Teachers' Feedback on Using Discord as an Online Learning Platform

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	ABSTRACT
Keywords: e-learning, distance learning, online learning, conferencing software, Discord	The COVID-19 pandemic has called for a shift in the teaching and learning landscape from conventional classes to e-learning. This propels the use of a range of online learning and distance learning platforms massively, notably MS Teams, Zoom US, and Google Classroom. However, the fact that the aforementioned require a monetary subscription to unlock their full potential proves detrimental to the accessibility to education during the pandemic, i.e., not all students and/ or educational institutions have the available means. This paper thus seeks to affirm the capability of Discord as an alternative online learning platform that is not only efficient in its own right but also comes at no expense. To this end, a handful of English teachers who had been teaching online via either of the three platforms above were offered to switch to Discord for a fixed amount of time. They received instructions and support from the research team concerning the platform along the way and were asked to participate in a survey afterward. With the use of SPSS for statistical data analysis, the paper pointed out that Discord achieved a high compatibility level for both parties in use, namely the teachers and the students.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The impact of COVID-19 made 1.6 billion children out of school (Karboul, 2020). This stems from the fact that many countries – Vietnam included – have been forced to isolate their teachers and students in their respective homes. Hence, it can be observed that COVID-19 has taken its toll on education, diminishing the efforts spent on the endeavor for the past decade, as well as aggravating pre-existing problems, e.g., the dropout rate in all education levels. Supposedly, as a countermeasure and also to assure the continuity of education, Teaching and learning are thus

done remotely. As such, teachers need to adopt a new measure following the given health protocols and teach in multiple ways suitable for the student's socioeconomic status, along with ensuring the need for communication among English learners (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022).

Since the pandemic has rendered the conventional picture of pedagogy in the classroom unfeasible, both parties involved in the process, namely teachers and students, have opted to resort to the Internet for adaptation (Wahab, 2020). This is, in turn, accomplished via either or both of the available approaches to e-learning: online learning and distance learning, each of which retains its unique features, perks, and drawbacks (Moore et al., 2010). While more on the matter is to be discussed in the subsequent chapter, it should be noted that in the teaching and learning context of Vietnam during COVID-19, online learning, which has already gained momentum pre-pandemic (Dang et al., 2017), spikes in popularity both among the K-12 as well as the higher education levels due to its accessibility, among other positive effects (Suprianto et al., 2020).

1.2. Problem statement

As aforementioned, taking education online is the rising trend during the pandemic (Dhawan, 2020). However, with the immediate and visional upsides yielded, the preparations along with facilities available to cater to the matter at hand must be undoubtedly proportional, the notion which is facing challenges left and right in Vietnam. First of all, educational institutions across all levels are simply not equipped for this sudden technical transformation, typically around one week or two (Gülbahar & Adnan, 2020; Arum & Stevens, 2020). Secondly, not all students are exactly compatible with the rapid change to boot (Dao & Ha, 2021).

The forefront issue that all boils down to is the application – the medium via which e-learning is made possible. The synthesis is that the application is already prepared to launch or has been launching for a period of time so that educational institutions could make use of it right away and that it has garnered sufficient credibility to gain confidence from its users, especially the students/ learners (Cacho, 2020). Then again, most popular apps, e.g., Zoom US, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, often come with a hefty price tag to gain full access to their features, which poses a dilemma to small educational institutions such as cram schools and language centers. While less economically burdened alternatives like Discord are certainly up to the task, they have not yet received appropriate recognition to be applied prevalently, leaving the situation unsolved (Wulanjani, 2018).

1.3. Research purpose & research questions

The research purpose thereof is to evaluate Discord as an alternative application for the teaching and learning process during COVID-19 and beyond. As such, the study will function based on the following research questions:

1. To what extent is Discord effective as an e-learning platform?

2. What are the advantages of Discord over other applications, e.g., Zoom US, Google Classroom, and MS Teams?

1.4. Significance of the study

The study is believed to raise the public's opinion of Discord as a viable learning platform outfitted for online education in a fashion no less than its more prominent counterpart in terms of resourcefulness and accessibility. On another note, by doing so, the study seeks to introduce to small educational institutions a more cost-effective application that could resolve a part of their financial struggles during COVID-19, paving the way for the rise of Discord later on the pandemic is gone.

2. Literature review

2.1. Online conferencing software as a medium to conduct online classrooms

In a typical classroom, the teacher and students interact with one another via different means: vocal, gestures, and written words. All of these processes happen simultaneously. In other words, the communication in the classroom is synchronous (Blake, 2013; Beatty, 2010). When a learning course is transferred onto the Internet and technology becomes a medium for Teaching and learning, these characteristics remain. Of course, institutions can choose between offering distance learning programs, i.e., the students are paid for recorded materials and study by themselves at any time, or online learning ones, i.e., the students participate in live lessons with the teacher/ professor. Nevertheless, for ESL classrooms, online learning is still the preferred approach since it facilitates interaction and negotiation between the teacher and students, as well as students among themselves, which is essential for L2 acquisition to take place under the view of Interactionists (Long, 1983; Gass, 2018; Hummel, 2014).

Online classes are conducted via websites or applications that provide synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC). This might include social media, e.g., Facebook and Zalo, as well as standalone online conferencing sites and software, e.g., Zoom. Studies on CMC platforms are scarce; thus, the available data is insufficient to draw meaningful statistics (Ajabshir, 2018). However, it is observable that the latter option is more commonly used, perhaps since they come better equipped for conferencing, as the name suggests (Roos et al., 2020). Most online conferencing services provide three basic functions: audio and video conferencing, screen sharing, and text chat.

- Audio and video conferencing forms the foundation of an online classroom by allowing the teacher to present the lesson in real-time as in a traditional class. It also functions as a medium for discussion, Q&A sessions, or other collaborative tasks. By having cameras turned on, video conferencing aims to replicate the eye contact that both the teacher and the students need to feel more like speaking to actual human beings rather than a computer.

- Teachers often use screen-sharing features and text-compiling software to act as a whiteboard to illustrate their lectures better. They can also use it as a projector, showing PowerPoint slides directly onto learners' screens as they present. If the teacher so chooses, the feature can also be used by students to conduct presentations in the same manner as in offline classes.

- Although not as prominently used as the other two, text-chat is valuable when the teacher needs to keep important information "on the board" when they move on to the next sections.

The degree to which the other two features can function at their top efficiency, given that they are deployed correctly on the part of the teacher, depends on internet connection stability and the program's technical infrastructures. Issues such as stuttering voice, pixelated images, or high latency in screen sharing are quite common when connection speed is low or when there are limitations in how a program functions.

2.2. Challenges that teachers face when conducting online classes

Considering the fact that online conferencing software is the go-to choice for many online classes, students are willing to make the switch from traditional classrooms to these platforms during the pandemic (Nguyen, 2022). However, things may not be so easy for teachers. Issues may arise as a result of the transition from traditional Teaching to Online Teaching. Anderson et al. (2011) claim that teachers who are confident in their face-to-face practice have a sense of uncertainty when it comes to teaching virtually. One related challenge identified by Murphy (2009) is multitasking. She emphasizes the fact that teachers constantly need to resolve the issues encountered by different learners and that technological problems further complicate the situation, leading to the unlikeliness of learners receiving equal attention from their instructors. Teachers, according to the author, can remedy this situation by appointing some students as moderators who provide assistance to their fellows. Having said that, the transformation in the mode of instruction has placed tremendous pressure on teachers, who have to deal with more spontaneous trouble.

In addition, teachers can face communication challenges (Kebritchi et al., 2017). Whereas teachers can directly observe students' attitudes via verbal or non-verbal affective signals in a traditional classroom (Coppola et al., 2002), it is more difficult to do so in an online context (Crawley et al., 2009). Another setback is associated with learners' engagement, indicated by long silences (Moorhouse, 2020; Murphy, 2009). Murphy (2009) discovers that activities are often lengthy and slow, so the engagement level is consistently low. In Moorhouse (2020), students are inclined to provide short responses, not to mention that they prefer using the text box to talking through the microphone. The disengagement can cause difficulty in communication, especially when the students leave their cameras off, inducing a lack of paralinguistic cues (Peachy, 2017). Quite often, the online environment makes it more difficult to generate students discussion and smooth teacher-student communication (Nguyen, 2022), which may help explain lower exam scores in online courses (Pham, 2022). In general, these studies illustrate that the degree of communication and engagement can decline in a virtual classroom, posing yet another threat to the success of online Teaching.

Since online Teaching entails the use of video-conferencing software, the technology can be a burden for teachers (Fein & Logan, 2003). The authors accentuate teachers' need to understand what they use despite challenges comprehensively. In fact, teachers need not rely on technology so as to succeed in a traditional classroom. On account of the emergence of online Teaching as

a new phenomenon, it is unavoidable that some teachers are not willing to welcome it, resulting in a struggle to find their own identity (Baran et al., 2011), that is, a reluctance to become an e-instructor (Fein & Logan, 2003). It is obvious that teachers usually apply their usual traditional practice to the online context. This, however, may restrain them from effective Teaching, provided that there is a huge difference between online and traditional environments. It is obvious that familiar teaching aids such as blackboards as well as chalk or markers are not at teachers' disposal, and they have to get used to in-app features such as word processors and doodling widgets as a replacement. The circumstance can be exacerbated for technophobe teachers or those who are not acquainted with the technology.

Teaching also involves giving assignments, which cannot be implemented online in the same way compared in face-to-face classrooms, and which there has been limited research on. Teachers clearly cannot assign students homework by posting instructions and uploading files onto the chat box because they are not allowed to do so with some applications, and nothing will be saved after a session. In reality, teachers often resort to other platforms in order to upload and store files, materials, and instructions for assignments and revision. In other words, additional applications must be used in conjunction with the video-conferencing software to keep records of ongoing classes. This calls for the need to acquire new skills and competencies linked with the technology (Peachy, 2017).

There also exist external technical problems. Murphy (2009) presents two problems, one related to the sound quality and the other related to the insufficiency of equipment. For the former, the author suggests using an integrated tool – direct messaging, which is similar to the chat box of video-conferencing applications. As for the latter, she recommends enquiring technicians for further support. Nevertheless, this solution is not concerned with the internet connection, which can also cause a lag in signal transmission. As a matter of fact, concerns about internet connection or power supply are beyond teachers' reach, and many teachers might as well give in when encountering them, leading to low-quality lessons and even the cancellation of sessions.

Last but certainly not least, one key difficulty that these online conferencing services pose to small-scale institutions is their pricing. In other words, unless users (in this case, the stakeholders or teachers) are willing to buy a premium membership, there are bound to be blockages implemented within the software that present inconveniences for Teaching and learning. These can be in the form of a limit on the maximum time allotted per meeting, a participant cap, or an outright disability on certain features. All of these shall be discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.3. Discord as online conferencing software for educational use

Unless the institution issues an in-house built program, most teachers are currently using one of the following: Zoom US, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams. All of these three are designed with the business world in mind, which is reflected in their marketing tactics. On the other hand, Discord was not originally opted for this user demographic. Up to now, Discord is still mainly used by the gaming community, despite having comparable features for online learning and

arguably more competitive prices. Users can utilize most of Discord without having to pay a dime. However, the software also offers a premium license with noticeable upgrades, i.e., larger bandwidth to accommodate more simultaneous speakers or higher upload speed for better audio transmission. In comparison with others save for MS Teams, Discord Nitro (the name of Discord's premium subscription) is sold at a lower price of $9.99 per month. Table 1 illustrates a more detailed comparison of the four platforms.

Table 1. A comparison among Zoom US, Google Meet, MS Teams, and Discord

	Zoom US	Google Meet	MS Teams	Discord
Premium pricing				
Starting from	$14.99 /month	$7.99 /month	$5.00 /month	$9.99 /month
Voice/ video conferencing (Free license)				
Maximum number of participants	100	100	20	50
Call duration	45 minutes	60 minutes	Unlimited	Unlimited
Video quality	Above 720p	720p	Above 720p	720p
Additional features				
Breakout room	No (available in paid licenses)	No	No (available in paid licenses)	Yes
Dashboard	No	No	No (available in Microsoft 365)	Yes
Recording	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Whiteboard/Doodling	Yes	No	Yes	No

2.3.1. Unique features of Discord

2.3.1.1. Unlimited voice conferencing

Suppose a free license is the basis of comparison among these applications. In that case, Discord has a quite modest capacity in terms of maximum users on the same voice channel (50) compared with Google Meet (100) and Zoom US (100). However, what sets Discord apart is that it does not limit the call duration at all, meaning that members can stay in the call for

unlimited time, whereas Zoom US only allows 45 minutes of voice conferencing in one session. Google Meet is also looking into the possibility of implementing the same time cap at 60 minutes. In the case of MS Teams, despite virtually not having an upper limit on the duration of the call (24 hours), the maximum number of participants on a free license of the host is 20.

2.3.1.2. Breakout room

Discord allows the server admin (the teacher) to create multiple voice channels within the server, then move other members (the students) into these channels where they can discuss vocally in pairs or smaller groups. These channels are completed with their own screen-sharing functions, meaning that students can share their screens for group work without interfering with other groups. The teacher can instantly hop from one room to another to observe and check on students' progress. This is an excellent tool for teachers to organize activities that are otherwise impossible to do in a common voice room and directly address the problem of lack of interaction among students (Nguyen, 2022). Although the feature is not inherently unique to Discord in the sense that only Discord has it, breakout rooms are locked behind paywalls in other apps (MS Teams), requiring paid licenses to gain access. The quota on breakout rooms on Discord exceeds 15, which should be more than enough for most ESL classrooms.

2.3.1.3. Dashboard

What is lacking in the three apps Zoom US, Google Meet, and MS Teams (or at least their free versions), is a dashboard. When a meeting is closed, any information that was sent through text is either lost or left unorganized. For important announcements, users often need the use of third-party platforms such as emails to keep everyone on track. With Discord, the server admin can create text channels that are dedicated to updates and announcements, equipped with multimedia and any file sharing (under 25 MB). By restricting who can post in said channel, the chance of text chat flooding by members is minimized. Even without anyone using voice calls, members can freely view these channels to get themselves up to date on current schemes.

2.3.2. Limitations of Discord in comparison with other apps

2.3.2.1. User interface (UI) not being technophobe-friendly

As Discord is built primarily for gamers, who have already familiarized themselves with computers, new users can be overwhelmed by its user interface. For teachers who are inexperienced in navigating applications, it may take them some time to set everything up the first time they create a classroom.

2.3.2.2. No recording features

Unlike the three other applications, Discord does not have a built-in feature for recording the meeting. This can be difficult for teachers who wish to upload the recorded version of their lesson on the Internet for students to revise later. Nevertheless, there are third-party soft-wares acting as workarounds for such a problem.

2.3.2.3. No whiteboard and doodling

Both Zoom US and MS Teams allow the host to present a whiteboard and doodling on it with their mouse, which is great for brainstorming sessions. There are yet to plan for the implementation of this feature on Discord.

3. Methodology

3.1. Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at C-Plus Education, IPP Education, WESET English Center, and Zim Academy, as the researchers have connections with those institutions. The centers, all based in Ho Chi Minh City, provide English courses to cater to different learners' needs, ranging from general English to IELTS. Owing to the outbreak of COVID-19, online Teaching has been adopted, and each center employed different software to deliver courses to learners.

One hundred six teachers at the aforementioned institutions were chosen as participants, which is an appropriate number for the reliability and validity of the research (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Thanks to the association with the centers, the participants were selected based on convenience sampling. It is worth noting that all participants had some experience working with at least one of the predetermined software, which they were using for organizing online classes.

3.2. Design of the Study

For this study, a cross-sectional survey was employed to explore the efficiency of Discord compared to other video-conferencing software. This can be justified by the fact that a survey is used to discover opinions, attitudes, and trends (Creswell, 2012; Fraenkel et al., 2012). In addition, to be able to evaluate Discord comprehensively from teachers' beliefs, it was necessary to tap into several aspects of the software, which could be achieved with a survey design. Specifically, a cross-sectional survey was utilized as the study was carried out during one period of time, and there was a need to compare a certain number of involved applications, according to the aim of the research. The research team designed the survey in light of the scarcity of studies on CMC (Ajabshir, 2018). Even though they garnered the materials necessary to formulate the survey from various sources, especially user-experience surveys by Discord themselves, it ultimately was not adequate to consider this an adaptation of any previous study. Regarding the design of the content of the questionnaire, all questions were close-ended and adopted the four-point Likert Scale.

3.3. Scope of the Study

There exist many applications which can be applied to Teaching. However, the researchers deliberately limited the range of software to only four, including Discord, which was the main subject of the study, Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, which are widely used as a platform for online Teaching. Since the aim of the paper was to evaluate Discord as an online platform for pedagogical purposes, it was important to make a comparison with other prevalent ones. Furthermore, platforms such as Tik Tok and YouTube are also popular with English

learners. However, they were excluded from the study because they are intended for distance learning, but not online learning.

3.4. Data collection & analysis

Once the teacher-participants finished their trial period using Discord as the English teaching and learning platform, they were asked to complete a relevant survey whose data were then yielded into a collective file. After being put through the analysis phase, which relied on the SPSS 20 engine, the means and the standard deviation were deduced. The findings and subsequent discussion of which were elaborated on in the ensuing sections.

Concerning the reliability as well as the validity of the research, since the survey was cross-sectional in nature, it was ideal for measuring quantitatively the attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and practices of the participants, which in this case was their entire interaction with Discord (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, there were 106 participants in the survey, ensuring that the population was large enough to be reliable (Fraenkel et al., 2012)

4. Results

4.1. Demographics

According to Table 2, of the 106 teachers participating in the survey, more than half had been teaching English for less than one or one to two years, at 34 and 29, respectively. Among those with less than one year of experience, 18 were familiar with online Teaching, while the remaining 16 were not. Said figure experienced a larger gap in the next 29 with one to two years of experience, where 22 were familiar, and seven were not. From the remaining number, the figure of who had been involved in the craft from two to four years was 23 – 19 of whom were considered to be no stranger to online Teaching – leaving those whose experience exceeded four years at 20, with only two declaring their unfamiliarity with online Teaching.

Table 2. **The participants' demographics and online teaching familiarity**

Time span	Number/ Percentage	Online teaching familiarity	
		Yes	No
<1	**34**	**18**	**16**
	100	53	47
1-2	**29**	**22**	**7**
	100	76	24
2-4	**23**	**19**	**4**
	100	83	17
>4	**20**	**18**	**2**
	100	90	10

4.2. Discord's features

4.2.1. ease of use

On Discord's features, a four-point Likert scale was implemented to discover to what extent the participants agreed to the given statements regarding the instructions required to operate the platform, the ease of setting up a server, voice and text channels, and screen sharing for both teachers and students.

Table 3 illustrates both the teachers' and the students' functions and needs when it comes to an online teaching platform. This particular instance concentrated on whether either party felt that the instructions, server set-up, voice and text channels, and screen sharing set-up were vital to a smooth teaching and learning session. Overall, the majority of the participants agreed that the four categories as mentioned above were essential and should be ensured to operate accordingly. Since the standard deviation was all marked below 1, the data was statistically significant.

Table 3. Teachers' perceptions of Discord as an online teaching and learning platform

Ease of use	Teacher's functions and needs				Students' supposed functions and needs			Overall
	Require instructions	Set up a server	Create voice and text channels	Set up screen sharing	Require instructions	Join voice and text channels	Set up screen sharing	User interface is easy to use
Strongly agree	**35**	**33**	**44**	**42**	**55**	**43**	**38**	**40**
	33.0%	31.1%	41.5%	39.6%	51.9%	40.6%	35.8%	37.7%
Agree	**43**	**61**	**57**	**58**	**41**	**48**	**48**	**50**
	40.6%	57.5%	53.8%	54.7%	38.7%	45.3%	45.3%	47.2%
Disagree	**18**	**11**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**14**	**19**	**12**
	17.0%	10.4%	4.7%	5.7%	5.7%	13.2%	17.9%	11.3%
Strongly disagree	**10**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**1**	**1**	**4**
	9.4%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	0.9%	0.9%	3.8%
Means	**2.97**	**3.19**	**3.37**	**3.34**	**3.39**	**3.25**	**3.16**	**3.19**
Std. dev.	**0.94**	**0.65**	**0.57**	**0.58**	**0.76**	**0.71**	**0.74**	**0.78**

As evidently shown in Table 3, the teachers' and students' responses of the survey enjoyed a fairly low standard deviation, with none exceeding 1.00. This can be interpreted that most of the responses do not scatter in terms of choices; rather, they clump up closely together towards a particular mean. Concerning the means of the eight question statements – four of which were reserved for the teachers, three of which were exclusive to the students, one of which was open to both parties – except for the "require instructions" of the teachers observed at 2.97, all of the

remaining seven items achieved a mean higher than 3.00, with the statement of whether students required instructions having the highest mean of 3.39, which is closely followed by teachers' 'create voice and text channels', at 3.37. Thus, it is sufficient to determine that the majority of both parties involved in the survey agreed to the presented items.

4.2.2. Basic functionality

Similarly, a four-point Likert scale was also utilized for the participant's perception of the frequency of Discord's basic functions in terms of the quality of voice reception, webcam and screen sharing.

The functionalities of Discord, i.e., voice reception, webcam, and screen sharing, were put into perspective in Table 4. The quantitative result yielded revealed that most of the participants on both sides, i.e., teachers and students, had a high opinion of what Discord could offer toward a smooth-running session.

Table 4. Teacher' perceptions of the basic functions of Discord

Basic functionality	Voice reception quality		Webcam smoothness	Screen sharing smoothness
	Students to Teacher	Teacher to Students		
Always	38	39	29	29
	35.8%	36.8%	27.4%	27.4%
Usually	58	62	57	67
	54.7%	58.5%	53.8%	63.2%
Rarely	9	5	20	10
	8.5%	4.7%	18.9%	9.4%
Never	1	0	0	0
	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Means	**3.25**	**3.32**	**3.08**	**3.18**
Std. dev.	**0.65**	**0.56**	**0.67**	**0.58**

Table 4's questions of frequency determine the smoothness of several basic functions of Discord overall. Since the standard deviation yielded all fall below 0.7, the dispersion is low. Regarding the accompanying statistics, the majority of the participants opted for the 'usually' answer, whose rate was closely followed by 'always'. The low dispersion rate, along with the tendency toward 'always' and 'usually' choices, elucidate that the participants generally encountered little to no issue with the items given while video conferencing with Discord. This is clearly elucidated via the four collected means, none of which falls below 3.00.

4.2.3. Comparison between Discord and other applications

In Table 5, when comparing Discord to the software they are using, the participants were asked to respond to the items based on the degree of agreement. These items concerned whether Discord has the better voice, webcam, and screen sharing quality.

Table 5. Teachers' comparison between Discord and the application they are using

Comparison	Discord has…		
	Better voice quality	**Smoother webcam**	**Smoother screen sharing**
Strongly agree	**39**	**33**	**37**
	36.8%	31.1%	34.9%
Agree	**56**	**53**	**56**
	52.8%	50.0%	52.8%
Disagree	**9**	**19**	**11**
	8.5%	17.9%	10.4%
Strongly disagree	**2**	**1**	**2**
	1.9%	0.9%	1.9%
Means	**3.25**	**3.11**	**3.21**
Std. dev.	**0.68**	**0.72**	**0.7**

The question in Table 5 was whether Discord achieved more persuasive performing functionalities compared to other conferencing apps, e.g., MS Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet. In general, it was observed that although Discord gained a huge vantage point regarding voice reception quality and screen sharing, the webcam was reportedly not as satisfactory as the other two, with 17.9% of the population in favor of other apps, but was ultimately serviceable. The standard deviation once again achieves a low dispersion rate around the high means of 3.25 for the voice quality, 3.11 for the webcam, and 3.21 for the screen sharing feature, respectively.

4.2.4. Other practices and features

Besides Discord's core features, there were a handful of add-ons and tools in the equation whether the teachers thought they or their students required these external aids or otherwise was elucidated in the tables below.

Table 6. Teachers' perceptions of doodling

	Doodling		
	Doodling is important	Discord should have Doodling	Teachers are willing to use third-party programs
Strongly agree	**35**	**41**	**33**
	33.0%	38.7%	31.1%
Agree	**62**	**58**	**52**
	58.5%	54.7%	49.1%
Disagree	**9**	**7**	**16**
	8.5%	6.6%	15.1%
Strongly disagree	**0**	**0**	**5**
	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%
Means	**3.25**	**3.32**	**3.07**
Std. dev.	**0.6**	**0.59**	**0.8**

Table 6 illustrates the participants' attitudes towards the doodling feature of Discord. With all three items achieving a low standard deviation of under 1.00, it is sufficient to assume that the dispersion rate is low and that the answers are clustered together reliably. Most participants agreed with the importance of doodling when conducting an online class, with more than 90% of the population choosing either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' to the item. While a similar proportion of the teachers wished Discord would integrate such a feature, most of them were willing to circumvent the problem using third-party programs, at 33.1% for 'strongly agree' and 49.1% for 'agree'.

Table 7. Teachers' perceptions of recording

	Recording		
	Recording is important	Teachers record lessons	Discord should have recording feature
Strongly agree	**49**	**50**	**48**
	46.2%	47.2%	45.3%
Agree	**50**	**42**	**47**
	47.2%	39.6%	44.3%
Disagree	**5**	**11**	**7**
	4.7%	10.4%	6.6%
Strongly disagree	**2**	**3**	**4**

	1.9%	2.8%	3.8%
Means	**3.38**	**3.31**	**3.31**
Std. dev.	**0.67**	**0.77**	**0.76**

Table 7 showcases the three items on recording concerning its importance and the need for recording lessons. Since low standard deviations, i.e., under 1.00, are observed, the results are deemed reliable. An overwhelming number of participants agreed that the feature was much needed; in reality, the number of teachers who recorded the lessons was lower, which attracted the notable 'disagree' of 11, claiming 10.4% of the population. However, many of the participants still captured their live lessons for later revisions and wished that Discord would incorporate this characteristic into its platform, much like doodling.

Table 8. Teachers' perceptions of breakroom

	Breakrooms		
	Breakroom is important	Discord has a good breakroom feature	Discord's breakroom is better than others'
Strongly agree	**43**	**33**	**29**
	40.6%	31.1%	27.4%
Agree	**50**	**55**	**58**
	47.2%	51.9%	54.7%
Disagree	**9**	**18**	**19**
	8.5%	17.0%	17.9%
Strongly disagree	**4**	**0**	**0**
	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Means	**3.25**	**3.14**	**3.09**
Std. dev.	**0.76**	**0.68**	**0.67**

Table 8 displays the analyzed data on breakrooms. Similar to doodling and record, the standard deviations collected here are also under 1.00, which means a low dispersion rate and a reliable outcome. The surveyed teachers aligned with the statements that the breakroom was essential for effective classroom management, with 87.8% agreeing. While Discord's breakroom was deemed very well-designed, with 31.1% of the population strongly agreeing with the statement, the participants were not as determined to claim that it appeared superior to what the other conferencing apps offered; therefore, only 27.4% of the population expressed a strong agreement with this statement. Nevertheless, it is still valid that over half of the population were more comfortable using Discord's breakroom compared to other programs, with a cumulative 82.1% of the population on the agreeing side.

Table 9. Teachers' perceptions of the dashboard

	Dashboard		
	Dashboard is important	Discord facilitates announcements and reminders	Discord has a better dashboard
Strongly agree	**51**	**47**	**43**
	48.1%	44.3%	40.6%
Agree	**46**	**49**	**49**
	43.4%	46.2%	46.2%
Disagree	**8**	**9**	**13**
	7.5%	8.5%	12.3%
Strongly disagree	**1**	**1**	**1**
	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Means	**3.39**	**3.34**	**3.26**
Std. dev.	**0.67**	**0.67**	**0.7**

Table 9 elucidates the three items on the dashboard. As with the features mentioned above, the dashboard's items also achieved a low dispersion rate via no standard deviations exceeding 1.00. The dashboard was the feature deemed necessary for Teaching, reflected by the mean of 3.39, which indicates that the participants mostly agreed with the statement. Nearly the same number of teachers asserted that Discord had made it easier to make announcements as well as remind students of assignments, seeing that a cumulative 90.5% of the population agreed with this. It was also noted that Discord's dashboard drew the preference of the majority of those surveyed, with 40.6% choosing 'strongly agree' and 46.2% for 'agree'.

Overall, Discord excelled at offering a smoother means of dividing the class into smaller groups with the use of breakrooms along with a dashboard for both sides of the participants. Meanwhile, doodling and recording fell short of other apps since Discord was yet to incorporate these features into its platform. However, the majority of teachers in the population, at 39.1% for 'strongly agree' and 49.1% for 'agree', were willing to mitigate this issue by making use of third-party programs.

5. Discussion

5.1. The challenges posed in online Teaching

As discussed in the literature review, both teachers and students, when familiarizing themselves with online learning platforms, face a plethora of difficulties that they need to overcome to achieve efficiency (Murphy, 2009; Anderson et al., 2011; Kebritchi et al., 2017; Peachy, 2017). It is worth mentioning that years of teaching experience correlate negatively with the difficulties that teachers encounter (Fein & Logan, 2003; Baran et al., 2011). Among these challenges, there

are some which are beyond their control, such as internet connection and availability, while other issues concerning the users' inability to use these tools can be circumvented through training. Then there is also the problem with product licensing. These services may or may not come with a hefty price that is ideal to be covered by the institution. In reality, it is common for teachers to accept these paywalls as an inconvenience or to dig into their pockets to buy a premium subscription for this software.

5.2. Discord as a potential online learning platform

Suppose the fundamental features required for the software to function as an online learning platform are voice communication, webcam and screen sharing, and text chat (Roos et al., 2020). In that case, Discord is well-qualified as a contender among other more popular tools. Data from the survey suggests that the technological infrastructures of Discord are up to the task, except for the webcam sharing feature, which has been reported as being lagged at times. Voice chatting and live streaming in Discord is considered much smoother than in the participants' counterpart, reinforcing the idea that Discord is indeed suitable for their teaching and learning needs.

What truly sets Discord apart is the availability and quality of its features relative to its pricing. As a free user, teachers can have access to unlimited meetings for longer learning sessions, breakout rooms to facilitate classroom activities similar to a face-to-face lesson, and a dashboard for managing and storing important notices even when the class is not live. These widgets are greatly appreciated by respondents, who utilize them rather frequently in their practices. This is great news for small independent educational institutions, especially those which are struggling to balance their operational cost and revenue when switching to Online Teaching. For larger-sized classes of over 15 students, which renders the webcam feature a bit lagged, Discord Nitro can be purchased at a relatively lower price compared to Zoom, the platform with comparable features to Discord.

5.3. Setbacks and limitations of Discord

The opinion remains that the user interface of Discord is rather overwhelming for those who are not used to these types of software, i.e., teachers who are technophobes (Murphy, 2009; Anderson et al., 2011; Kebritchi et al., 2017; Peachy, 2017). Nevertheless, users seem to become more comfortable navigating within Discord once teachers and students have been instructed on how to do so, as mentioned by the participants. From that point onwards, using Discord for Teaching and learning became a much easier task.

The other limitations of Discord come in the form of non-existent features, namely screen recording and doodling. Understandably, screen recording has its own value in allowing teachers to save their lessons for future use, perhaps to help out students who are absent that day. Doodling, meanwhile, simulates the act of freely noting and drawing that one does with a normal marker or chalkboard. This can be especially helpful when teachers wish to draw mind maps or quick illustrations. Teachers in the survey expressed a strong agreement towards implementing these features into Discord if at all possible. However, it is important to note that

these drawbacks do not cripple Discord's usage as an online learning platform since respondents are willing to use third-party software to achieve these purposes.

6. Conclusion

From the scientific data analysis, without a doubt, Discord as an English teaching and learning platform incur a huge potential. Despite setbacks in the fact that the platform does not have adequate internal applications, e.g., doodling and recording, the overall teaching and learning performance has been assured of suffering little, as there are add-ons and workarounds to the posed dilemma.

For teachers and students, Discord can serve as a versatile platform in the sense that it facilitates potentially better Teaching and learning process at a relatively cheap cost if any. Considering their advantages over the other apps, with outstanding functionalities, the two parties, i.e., teachers and students, have the opportunity to aim for better sustainability and efficiency in their respective educational environments. Despite the shortcomings in terms of the features mentioned in the above sections, i.e., doodling and recording, it is still viable to make use of the aid of additional apps which make up for this deficiency, as the participants are willing to do so.

Though larger educational institutions may, partly due to bureaucracy, be initially hesitant to try out the platform on any relevant scale, Discord – with its features and characteristics over pricing – is deemed ideal for smaller educational business models since they are sleek in design, familiar to students, and – as observed – teachers can adapt to what the platform has to offer in a relatively short amount of time.

This research is based on the free version of Discord, so problems concerning the class size, which correlates with demanding a wider bandwidth, have not been touched upon. Additionally, Discord is – in all sense and purpose – an online service, which means it will be susceptible to updates and modifications as time goes on. These are gaps that future research into the matter might explore further.

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Appendix

A detailed comparison of Zoom US, Google Meet, MS Teams, and Discord on the basis of free-license

	Zoom US	Google Meet	MS Teams	Discord
Voice/ video conferencing				
Maximum number of participants	100	100	20	50
Call duration	45 minutes	60 minutes	Unlimited	Unlimited
Video quality	Above 720p	720p	Above 720p	720p
Additional features				
Breakout room	No (available in paid licenses)	No	No (available in paid licenses)	Yes
Dashboard	No	No	No (available in Microsoft 365)	Yes
Recording	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Whiteboard/ Doodling	Yes	No	Yes	No