distance-learning education that can be widely used for both face-to-face courses and online learning.

Nowadays, through utilizing ODL system effectively, lecturers can easily produce a variety of educational resources and learning materials available in the cyber world, which come in different formats, such as a combination of text, audio, video or others printed format. Besides, lecturers can maneuver synchronous technologies such as mobile technologies, social media and conferencing tools (Google meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams) to conduct bidirectional interactive teaching. Hence, lecturers should equip themselves with sufficient technological knowledge and select the most appropriate and relevant resources and learning materials to ensure a high quality of learning process.

Formerly, ODL was not the main option for Mandarin teaching and learning. However, under the effect of COVID-19 pandemic, ODL has become the centre of attention in education field. It has also become

an irreplaceable method for conducting teaching and learning, regardless of lecturers' or students' preference and acceptance towards it. Previous studies have shown that the usage of ODL teaching and learning has played a significant role in supporting teaching and learning and become very crucial nowadays. According to Jegathesan, Rajadurai, et al.(2018), a study on Learners' Satisfaction and Academic Performance in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Universities in Malaysia has found that the learners were satisfied with their usage of learning materials, assessment management, academic facilitation and the services provided by the universities. However, only two variables were related to learners' performance, namely assessment management and services rendered by the universities. Furthermore, Allam, et al (2020) reported that computer/internet literacy competency among Malaysia undergraduate students is at a high level, while self-directed learning and motivation for learning reported at a low level during COVID-19 outbreak. Under the new norm of post-COVID 19 pandemic, ODL should not hinder potential interactive learning for best academic performance, but it should drive excellent achievement. Therefore, to improve the quality of ODL, especially for Mandarin subjects, investigating students' perception and acceptance that are associated with their motivation and performance are utmost crucial as well.

Methodology

This pilot study was carried out to examine the students' perception and acceptance towards ODL in Mandarin language teaching and learning. A questionnaire was designed and opened for answering from 10th to 17th August 2020 through Google Forms. The respondents of the questionnaire are all students from Universiti Teknologi Mara, Perak Branch (Seri Iskandar and Tapah), Malaysia, who had taken and completed "TMC401 Introductory Mandarin 1" course in February semester of year 2020. There are four different lecture groups, with a total of 93 students registered for the course. The questionnaire conducted had successfully collected feedbacks from 77 students (82.7%).

The survey was kept confidential, where students logged in to Google Forms to fill up their responses through the link sent by lecturers in WhatsApp. Before the survey begin, it was made clear to the students that the survey results will not affect students' grades. The questionnaire includes three items: A) Personal Information; B) Students' Perception on Mandarin's Open Distance Learning (ODL) Sessions During COVID-19 MCO Period; and C) Challenges Faced by Students in Mandarin's Open Distance Learning (ODL) Sessions During COVID-19 MCO Period. Section B and C contain 11 and 17 questions respectively. Likert scale were used in some of the questions, where 5 indicates the highest level of a certain indication, while 1 represents the lowest.

All the respondents had successfully completed their “TMC401 Introductory Mandarin 1” course by the time they answered the questionnaire. With a total of 28 learning hours, the 14-week Mandarin 1 course was conducted through two lessons per week (55 minutes for each lesson). However, due to the enforcement of MCO starting 18th March 2020, students were forced to continue their classes for the remaining 11 weeks through ODL mode, after only 3 weeks of face-to-face classes were conducted. Respondents were taught by different lecturers, but the syllabus, teaching materials and assessment methods involved are all the same throughout the four lecture groups.

Findings and Analysis

Regarding the topic of “Students’ Perception on Mandarin’s Open Distance Learning (ODL) Sessions During COVID-19 MCO Period”, Questionnaire Section B Item No. 1 to 5 assisted in identifying the results. Based on Figure 1 below, it is found that only 42.9% (33) students prefer participating in Mandarin’s ODL sessions compared to the traditional “face-to-face” teaching & learning method, while 57.1% (44) do not prefer the ODL method. This shows that in general, the respondents currently have a slightly negative notion towards ODL methods in Mandarin language teaching and learning in terms of perception and acceptance.

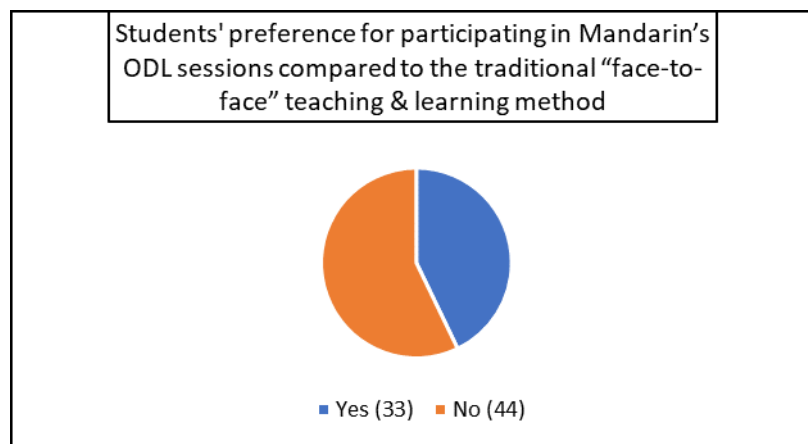


Figure 1: Students' preference for participating in Mandarin’s ODL sessions compared to the traditional “face-to-face” teaching & learning method

Referring to Figure 2, to further investigate on reasons why the 33 students prefer ODL method, 45.5% (15) of them believed that ODL are “more flexible”, and 42.4% (14) were satisfied that ODL allows them to “learn anywhere and anytime”. This shows that these ODL supporters were confident in the ubiquitous nature of ODL method. Only 6.1% (2) students recognized the advantage of ODL method as both “time-saving” and “does not required physical attendance to the class” respectively.

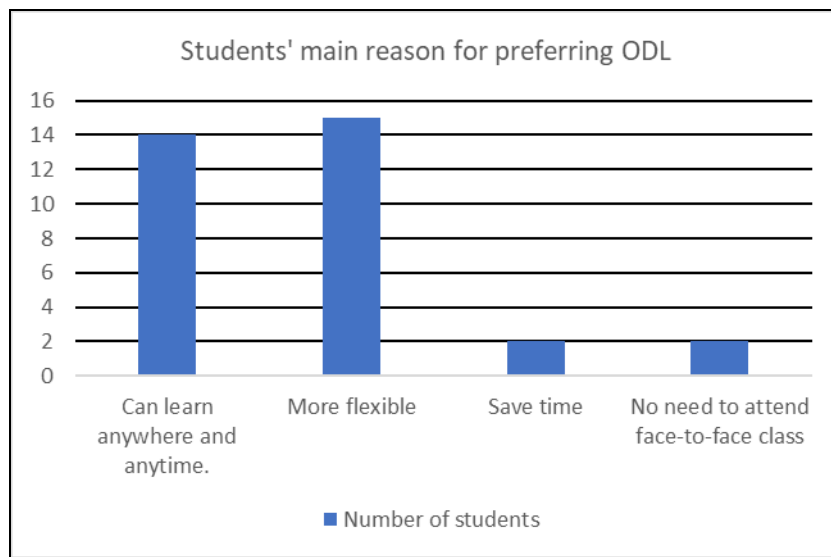


Figure 2: Students' main reason for preferring ODL

In contrast, out of the 44 students that do not prefer ODL method, a significant 61.4% (27) students had stated their belief that “traditional face-to-face classes are more effective” in Mandarin language teaching and learning. 22.7% (10) students even admitted that they were “unable to adapt to drastic and sudden changes from traditional method to ODL session” at the beginning of MCO period. There are 6.8% (3) students who were unable or failed to have internet access, which does not allow them to proceed with ODL method, while 9.1% (4) students found that accessing ODL sessions is more troublesome than traditional face-to-face classes. The findings are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

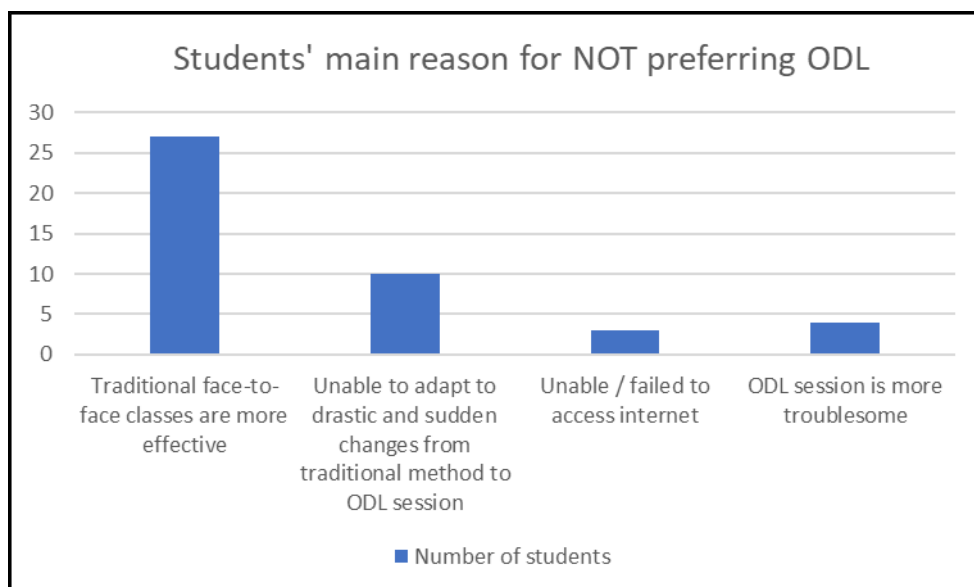


Figure 3: Students' main reason for NOT preferring ODL

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Based on Figure 4 below, even though there are 55.8% (43) students agreed that ODL is efficient in their overall learning process, but only 45.5% (35) students prefer Mandarin's ODL session to be conducted comprehensively in the future, regardless of the existence of pandemic situation or MCO period, as shown in Figure 5.

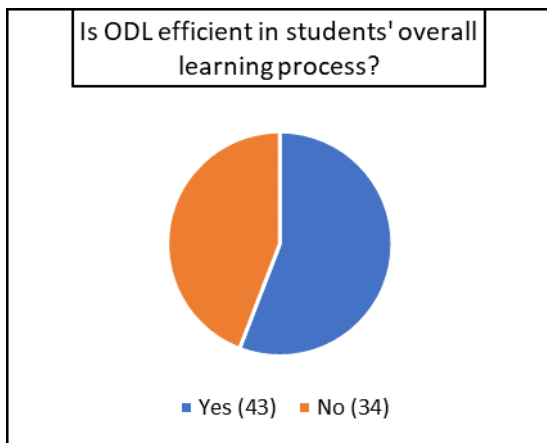


Figure 4: Is ODL efficient in students' overall learning process?

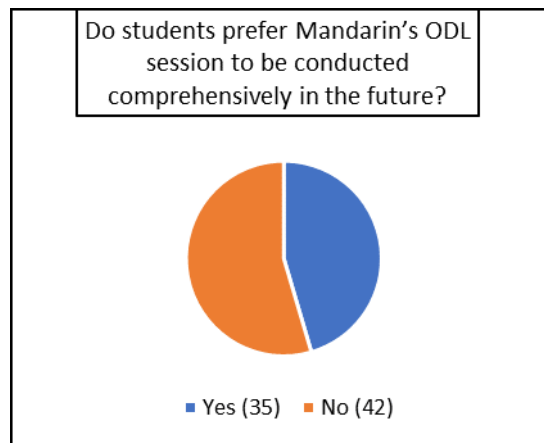


Figure 5: Do students prefer Mandarin's ODL session to be conducted comprehensively in the future?

It is worth noticing that based on the results between Item No. 1 and 5, both findings shared similarity and established a slightly negative notion that currently, less than 50% students were yet to wholeheartedly accept ODL as a comprehensive method to learn Mandarin, be it as a compulsory requirement during MCO period, or as a selectable choice in the future, in comparison with traditional face-to-face classes. This may be due to the sudden change from traditional face-to-face classes to full 100% ODL sessions, together with hasty implementation across all courses, where both lecturers and students were given only one-month time for preparation and adaptation period. Almost all undergraduate programs offered by the public university are supposed to be conducted on a full-time and face-to-face basis, where the course content is usually delivered through 90% face-to-face and direct interaction with lecturer, and with only around 10% conducted using blended learning method. Hence, ODL session during the MCO period had been totally strange and unfamiliar to students who never faced 100% online learning before, let alone minimum face-to-face interaction with their respective lecturers.

Generally, students did not face any obstruction accessing ODL with their current computer and internet literacy. This can be proven by the data result collected from Questionnaire Section C Item No. 1 to 6,

as shown in Table 1 below. Around 83% (64) to 91% (70) students can easily access the internet as needed for their Mandarin's ODL sessions anywhere any time, and have no problem using different types of electronic devices, including laptop, notebook, desktop computer, smartphone, and tablet to access and perform ODL sessions. However, students still show below-average level on acceptance towards ODL method. This may be due to the limitation of slow and unstable internet connection speed in certain local region, especially rural and semirural area.

Challenges Faced by Students	Number of Students				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Fair	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I can easily access the internet as needed for my Mandarin's ODL sessions anywhere any time.	14	26	24	11	2
2. I did not encounter any technical difficulties during Mandarin's ODL sessions.	10	23	20	18	6
3. I have strong and stable internet network to access ODL sessions.	7	28	21	18	3
4. I have no problem using Laptop/Notebook or Desktop Computer to access & perform ODL sessions.	25	28	17	5	2
5. I have no problem using Smartphone or Tablet to access and perform ODL sessions.	26	26	18	6	1

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6. I have no problem using both types of electronic devices mentioned in Question No. 4 & No. 5 above to access and perform ODL sessions.	28	23	18	4	4
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Table 1: Challenges related to computer and internet literacy faced by students in Mandarin's Open Distance Learning (ODL) sessions during COVID-19 MCO period

Based on Table 1, a staggering total of 27% (21) students admitted that they faced internet connection problem during MCO period, which basically coincides with 31% (24) students facing technical difficulties during Mandarin's ODL sessions, such as frequent disconnection during online lecture or test session, difficulties in downloading larger size learning materials or submitting assignment through online method, and etc.. Even though ODL allows lecturers and students to interact through virtual platform, but some students only managed or willing to go through such troubles to attend the compulsory online class sessions as required by the university, which sometimes were also interrupted by lagging and disconnection issues. They were hardly able to join any other extra online activities or discussions, which in the end will affect their learning motivation, revision process, and overall performance.

Nevertheless, the result of Item No. 4 shows that nearly more than 50% students agreed that ODL is more efficient in overall Mandarin learning process. In comparison with the result of Item No. 8, as shown in Figure 6, there are a total of 96.1% (74) students who give positive rating to the overall Mandarin's ODL session of February 2020 semester, indicating high level of satisfaction towards the delivered quality of teaching and learning. This may also signify that despite the slightly negative notions students generally hold against ODL method compared to traditional face-to-face methods, students' perception and acceptance towards ODL in Mandarin learning will surely and gradually improve over time in the future, provided that enough time is given to adapt and adjust to the change, as well as for the internet connection-related technical difficulties to be resolved.

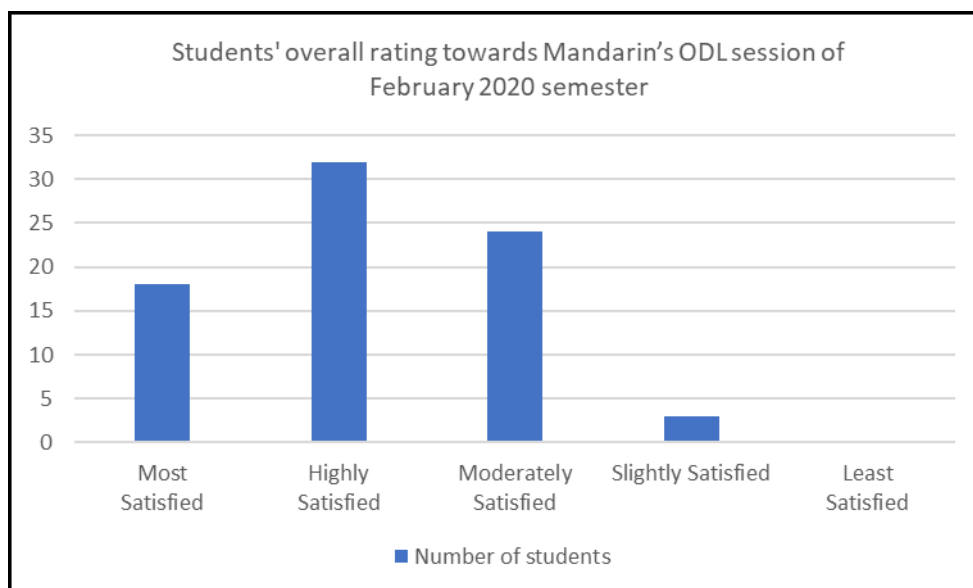


Figure 6: Students' overall rating towards Mandarin's ODL session of February 2020 semester

To study the specific criteria that students' favour and prefer in ODL, the questionnaire asked the students to rate the likability of several teaching & learning methods used in Mandarin's ODL sessions through five different levels of Likert scale. The data results are shown in Table 3 below.

Likability Rating Methods used in ODL sessions	Number of Students				
	Strongly Likable	Highly Likable	Moderately Likable	Slightly Dislike	Strongly Dislike
1. Live online class through Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other online meeting platforms.	16	25	27	9	0
2. Teaching video prepared by lecturer and uploaded to online learning platform.	26	24	21	3	3
3. Teaching video adopted from other platforms (i.e. YouTube etc.).	19	29	25	4	0

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4. Online assignment, exercise, tutorial, and quiz.	21	33	19	2	2
5. Forum and discussion via online learning platforms (i.e. UFuture, Google Classroom, etc.).	22	27	23	4	1
6. Notes and handouts uploaded to online learning platforms.	28	27	20	2	0
7. The use of Social Media Application (i.e. WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook, Telegram, etc.)	26	27	22	2	0

Table 2: Students' rating on the likability of the specified teaching & learning methods used in Mandarin's ODL sessions

Based on Table 2, it is obvious that both “notes and handouts uploaded to online learning platforms” and “the use of social media application (i.e. WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook, Telegram, etc)” have the highest popularity of 97.4% (75) and are most likable by students, followed by “teaching video adopted from other platforms (i.e. YouTube etc.)” and “online assignment, exercise, tutorial, and quiz”, in which both of these have an equal amount of supporters (94.8%, 73 students). “Forum and discussion via online learning platforms (i.e. UFuture, Google Classroom, etc.)” obtained 93.5% (72) of likability, while “teaching video prepared by lecturer and uploaded to online learning platform” has a rating of 92.2% (71). However, “live online class through Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other online meeting platforms”, which is one of the most important and crucial elements of ODL, becomes the least favourable among students and only able to obtain an 88.3% (68) rating.

Through the comparison between students' most likable and least likable criteria, it is worth noting that those with higher likability rating, are actually elements that can be found in and implemented through traditional face-to-face teaching and learning methods as well, from the aforementioned “notes and handouts”, “online assignment, exercise, tutorial, and quiz”, “online forum and discussion”, to “social media applications” and “teaching video adopted from other platforms”, which are considered as various types of

supplementary tools that also support the traditional face-to-face teaching and learning method. As mentioned previously, due to the sudden change from traditional face-to-face classes to full 100% ODL sessions, and to ensure that students themselves are still able to study efficiently, they might rely on these learning methods that are much more familiar to them as a smooth transition process towards full ODL practices. Under the full ODL learning process, softcopies of notes and handouts are now functioning as ubiquitous reference for students, while online assessments, forums and discussions, as well as teaching video adopted from other platforms may assist students in improving their four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) through sufficient revision and repeated drills. Various social media applications now served as an indispensable and crucial platform for lecturers and students to contact and interact virtually due to social distancing SOP, and even for the above criteria to be implemented effectively throughout the learning process.

On the contrary, the least likable criteria rated by students are closely related to lecturers and the role of lecturers itself, including “teaching video prepared by lecturer and uploaded to online learning platform” and even “live online class hosted or conducted by lecturer through online meeting platforms”, where especially the latter is generally considered compulsory by the local educational institute, as this is the main, or rather, only mean for lecturers and students to prove that they have fulfilled their teaching hour requirement and attendance respectively. This result may also presume that under the limitation of syllabus content, preparation time, or video-editing skills of the subject lecturers, students found the teaching video prepared by lecturer, or the live online class to be less attractive or interesting, compared to YouTube videos that tend to be more creative and more appealing in terms of the quality of visual and audio effects, thus make it less likable compared to other ODL criteria.

A similar result pattern that closely resembles the rating of likability can also be observed on the rating for importance and necessity of the specified teaching & learning methods used in Mandarin’s ODL sessions. According to Table 3 displayed below, both “notes and handouts uploaded to online learning platforms” and “forum and discussion via online learning platforms (i.e. UFuture, Google Classroom, etc.)” has the highest rating in terms of importance and necessity by a total of 96.1% (74) students, followed by “the use of social media application (i.e. WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook, Telegram, etc.)” with a total rating of 94.8% (73). Both “Online assignment, exercise, tutorial, and quiz” and “teaching video adopted from other platforms (i.e. YouTube etc.)” earned a moderate rating of 92.2% (71), while “teaching video prepared by lecturer and uploaded to online learning platform”, as well as “live online class through Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other online meeting platforms” still obtained the lowest rating of 90.9% (70).

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Importance and Necessity Rating Methods used in ODL sessions	Number of Students				
	Most Important & Most Necessary	Highly Important & Highly Necessary	Moderately Important & Moderately Necessary	Slightly Important & Slightly Necessary	Not Important & Not Necessary
1. Live online class through Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other online meeting platforms.	32	20	18	7	0
2. Teaching video prepared by lecturer and uploaded to online learning platform.	31	22	17	7	0
3. Teaching video adopted from other platforms (i.e. YouTube etc.).	19	28	24	5	1
4. Online assignment, exercise, tutorial, and quiz.	19	35	17	5	1
5. Forum and discussion via online learning platforms (i.e. UFuture, Google Classroom, etc.).	24	28	22	3	0
6. Notes and handouts uploaded to online learning platforms.	33	24	17	3	0

7. The use of Social Media Application (i.e. WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook, Telegram, etc.)	28	24	21	4	0
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Table 3: Students' rating on the importance and necessity of the specified teaching & learning methods used in Mandarin's ODL sessions

Based on the rating arranged according to the order from highest to lowest, it further indicates and proves that students mainly rely on the study material prepared by lecturers beforehand from online learning platforms to gain a basic knowledge at the beginning of their learning process. This, of course, is closely related to students' attitude, willingness, and motivation to implement self-directed learning. On top of that, they also managed to perceive that a dynamic and highly interactive environment among lecturers and other learners via online learning platforms and social media applications, are the most essential methods to practice and apply the knowledge and skills they have established through self-directed learning. Learning takes place through conversations and interactions on accurate pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures of Mandarin language, further assisting students to promote and routinize certain frequent-used expressions that help develop speaking skills. Students also highly recognized that online assignment, exercise, tutorial, and quiz are crucial for both lecturers and students to have a clear understanding regarding their exact level of improvement between certain intervals. Watching teaching video adopted from other platforms may also serve as an extra, but not compulsory, source of information to further corroborate and enhance their gained knowledge and skills. Such result may also infer that, if all these criteria are successfully met with high level of self-directed learning motivation, students' dependency on lecturer will be reduced, thus lowering their rating of importance and necessity on both teaching video and the live online class conducted by lecturers.

In terms of the effectiveness of the specified teaching & learning methods used in Mandarin's ODL sessions, it is interesting to note from the following Table 4 that, though the percentage of rating shows only a mere 1.3% (1 student) or 2.6% (2 students) of slight difference in between each criteria under comparison, the results show a rather different order of rating towards these criteria. "Notes and handouts uploaded to online learning platforms" still remain as the highest, with a rating of 96.1% (74), followed by "the use of social media application (i.e. WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook, Telegram, etc.)" with 94.8% (73), "forum and discussion via online learning platforms (i.e. UFuture, Google Classroom, etc.)" with 93.5% (72), "online assignment, exercise, tutorial, and quiz" with 92.2% (71), "live online class through Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other online meeting platforms" with 90.9% (70), and "teaching video adopted from

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other platforms (i.e. YouTube etc.)” with 89.6% (69), while “teaching video prepared by lecturer and uploaded to online learning platform” with 87.0% (67) obtained the same lowest rating as previous.

Efficiency Rating Methods used in ODL sessions	Number of Students				
	Most Effective	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not Effective
1. Live online class through Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other online meeting platforms.	22	27	21	7	0
2. Teaching video prepared by lecturer and uploaded to online learning platform.	21	25	21	10	0
3. Teaching video adopted from other platforms (i.e. YouTube etc.).	14	28	27	7	1
4. Online assignment, exercise, tutorial, and quiz.	19	29	23	5	1
5. Forum and discussion via online learning platforms (i.e. UFuture, Google Classroom, etc.).	19	27	26	5	0
6. Notes and handouts uploaded to online learning platforms.	21	30	23	3	0
7. The use of Social	21	28	24	4	0

Media Application (i.e. WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook, Telegram, etc.)					
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Table 4: Students' rating on the efficiency of the specified teaching & learning methods used in Mandarin's ODL sessions

The result of Table 4 above has indicated that live online class through online meeting platforms is now perceived as moderately effective, even though it is shown to be one of the least likable and least important and necessary; while teaching video adopted from other platforms, which is highly likable and moderately important and necessary, is now deemed as one of the least effective way to study Mandarin through ODL. Such result indicates that there may be a slight contrast between students' initial expectation and the practical reality. Compared to simply watching video adopted from other platforms, where lecturers have no control over the content whatsoever, the effectiveness of live online class is still undeniably high and relevant for students, as it is more related to the content of notes and handouts prepared by lecturers, and the pace of teaching & learning session can be controlled and determined by lecturers and students as well. Detailed explanation and demonstration that are complementary to the syllabus can also be provided flexibly during the live online class sessions depending on situations. On the contrary, some adopted videos may require students to have an above-average level of language knowledge and skills for them to be able to fully comprehend the content, which will not be suitable for every student, especially the less-able ones. Thus, lecturers should be more careful in filtering suitable videos for adoption from other platforms, or such method may instead hinder and obstruct students' learning process.

Conclusion

Since the study is focusing on students' perception on Mandarin's Open Distance Learning (ODL) sessions during COVID-19 MCO period, it is worth noting that all the respondents were forced to accept full ODL methods, as it is mandatory even if it causes sudden change and paradigm shift. Therefore, it is logical for students to have slightly negative notion towards accepting ODL compared to the traditional "face-to-face" teaching & learning method. Even though a slight majority of students generally recognizes the efficiency of ODL, the negative notions may also be linked to why there are lesser students who prefer Mandarin's ODL session to be conducted comprehensively in the future, regardless of the existence of pandemic situation or MCO period.

In conclusion, the study results obtained from questionnaire survey were both positive and negative. Students are highly satisfied with the quality of Mandarin's ODL session in February 2020 semester, and

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even agreed that ODL is efficient in their overall learning process. But, if given the freedom to compare and choose, majority students do not view or prefer ODL as the primary method in Mandarin learning, even during or after MCO period, and would rather maintain with the traditional face-to-face method. The study managed to identify certain relevant key external factors that cause the comparatively lower acceptance level towards ODL, including a perceived sudden change and hasty implementation of ODL at the beginning of MCO period, as well as limitation of slow and unstable internet connection speed in certain local region. Challenges in ODL faced by students should not be overlooked too, such as their motivation, participation, attention, adaptation, and comfortability level, may also shape and influence how they perceive, accept, and utilize ODL effectively. As the study does not shed much light on lecturers' role in ODL, it would be interesting to determine whether similar results would be obtained with a larger sample with more diverse population, shifting the focus of survey more towards to lecturers' point of view.

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