

# Vlogging as an Assessment Tool in ELT: A Study Among Adult Learners in a Distance Learning Programme

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## ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to address the problem of English language speaking anxiety among adult ESL learners by introducing vlogging as one of the learning activities and as an assessment of speaking skills. The main objective of this action research was to establish whether vlogging assignments could assist in alleviating speaking anxiety among adult learners and in determining whether the students' vlogs posted in the class's Facebook group could be used as part of the course's speaking assessment to replace face-to-face presentation. A qualitative research design was adopted in this study. The study employed purposeful sampling, and the participants chosen came from an intact group of thirty adult learners who enrolled in a distance learning programme at a public university in Malaysia. The study was conducted in the students' 'English for Communication' class over a study period of fourteen weeks. The data was collected at the end of the study period through focused group interviews and analysed using the thematic analysis method, and presented descriptively. It was found that vlogging is effective in increasing the students' English talk time outside class which consequently contributes to increasing their self-confidence and alleviating speaking anxiety. Thus, it can be concluded that vlogging is effective in lessening language speaking anxiety among the participants and can effectively be used as an assessment tool to reduce test-taking anxiety. Facebook group is also found to be a suitable platform for group interactions as it provides a non-threatening learning environment for the learners. The findings of the study have potential implications for English language teaching among adult learners.

## 1. Introduction

Many public and private universities in Malaysia are offering diploma and degree programmes on a part-time basis to encourage the general population to embark on lifelong knowledge-seeking as advocated by the Ministry of Higher Education to enculturate lifelong learning within the community (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). The students who enrolled in these programmes are adults who are already part of the workforce from diverse economic sectors. They are pursuing higher education for various reasons and are referred to as 'adult learners'.

The definition of 'adult learners' in this study is based on the classification made by Kahu et al. (2013). They used the term 'adult learners' in reference to young and older adults who continue their education by balancing their family and work and are generally older than 22 years old. Adult learners are found to be motivated and high in self-efficacy (Kahu et al., 2013). Although these characteristics provide adult learners with some advantages in educational processes compared to traditional learners, they also lead to various

challenges. Adult learners bring with them a wide range of learning, social, vocational as well as professional experience and needs. Thus, it is challenging not only to motivate them to join a certain educational programme but also to retain them until they graduate (Kapur, 2015).

In Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia is the National language and is used in government sectors as well as during most official functions. On the other hand, English is considered a second language and is widely used in institutions of higher learning and business sectors (Saleh & Murtaza, 2018). Both Bahasa Malaysia and English are taught in all government schools in Malaysia (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2014). English is also taught at tertiary levels, and all undergraduates in public universities have to take up English courses as part of the universities' graduation requirement, irrespective of the programmes they enrolled in.

Despite learning English for about 11 years in school, many Malaysians still encounter difficulty in using English effectively (Rusli et al., 2018). Of the two productive language skills, speaking is found to be more difficult to

acquire compared to writing. Many English as a second language (ESL) learners are able to perform well in reading, writing and listening but find it difficult to speak the target language confidently (Badrasawi et al., 2020). In Malaysia, the inability to speak English confidently is not only faced by young but also adult learners. It is difficult for ESL learners, especially adults, to speak the target language fluently and appropriately (Ab Rashid et al., 2017). In order to provide effective guidance in developing competence in English, it is necessary to address the contributing factors which hinder them from acquiring the said skill.

Anxiety has been found to be one of the many factors that hinder second language learners from acquiring the target language, especially speaking skills (Ab Rashid et al., 2017; Boonkit, 2010; Humphries, 2011; Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012; Zhang & Rahimi, 2014). Although adult learners are more independent and mature as well as have a more positive attitude toward language learning, they often lack self-confidence and are insecure in the ESL classrooms (Ab Latif, 2015). Adult ESL learners attending distance learning programmes often lack practice and motivation to use the target language in their daily activities (Fadilah, 2016). They have few occasions where they can practise English outside of the classroom (Samaranayake, 2016). Since face-to-face class time is limited, ESL teachers are not able to provide opportunities for real practice in speaking (Derakhshan et al., 2015). Due to these reasons, they lack the confidence to speak English.

Many researchers have investigated the relationship between anxiety and language learning (Gardner et al., 1997; Sahari et al., 2016; Abdul Latif, 2015). Gardner et al. (1997) investigated the relationship between anxiety and proficiency in the second language and found a high correlation between the two variables. Thus, they concluded that learners who succeed in second language learning usually have low anxiety. Sahari et al. (2016) conducted a study on a group of adult learners to determine their anxiety levels in different situations. The researchers concluded that adult learners in their study experienced high levels of language anxiety in most of the situations being studied. In addition, the study found that the participants did not experience much anxiety in group discussions or while conversing among themselves, but most of them experienced high levels of anxiety while doing presentations and role-play in front of the class. The group of adult learners in the study confessed that they felt intimidated talking to someone whom they thought spoke better English compared to them or conversing with an English speaker. These activities affect their anxiety level greatly.

Another study conducted among adult learners (Ab Latif, 2015) concluded that motivation and self-confidence are important to enhance the second language learning environment. Therefore, it was recommended that the lecturers carry out the students' evaluations in a more

indirect manner so that the students would not feel anxious about learning English. The study implied that traditional speaking assessments such as public speaking and role-play could be substituted with the less intimidating type of speaking assessments. Thus, many English language educators have turned to the use of technology in language classrooms to make English language learning less intimidating.

The use of technology in language teaching to facilitate learning has been widely accepted, and many language educators have been incorporating the use of technology in their language classrooms. Integrating technology in language teaching can solve limited class time and encourage the learners to be more independent. Since many studies conducted on the use of technology in English Language Teaching (ELT) have found that it provides many benefits, this study was conducted following the action research guidelines provided by Clark et al. (2020) to determine whether incorporating vlogging as part of teaching and learning could increase students' English talk time outside the classroom. In this study, vlogging assignment was used as part of teaching and learning as well as speaking assessment in the hope of lessening the students' speaking anxiety and increasing their self-confidence. Throughout the study period, the students prepared their presentations in the form of vlogs and posted them in their closed/private Facebook group to be assessed instead of presenting them in front of the class. The study hopes to provide a non-threatening environment for the students to prepare, practise and present their work. The objectives of the study were:

- To determine whether vlogging assignments can lessen English language speaking anxiety and increase students' speaking confidence.
- To establish whether vlogging can be used as an assessment tool to lessen the participants' test-taking anxiety.
- To understand the participants' views on the use of the Facebook group as a platform for group interaction.

Three research questions were formulated for this study which are:

- How can vlogging assignments lessen the participants' English language speaking anxiety and increase their speaking confidence?
- Can vlogs posted by the students in their Facebook group be used as speaking assessments to lessen test-taking anxiety?
- What are the participants' views on the use of the Facebook group as a platform for group interactions?

## 2. Literature Review

As mentioned before, English is the second language in Malaysia which is taught at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. However, despite learning English for more than 11

years in school, many Malaysian undergraduates still face difficulty in expressing themselves effectively in English. One of the factors which hinder them from acquiring the speaking skill is anxiety.

## 2.1 Speaking Confidence and Speaking Anxiety

According to Bygate (2009), ESL/EFL learners found speaking challenging because it involves a complex cognitive process. In addition, there are some psychological factors that contribute to the difficulty in acquiring speaking skills, such as self-confidence and anxiety (Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018). Saint-Leger (2009) proposed that language educators should assign the learners tasks which could promote a sense of achievement to lessen the learners' speaking anxiety, which in due course would lead to the improvement of their self-confidence. One of the contributing factors to ESL learners' inability to speak confidently is a lack of practice. In ESL/EFL situations, learners can only practise speaking the target language in the classroom (Savaşçı, 2014), and the opportunity to use the target language outside the classroom is very limited. Thus, it is up to language educators to provide the learners with a learning environment where they can practise the target language outside the classroom. As stressed by O'Malley and Valdez (1996), language educators should be creative and innovative in choosing a medium which can offer the learners more opportunities to practise the language extensively outside the class so that they can gain more exposure, rather than depending solely on the in-class speaking practices.

## 2.2 Sources of Anxiety for Adult Learners

A study conducted by Cubukcu (2007) which examined the students' level of anxiety and its relationship to second language learning, found that there are several factors which contribute to anxiety among them. Among the factors were the fear of making mistakes, the fear of losing face, the fear of failure and the fear of not being able to achieve a certain standard. Thus, it was concluded that students' poor performance in language assessments may not be due solely to their lack of ability or inadequate background or poor motivation but may also be due to language anxiety.

In a similar study conducted among adult learners from a public university in Malaysia, it was concluded that doing presentations and role-play in front of the class contributed to high levels of anxiety among them (Sahari et al., 2016). Since most of these students are working and some of them hold important positions at their workplace, they are very conscious of their performance and anxious about making mistakes in front of their classmates. Many adult learners are fearful of others' evaluation of their abilities, especially in the classroom (Baran-Lucarz, 2014; Sabbah, 2018). Therefore, language educators should find a way to alleviate their anxiety by providing them with a non-threatening

environment for them to practise speaking the target language.

### 2.2.1 Test-taking Anxiety

Most language learners would experience a certain level of anxiety when sitting for examinations and doing assessments (Zeng & Cheng, 2018). Test-takers would experience differential levels of anxiety in different testing situations because language anxiety is situation-oriented anxiety. According to Zeng and Cheng (2018), even students who considered themselves to be experienced test-takers and were adept at test-taking expressed their anxiety about speaking in English. This finding contradicts the findings of Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) on the effects of anxiety and speaking test results. Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) found that there is a moderate inverse relationship between language anxiety and performance, which implies that students who express more foreign language anxiety tend to receive lower exam grades compared to students who are less anxious.

## 2.3 The Use of Social Media Platforms in ELT

Studies have observed that the use of technology in English language teaching (ELT) fosters autonomous learning and decreases students' anxiety about the learning process. Many researchers have explored the use of social media platforms in ELT, such as Twitter (Upadhyay & Upadhyay, 2020), Instagram (Wulandari, 2019), YouTube channel (Saed et al., 2021; Sari, 2017), Facebook group (Ab Manan, 2012; Mabuan & Ebron, 2016; Ong et al., 2020). All these studies have concluded that incorporating the use of social media in ELT is able to promote autonomous learning among ESL learners.

### 2.3.1 The Use of Vlogs in Language Teaching

Vlog is an acronym for a video blog, a form of blogging which uses videos and audio as its main content instead of pictures and texts (vlog, 2021). Vlog is supported by several social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. The growing interest in vlogging has aroused the interest of ESL/EFL teachers, who see vlogging as a simple and inexpensive way of giving students the opportunities to share their own videos on the internet as part of ESL learning.

Many studies (Anggraeni et al., 2020; Madzlan et al., 2020; Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020; Saputro et al., 2020; Ong et al., 2020) have explored the use of vlogging as a tool to improve speaking and other skills in ELT. Anggraeni et al. (2020) conducted a study among forty students who enrolled in the English Language Study programme. The participants formed 13 groups, and each group developed a vlog with a tourism theme. Their vlogs were then uploaded onto YouTube channels where their peers could watch the videos and leave comments. Their vlogs were used as part of the English language speaking assessment for the course.

The assessment criteria used by the lecturer include introduction, body, conclusion, eye contact, use of language, body language, clarity, topic and visual aids. The study concluded that vlogging could be used in language learning to promote speaking skills and develop learners' multimodal literacy. It was also found that the students perceived vlog-mediated speaking assessment and activities as beneficial.

Next, forty English Education majors from an Indonesian university participated in a study by Mandasari and Aminatun (2020) to determine whether vlogging used as an intervention can improve students' speaking performance. At the beginning of the study, the participants sat for a pre-test. They were then assigned to watch vlogs on YouTube as supplementary materials to improve their speaking skill. In addition, the participants took a trip to Bali and Yogyakarta and created their own vlogs on tourist attractions and traditional cuisines from both places. They conceptualised, brainstormed, articulated, monitored, evaluated, reported and finally uploaded their vlogs on the internet. At the end of the study period, the participants sat for a post-test to measure their speaking performance. A statistical analysis of the results showed a significant difference between the mean of the pre-test and the post-test, which implied that there was a significant improvement in the participants' speaking performance. The researchers concluded that vlogs could be used as an alternative tool to support English language teaching and learning.

Another intervention study was conducted by Madzlan et al. (2020) among fifty-four first-year undergraduates from a public university in Malaysia to determine whether vlogs could be used to alleviate speaking anxiety. The objective of the study was to determine the impact of an intervention on the learners' speaking ability. The intervention in the study was the use of vlogs to deliver a public speech. Two intact groups of 30 and 24 participants were assigned as a treatment and control group, respectively. The treatment group was required to produce three thematic video blog entries per week based on proposed topics obtained from the Listening and Speaking Workbook by Oxford Press (Earle-Carlin et al., 2011), or they could choose other topics. The treatment group was required to keep reflection journals of their vlogging activities. The participants in the treatment group reflected that their public speaking anxiety decreased significantly after conducting vlogging activity compared with the control group. The study concluded that vlogging could significantly alleviate public speaking anxiety among ESL learners and could potentially increase their public speaking confidence.

Saputro et al. (2020) examined the use of vlogs to improve students' oral language production. The participants in the case study were three male and three female students from the English Language Education Department at a private university in Indonesia. The participants recorded several vlogs throughout the study period. Since the

participants were under training to be English language teachers, the contents of their vlogs were related to language teaching issues. The objectives of the case study were to investigate the effects of vlogs on the complexity, accuracy and fluency of students' oral language production and to determine the students' perception of the use of vlogs in their language learning. The study found that the use of vlogs positively affected the participants' accuracy while negatively affecting their complexity and fluency. However, as a whole, the researchers concluded that the benefit offered by vlogging outweighs its drawback as it provides bountiful learning opportunities for the students.

Another case study was conducted among teacher trainees by Ong et al. (2020). The participants were thirteen pre-service Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) teachers from the faculty of education at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. The study was carried out during the second phase of their practicum, which lasted for 12 weeks. The participants were trained to use vlogs and a reflective model to reflect on their lessons as they recorded themselves. Their vlogs were then uploaded onto a private Facebook group. It was observed that the vlogs contents posted were able to promote sharing of ideas on teaching methods in the classrooms and create a positive environment for learning. Non-judgemental and supportive learning environment offered by the private Facebook group enables the participants to post encouraging comments to each other. However, there were technical issues that were raised related to vlogs production. Although these pre-service teachers were savvy in the use of the internet, social media and online platforms, not all of them were able to solve technical problems faced during their vlogs production and would require additional training.

All the studies discussed in this section utilised vlogging to provide ESL speaking practice outside the classrooms. The vlogs were uploaded on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to alleviate the students' anxiety and improve their speaking confidence. Vlogs created by the students were also used as assessments for speaking (Anggraeni et al., 2020). The advantages offered by vlogging seem to be abundant, and it is up to ESL educators to tailor its application to suit their students' needs. The current study envisages validating the use of vlogging in ELT and as an assessment tool among adult learners. It was also conducted to determine whether the claims that vlogging can alleviate speaking anxiety are justified.

### 3. Method

A qualitative research design which is considered the most suitable for the study of L2 classroom teaching, as proposed by Nassaji (2015), was adopted in this study. The data for this study came from focused group interviews. The data collected were analysed thematically and presented descriptively.

### 3.1 The Participants

The present study involved thirty (30) adult learners attending a distance learning programme on a part-time basis at a public university in Malaysia. The study was carried out during April-July 2019 semester before the Covid 19 pandemic started in Malaysia. The participants were second-year Bachelor of Art in Public Administration students who were enrolled in the English for Communication course. The participants' demographic is presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Participants' Demographic Details

Gender		Number
Male		18
Female		12
Age range		
20-25		5
26-30		6
31-35		7
36-40		6
41-50		6
Occupation		
Categories	Jobs	Number
Public defence	Policemen	7
	Firemen	5
Office workers	School offices	4
	Banks	4
	Local council	3
	Broadcasting	1
Business owners	Insurance	2
	Bakery	1
	Computer Shop	1
	Printing Shop	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>

Based on **Table 1**, the participants in the study came from diverse backgrounds. Eighteen males and twelve females participated in the study. Their age ranged from twenty (20) to fifty (50) years old. The participants' occupational background can be divided into three categories which are public defence, office workers and business owners. Twelve (12) of them worked as public defence personnel, seven (7) of them were police officers, and five (5) of them were firefighters. Fourteen (14) of them were office workers, four (4) students worked in school offices, four (4) worked in banks, three (3) worked with the local council, one (1) person

worked at a broadcasting station, and two (2) people worked at insurance companies. Another four (4) participants were business owners. One participant was the owner of a bakery, another was a computer shop proprietor, and two (2) participants were printing shop vendors.

### 3.2 English for Communication Course

English for Communication course is one of the university's requirements, and it carries three (3) credit hours. Classes were conducted once a month which means the students only had face-to-face meetings with the lecturer four (4) times throughout the 14-week semester. Each meeting lasted for four (4) hours. The English for Communication course was a proficiency level course which focused on teaching the four language skills. The students were provided with thematic modules which cover the four skills; 'reading comprehension', 'listening comprehension', 'writing' and 'speaking'. For listening practice, the students were provided with audio recording materials. The fourth hour for every face-to-face meeting was allocated for assessments.

**Table 2.** Assessment Weightage for Each Skill

Language Skills	Assessment	Weightage
Reading Comprehension	1 Test (10%)	40%
	1 Final Exam (30%)	
Listening Comprehension	1 Test	20%
	1 Test (10%)	
Writing	1 Final Exam (10%)	20%
	1 Role Play (10%)	
Speaking	1 Vlog (10%)	20%

**Table 2** shows the assessment weightage for each language skill. 'Reading comprehension' had the highest weightage, which was forty per cent (40%), while 'listening comprehension', 'writing' and 'speaking' were allocated twenty per cent (20%) each. The first 'reading comprehension' and 'writing' tests which were ten per cent (10%) each, were conducted during class. The other thirty (30%) for 'reading' and ten per cent (10%) for 'writing' were allocated for the final examination. 'Listening' test, which was twenty per cent (20%) and 'role play', which was ten per cent (10%), were conducted during class. The assessment weightage for each skill is shown in **Table 1**. Based on **Table 1**, it can be seen that vlog assignment was allocated only ten per cent (10%) out of the total assessment weightage.

**Table 3.** Assessment Criteria for Vlogging

Weightage for Vlog Assignment		
Assessment Criteria		Marks
Content	Informative	10 marks
	Interesting	10 marks
Language	Grammar	20 marks
	Pronunciation	20 marks
Delivery	Fluency	20 marks
	Body Language	10 marks
Video	Overall Recording	10 marks
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 marks</b>
Weightage	100 marks/ 10 = 10 %	

**Table 3** shows the assessment criteria for vlogging assessment. Twenty (20) marks were allocated for ‘content’, forty (40) marks were allocated for ‘language’, thirty (30) marks were allocated for delivery, and ten (10) marks were allocated for ‘video’. Since the objective of the assignment was to improve speaking skills, higher weightage was given to ‘language’, ‘pronunciation’ and ‘fluency’. The total marks given were one hundred (100), which was then converted to ten per cent (10%) of the total assessment marks.

### 3.3 The Scheme of Work for the Study

**Table 4.** Scheme of Work for Vlog Assignment

Period	Stage	Activity
Week 1-3	Planning	Forming groups Choosing themes Writing scripts Editing scripts
Week 4-10	Practising	Practise script reading Recording script reading practice Posting practice script reading videos on the Facebook group
Week 11-13	Recording	Recording the final vlogs Editing the vlogs
Week 14	Posting	Posting the final vlogs on the class Facebook group

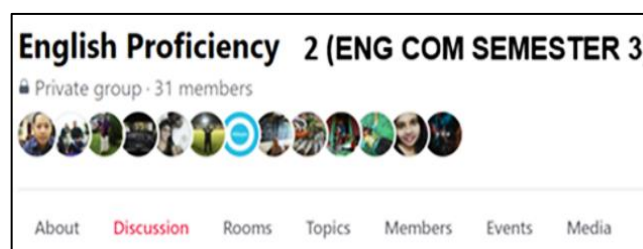
**Table 4** shows the scheme of work for the vlog assignment. Week one to week three was ‘planning stage’, week four to week ten was ‘practising’ stage, week eleven to thirteen was ‘recording’, and finally, week fourteen 14 was for ‘posting’ the final vlogs on the class Facebook group.

#### 3.3.1 Planning Stage

During the first face-to-face meeting, the lecturer instructed the class representative to create a ‘closed/private’ Facebook group for the class by inviting all the students registered for the class, including the lecturer. **Figure 1** shows a snippet of the Facebook group. Although anyone

could request to join the group, only the moderator (the class representative) had the authority to approve their requests, and only those who were in the group could view the updates. This was to create a non-threatening learning environment for the students.

**Figure 1.** The Closed/Private Class Facebook



The next step was for the participants to form their vlog groups. They were instructed to work in pairs, and each pair was required to select a topic based on themes given in their modules. **Table 5** shows the themes chosen by the participants and some examples of their vlog topics.

**Table 5.** Themes for the Vlogs Chosen by the Participants

Themes	Number of groups	Examples of Vlogs Title for Each Theme
Travel	6	Cycling adventure from Alor Setar to Pattani.
Cooking	2	How to cook a delicious meal using a pressure cooker.
Personal Diary	4	A day in the life of a policeman.
Gardening	1	How to cultivate vegetables in your backyard.
Health	2	A gym on my porch.

The duration of the vlogs should be between seven (7) to ten (10) minutes long, and the narration in the video should be at least five (5) minutes long. The students were given two weeks to decide on the topics for their vlogs and to post them in the class Facebook group. The students were encouraged to post comments (in English) on their classmates’ topics and negotiate with each other if their topics overlapped. The participants worked with their partners outside class to come out with the theme and storyline for their vlogs and posted each milestone on their class Facebook group. The lecturer would provide feedback on their scripts which were posted on Facebook. Based on the lecturer’s and their classmates’ feedback, the participants would edit and improve their scripts.

### 3.1.2 Practising Stage

During the next stage, the participants would practice reading the scripts. They would record their script reading practice sessions and post the videos on the class Facebook group. The lecturer would provide feedback on the participants' delivery, such as their pronunciation and facial expressions.

### 3.1.3 Recording and Posting Stages

The final vlogs were recorded between week eleven (11) and week fourteen (14). Meanwhile, the participants were encouraged to post their activities in the form of pictures or videos on the Facebook group to keep the lecturer and other classmates informed of their progress. Ultimately, the participants posted their final vlogs in their class Facebook group at the end of week fourteen (14) to be assessed.

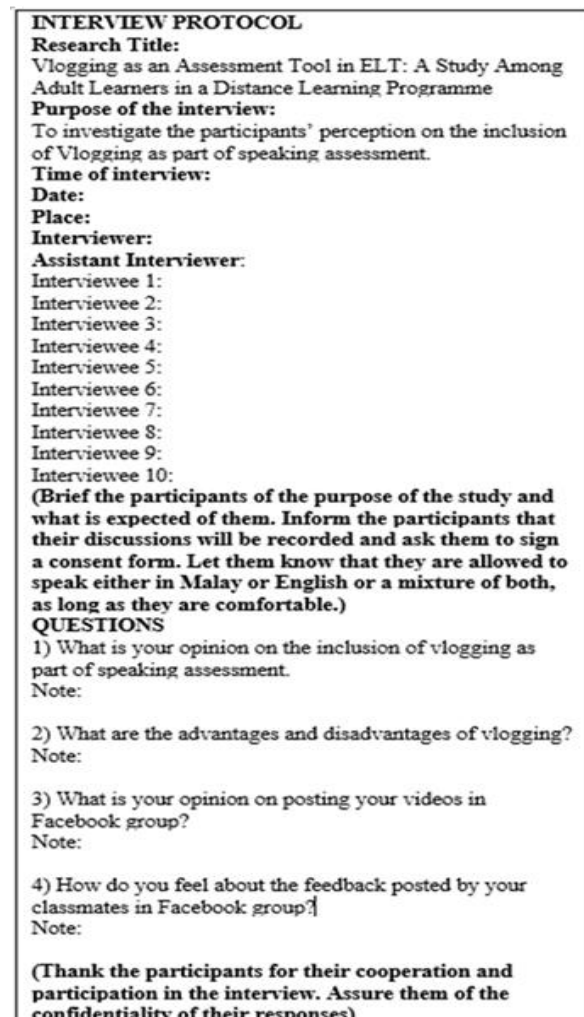
## 3.2 Data Collection

At the end of the study period, the participants were divided into three focus groups of ten participants. The focus group interviews were conducted during the last class of the semester. Before the interview was carried out, an interview protocol, as proposed by Cresswell (2008), was prepared. **Figure 2** shows the interview protocol that was used as a guide in the study.

All the three groups were interviewed on the same day, and each group took about 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted by the researcher (the class lecturer) and assisted by her colleague from a different class. Both lecturers acted as moderators to encourage and prompt the participants to express themselves freely. The interview was semi-structured, and the participants were allowed to express themselves in either English or Bahasa Malaysia. The main objective of the interview was to elicit the participants' opinions on the vlogging assignment, which was used as part of the course's speaking assessment, to address the research questions for the current study.

In addition, the interview also envisioned seeking out the participants' views on the use of the Facebook group as a platform for group interaction. Before the interview started, the participants' consent was sought, and assurance was given that the information gathered during the interview would be treated as confidential and would not have adverse effects on their grades. The interview sessions, which were labelled A, B and C, were audio-recorded. For ease of data analysis, the participants were given identification codes. For example, the first participants from interview sessions A, B and C were labelled as P1A, P1B and P1C, respectively, and the last participants from the three sessions were labelled as P10A, P10B and P10C, respectively. **Table 6** shows samples of how labels were assigned to the participants.

**Figure 2.** Interview Protocol



**Table 6.** Participants' Labelling

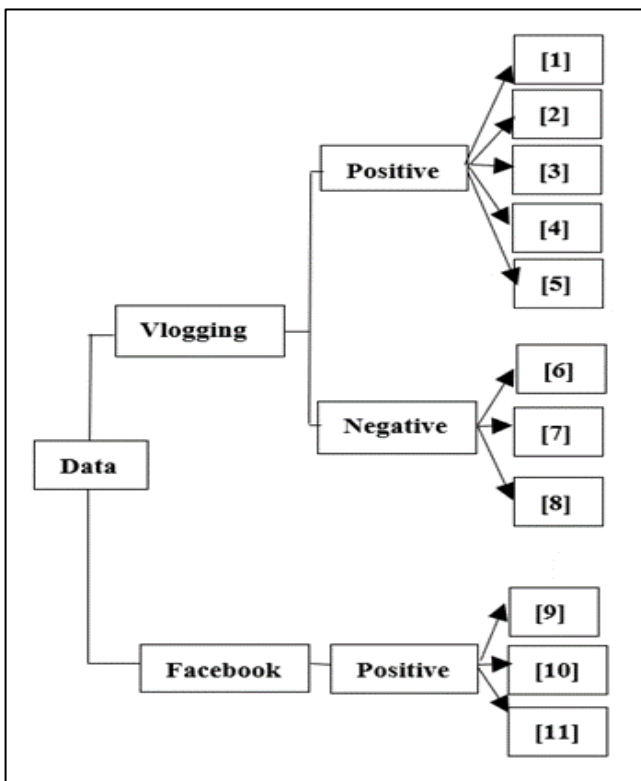
Interview session	Participants	Label
A	1	P1A
	2	P2A
B	1	P1B
	2	P2B
C	1	P1C
	2	P2C

The participants were given the freedom to express themselves in either English or Bahasa Malaysia during the interview; however, all of them tried to communicate in English. Although not all participants were proficient in English and made some grammatical and pronunciation errors, they were legible, and the audio recordings for all sessions were audible, which made data analysis less troublesome.

#### 4. Results

The audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically based on the thematic analysis method proposed by Clarke and Braun (2013). Based on the interview transcriptions, the participants' comments were first sorted according to whether they were in relation to the vlogging assignment (interview questions 1 and 2) or the use of the Facebook group as the platform for class interaction (interview questions 3 and 4). Then, the comments were further sorted based on whether they were positive or negative comments. The results are diagrammatically presented in the form of a thematic analysis network.

**Figure 3.** The Thematic Analysis Network



**Figure 3** shows five sub-themes which have emerged from the positive comments related to the vlogging assignment, which are a) 'Improve self-confidence', which was coded as [1]; b) 'Less stressful', which was coded as [2]; c) 'Provide an opportunity for practice' which was coded as [3]; e) 'Useful for people who want to be content developer' which was coded as [4] and finally f) 'Vlogging is better than role-play' which was coded as [5]. Sub-themes which have emerged from the negative comments are; a) 'It takes too much time', which was coded as [6]; b) 'Unfair for students who are not tech-savvy, which was coded as [7] and c) 'Not valid' which was coded as [8]. Table 7 shows the sub-themes for vlogging which have emerged from the data analysis.

The participants' opinions in relation to the use of vlogging were coded as shown in **Table 7**, and the frequency of the sub-themes being mentioned in the course of the interviews was tabulated in the form of a matrix (refer to **Tables 8 and 9**). **Table 8** shows the positive versus negative opinion matrix for vlogging.

**Table 7.** Sub-themes for Vlogging

Codes	Positive Sub-Themes
[1]	Improve Self-confidence
[2]	Less Stressful
[3]	Opportunity for practice
[4]	Can use knowledge to develop content
[5]	Vlogging better than role-play
Negative Sub-Themes	
[6]	Takes too much time
[7]	Unfair for students who are not techno-savvy
[8]	Not Valid

Based on **Table 8**, the number of times the positive sub-themes emerged from the data outnumbered the negative sub-themes. Sub-theme [1] was mentioned 17 times, sub-theme [2] was mentioned 11 times, sub-theme [3] was mentioned 8 times, while sub-themes [4] and [5] were mentioned 4 and 7 times, respectively. The total number of mentions for the positive sub-theme is 47. On the other hand, the total number of negative sub-themes being mentioned was 29. Sub-theme [6] was mentioned 15 times, while sub-themes [7] and [8] were mentioned 6 and 8 times, respectively. Meanwhile, the summary for the positive and negative opinion matrix are displayed in **Table 9**.

**Table 8.** Positive vs Negative Opinion Matrix

Opinion Matrix		
	Positive	Negative
	3,1,2,1,1,3,4,5,1,3,1,5,2,	6,6,7,8,6,7,8,7,6,6,6,6,6,
	5,5,1,5,1,4,3,5,2,1,1,1,5,	6,7,6,6,6,6,7,7,6
	4,3,4,1,1,2,1,2,1,2,3,3,1,	
	2,2,2,3,1,1,2,2	

**Table 9.** Positive vs Negative Opinion Matrix Summary

Opinion Matrix			
Positive Theme	Number of Mentions	Negative Themes	Number of Mentions
[1]	17	[6]	15
[2]	11	[7]	6
[3]	8	[8]	8
[4]	4		
[5]	7		
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>		<b>19</b>

Meanwhile, as shown in **Table 10**, three positive sub-themes have emerged from the comments related to the use of the Facebook group as the platform for group interaction as well as for posting their vlogs assignment/ assessments.



**Table 10.** Sub-themes for the use of Facebook

Codes	Sub-themes
[9]	Give/receive feedback, motivation and encouragement
[10]	Feel comfortable due to privacy provided by Facebook group
[11]	Can practise writing in English

The sub-themes are a) ‘Give/receive feedback, motivation and encouragement’, which was coded as [9]; b) ‘Feel comfortable due to privacy provided by the Facebook group’, which was coded as [10]; c) ‘Can practise writing in English’ which was coded as [11]. There were no negative comments related to the use of Facebook in the study.

Tables 11 and 12 show opinion matrices for the use of Facebook and its summary, respectively. As mentioned in the previous section, there is no negative comment on the use of the Facebook group as a platform for class interaction. All the participants had positive opinions about the use of the Facebook group. Sub-theme [9] was mentioned 16 times, sub-theme [10] was mentioned 10 times, while sub-theme [11] was mentioned 13 times.

**Table 11.** Opinion Matrix for the use of Facebook

Opinion Matrix
Positive Opinion
9,9,9,10,9,11,11,10,9,9,10,10,9,9,9,9,11,11,10,11,10,10,10,11,11,11,11,9,10,11,11,10,9,9,9,11,11

**Table 12.** Summary of Opinion Matrix for the Use of Facebook

Opinion Matrix	
Sub-Theme	Number of Mentions
[9]	16
[10]	10
[11]	13

The majority of the participants agreed that utilising the Facebook group as the platform for class interaction is beneficial. The following section deals with the findings of the study as the sub-themes that have emerged are discussed descriptively with samples of coded interview excerpts from the transcribed data. The excerpts are the transcriptions of real audio from the recorded interview sessions. They have not been corrected for grammatical errors to preserve the authenticity of the data.

#### 4.1 Participants’ Views on Vlogging Assignment

This section will describe the positive sub-themes which have emerged from the data related to vlogging assignments. Table 13 shows samples of the coded transcriptions with positive sub-themes.

**Table 13.** Samples of coded transcriptions (positive)

Participants’ Label	Sample of Participants’ Coded Quotes
P2A	<i>After a lot of practice reading the script [3], I more confident [1] to speak, if make mistake when do the recording I can repeat so less stress [2]</i>
P4A	<i>Although take a lot of time, I enjoy because I can become YouTuber in future [4]</i>
P8A	<i>Role play caused me heart attack ...(laugh) [5]... vlog less stress [2]</i>
P1B	<i>In my opinion, vlogging good because before this I don’t know how to do recording...I learnt new thing and improve my speaking...pronunciation ...more confident [1] ...I interested to become YouTuber [4] ...overall I enjoy.</i>
P3B	<i>I also don’t like to present in front of the class, role play cause me cannot sleep ...Vlog better [5] [2], I am more confident [1]</i>
P8B	<i>I become more confident [1] to speak because I practice the script many times [3] like more than ten times.</i>
P1C	<i>I agree with my friend...I most stress... when do role play [2]. Vlogging much better[5] ... more confident.</i>
P5C	<i>I more confident [1] to speak, not too shy because not face-to-face... less stress [2]</i>
P7C	<i>I got many practice...practice makes perfect...[3] so I more confident[1].</i>

It can be observed from Table 13 that many participants believed that vlogging assignments were able to improve their self-confidence. Their feelings can be detected by examining the sample excerpts P2A, P1B, P3C and P1C. The participants who came from varied occupational backgrounds indirectly admitted during the interviews that they were anxious by saying that they "cannot sleep", were "most stressed", and it caused them "heart attack" present in English. In addition, it was found that many participants believed that vlogging assignments had helped them in improving their self-confidence, as stated by the participants in the sample excerpts P2A, P8B and P7C. Before the actual vlog recording, they had recorded their script reading practice sessions which required several rounds of rehearsals. Since the participants did not use English in their daily lives, the script reading practices and rehearsals that they did before the actual vlog recording had indirectly increased their English talk time, which is imperative in enhancing speaking ability.

The next finding is directly related to speaking anxiety. All the participants, like many ESL learners, are anxious about speaking in English. Although their anxiety level varies, the fact that the vlog assignment was part of their overall assessment for the course made them more concerned and anxious. However, many of them emphasised that the vlog assignment was less stressful because they could repeat

the recording if they were not satisfied or if they made mistakes, thus, decreasing their anxiety level. Another reason being mentioned was the fact that vlogging did not require them to present face-to-face. From the sample excerpts, it can be seen that P2A, P8A and P5C directly mentioned that vlogging was less stressful.

It was also observed that a few participants preferred vlogging assessment compared to role-play. Performing role-play in front of the class predictably brought about a lot of concerns and tensions among the participants. P8A, P3B and P1C implied that they found vlogging better than role-play due to these reasons. It was similarly brought to the researcher's attention that a few participants (P1B & P4A) who envisaged becoming content developers in the future found vlogging assignments beneficial to them. Although their motivation was probably different from the main objectives of this study, these students not only expressed their satisfaction with the assignment but also put a lot of effort into it.

It can be concluded based on the positive sub-themes that have emerged from data analysis that a large number of participants were of the opinion that vlogging improves their self-confidence because they were able to practise in advance and repeat their presentations until they were satisfied. Thus, vlogging assessment was found to be less stressful than role-playing. A few participants mentioned that the assignment was beneficial because they envisaged being content developers in the future. However, there were also several negative sub-themes which have emerged. **Table 14** shows samples of negative sub-themes that have emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 14.** Samples of coded transcriptions (negative)

Participants' Label	Sample of Participants' Coded Quotes
P1A	<i>I waste time doing vlog...but marks for vlog very little [6]</i>
P4A	<i>I'm not good at making video so I worried affect my marks [7]</i>
P4B	<i>Not fair because some students ask other people to write script [8]</i>
P10B	<i>I only spent short time writing script...and practice...about two to three hours but edit video like ten hours [6]</i>
P3C	<i>I think not suitable for part-time students because...we very busy, no time [6]</i>
P9C	<i>Although Madam said the delivery more important than video quality but if video beautiful, better quality, of course affect our mark, right? Other group used drone... my group used cheap hand phone ...sure his group high marks...not fair... because marks not for language [7] [8]</i>

The first negative sub-theme that emerged was that vlogging assignments took too much time to complete, as stressed by P10B and P3C. Since the participants had enrolled in the programme on a part-time basis, they faced many constraints in juggling their full-time job and part-time studies. P3C felt that vlogging assignment was not suitable for part-time students. Meanwhile, P1A felt that vlogging assignment had taken up an inordinate amount of time, considering it only contributed a small percentage to the overall assessment. Another participant (P10B) lamented that he actually spent more time on the technical part of vlogging, such as video editing, instead of spending time on speaking practice.

Additionally, the participants who were not techno-savvy and unfamiliar with vlogging found themselves to be disadvantaged and thus, felt that the vlogging assessment was biased and unfair towards them, as stressed by P4A and P9C. As discussed in the earlier section, the participants in the study were all working adults from various economic sectors. For example, the participant who worked in broadcasting owned a drone which he usually used to hone his craft, while another participant owned a computer shop which also supplied electronic devices for personal computers. Thus, these two participants were more familiar with the technical side of vlogging compared to the others, which consequently caused the less technically informed to feel intimidated. This has led to the issue of validity and reliability of the assessment being raised by some participants.

Although the assessment criteria for vlogging were provided and explained to the participants (refer to **Table 3**) at the beginning of the study, a few participants felt that the vlogging assessment lacked validity. P9C pointed out that the assessment was seen as evaluating the quality of the vlogs instead of assessing the participants' English-speaking ability. Since the vlogging assignment was done outside class hours, P4B claimed that there were participants who had assigned other people to write the scripts for their vlog assignment, thus considering the assessment invalid. P4B and P9C expressed their dissatisfaction with the vlogging assignment being used as one of the assessments for the course.

Suffice to say that although vlogging assignment allowed the participants to practise and repeat their presentations, the time spent on recording and editing the videos was much longer than the time spent on speaking practices. The participants who were not tech-savvy found themselves to be disadvantaged and thus, felt that the vlogging assessment was biased and unfair towards them.

#### 4.2 Participants' Views on the Use of Facebook

This section will describe the sub-themes which have emerged from the data related to the use of Facebook groups as a platform for class interactions. Three positive sub-

themes related to Facebook have emerged, and there is no negative sub-theme. **Table 15** shows samples of coded interview excerpts for comments related to the use of Facebook. Similar to **Tables 13** and **14**, the excerpts are the transcriptions of real audio from the recorded interview sessions. They have not been corrected for grammatical errors to preserve the authenticity of the data.

**Table 15.** Samples of coded interview transcriptions

Participants' Label	Sample of Participants' Coded Quotes
P3A	<i>I am happy when my classmates give feedback. I get a lot of motivation [9].</i>
P5B	<i>Comment by madam, I don't feel bad at all because our group is private [10].</i>
P8C	<i>I not confident to give feedback because my English not perfect so I just cheer my friend [9].</i>
P9A	<i>I don't use English for my personal FB only in group FB I comment in English, can practise writing [11].</i>
P10B	<i>Sometimes my classmate joke in the group, I feel happy and want to reply but my English not good, so just enjoy [9].</i>
P1C	<i>I very careful when write my comment. I afraid of making mistakes with grammar. But I'm more confident to write comment in English now [11].</i>
P5A	<i>I very comfortable to chat in the class FB group because only us [10].</i>
	<i>If I make grammar mistake, I won't be too embarrassed...(laugh) because the group is private [10].</i>

As mentioned earlier, three sub-themes have emerged for the use of Facebook groups as a platform for group interaction. Firstly, it allows the participants to give and receive feedback freely while motivating and encouraging their classmates as stressed by P3A, P8C and P10B. It can be seen from the excerpts that the participants were pleased to give and receive feedback. Although some of them mentioned that they were not confident to give useful feedback, they encouraged and motivated each other by leaving positive comments in their Facebook group. For example, P9A felt that she could practise writing in English when she posted comments in the Facebook group, while P1C felt that the exercise had made her more confident in writing in English. In short, the majority of the participants felt comfortable interacting in the Facebook group because of the privacy it provided. In addition, they did not feel embarrassed even if they received negative feedback knowing that only the group members could see the comments. It can also be inferred that the students were comfortable interacting with each other in the class Facebook group due to its 'private' setting.

## 5. Discussion

Based on the findings in the previous sections, the three research questions formulated for this study will be discussed in turn. The first research question is how vlogging assignments can lessen the participants' English language speaking anxiety and increase their speaking confidence. Although adult learners are said to be more motivated and driven (Kahu et al., 2013), many participants in the study revealed that they lacked self-confidence and were insecure when it comes to speaking in English, which is consistent with the observation made by Ab Latif (2015). Due to the constraints posed by distance learning, the students often lacked practice and motivation to use English in their communication outside the classrooms. This finding is in agreement with the finding reported by Fadilah (2016). It was found that vlogging activities in the study were able to lessen the participants' anxiety. This finding is in line with previous studies, which reported that speaking anxiety among the participants decreased significantly after conducting vlogging activities (Anil, 2016; Madzlan et al., 2020; Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020). The vlogging assignment in the current study was able to provide more opportunities for the participants to practise speaking in English outside class hours. For many L2 learners, the classroom is the only place where they can practise the language they are learning (Savaşçı, 2014). Due to limited face-to-face class time, their ESL lecturer was not able to provide the occasions for real practice in speaking during the class, which is a common problem faced by distance learners, as pointed out by Derakhshan et al. (2015). Since English is not their language of choice and is rarely used in their daily lives, the script reading practices and rehearsals that they did before the actual vlog recordings had indirectly increased their English talk time, which is essential in enhancing speaking ability, as stressed by Mohammed et al. (2020). A similar finding was reported by Anil (2016) and Watkins (2012), who found that vlogging activities conducted by the participants in their studies were able to increase the students' talk time. The practise sessions that the participants had during the preparation of their vlogs became an effective strategy to lessen their anxiety and consequently improve their speaking confidence. This finding is also consistent with the finding reported by Madzlan et al. (2020), who attributed the participants' increase in confidence level to the practices that they had in the process of recording the vlogs.

Next, the second research question on whether vlogs posted by the students in their Facebook group can be used as speaking assessment to lessen the participants' test-taking anxiety will be addressed. As stated by Zeng and Cheng (2018), most language learners would experience a certain level of anxiety when sitting for examinations and doing assessments. Test-takers would experience differential levels of anxiety in different testing situations because language

anxiety is situation-oriented anxiety. Thus, it is impossible to totally eliminate the students' test-taking anxiety. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that posting their vlogs in the Facebook group instead of presenting in front of the class was able to alleviate their test-taking anxiety, which makes it a suitable assessment tool. This finding is consistent with the finding reported by Anggraeni et al. (2020) that students perceived vlog-mediated speaking assessment and activities as beneficial and, thus, can be a good assessment tool. In addition, similar to the finding by Sahari et al. (2016), this study also discovered that presentations and role-plays in front of the class contributed to high levels of anxiety among the participants. Since they were anxious about their speaking performance, vlogging provided them with an environment where they felt less threatened. However, there are some downsides to using the vlog as an assessment tool which has emerged from the findings. Firstly, the issues of reliability and validity of using vlogs the participants posted in the Facebook group as part of their speaking assessment were raised. There were a few participants who claimed that some of their classmates had assigned other people to prepare the scripts for their vlogs. As highlighted by Arnold (2012), computer-mediated speaking assessment is akin to a take-home or open-book test. Therefore, it is difficult to gauge who or how many are working on the assessment, and ESL lecturers should be aware of this drawback when planning the scheme of work and test specifications. A good assessment not only requires content and construct validity but also face validity. An assessment is said to have face validity if it looks as if it measures what it is supposed to measure (Li, 2011).

Another concern raised in this study is whether vlogging assignment used as part of the speaking assessment is seen as measuring what it intends to measure. Some of the participants were of the opinion that the assessment was measuring the participants' vlogging skills instead of speaking skills. Similar issues were raised by participants in the study conducted by Ong et al. (2020). This is not unexpected as many adult learners are advanced in age compared to the conventional university students who are younger and are more exposed to technology. Some participants in the current study were not techno-savvy and thus, found it difficult to adapt to multimodal teaching and learning and were not ready to embrace the challenges posed by it. A study by Nasir (2020), conducted among adult distance learners in a Malaysian institution of higher learning, confirmed that one of the many aspects of readiness they lacked was technical readiness. In the current study, the researcher had assumed that all the participants would be able to produce vlogs even without any training since most of them were familiar with the use of social media and online platforms. In reality, not all of them were capable of solving technical problems related to vlogs production, and this has become the bone of contention. A similar issue was highlighted by Taqwa et al. (2019), who found the

participants in their study were facing problems in the editing process of vlogging. Watkins (2012) stressed that vlogging could be successfully employed to improve oral communication only if the technology is accessible, the class size is optimal, and the students are ready and willing to engage in the activity. Both students and lecturers should have some knowledge of the technical requirements for vlogs production, such as the hardware, software and video hosting websites (Watkins, 2012). Otherwise, it can be very challenging for both parties. Thus, it is recommended that some adjustments be made to the scheme of work for the course in the present study. Training on basic vlogging skills should be included in the scheme of work so that the objective of the course to improve speaking skills can be achieved without being overshadowed by the students' lack of technical skills in vlogging. In addition, speaking assessment, whether face-to-face or virtual, is subjective in nature, as it involves human judgement. As stressed by Ockey et al. (2019), the construct of speaking ability is multidimensional, but computer-mediated oral assessment can only assess certain aspects of this ability. Thus, appropriate measures should be taken to increase its reliability, such as providing detailed rubrics and the use of two assessors or raters.

Finally, the third research question, which seeks to determine the participants' views on the use of the Facebook group as a platform for group interaction, is addressed. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the majority of the participants were comfortable interacting with each other in the class's Facebook group due to its 'private' setting. The Facebook group was able to provide the participants with a supportive and non-threatening learning environment, as concurred by other studies which had used this Facebook feature (Ab Manan et al., 2012; Andini, 2019). In short, the majority of the participants felt comfortable interacting in the Facebook group because of the privacy it provided. In the current study, the participants stated that they did not feel embarrassed even if they received negative feedback, knowing that only the group members could see the comments, unlike the participants in Ong's et al. (2020) study who expressed their fears of being judged despite the Facebook group's 'private' setting. However, Ong et al. (2020) still concluded that overall, the Facebook group provides the participants with a supportive learning environment. Similarly, the current study found that the participants were comfortable interacting with each other in the class Facebook group since it enables them to post encouraging and motivating comments. Andini (2019) shares the same opinion, as the participants in her study also stated that they felt comfortable expressing their ideas through Facebook groups. From these findings, it can be inferred that 'confidentiality' feature offered by the social media platforms is important and should be considered when deciding which platform to use for vlogging activities. In a similar study, Wulandari (2019) had chosen to use a private

class Instagram account for her students to upload their vlogs for the same reason, to provide the students with an unthreatening learning environment. However, in another study by Sari (2017), the students' vlogs uploaded on the YouTube channel were set as 'public'. She reported that incorporating vlogging into her teaching had helped improve her students' motivation and confidence to communicate in English since the YouTube channel has provided them with an 'audience'. The participants in Sari's (2017) study were young adults and were more comfortable with technology. Thus, the sense of having the 'audience' encouraged and motivated them to produce interesting vlogs. In contrast, if the participants' vlog posts in the present study were made public, it may cause distress among the participants simply because adult learners are fearful of making mistakes and being judged (Cubukcu, 2007). Thus, the decision to utilise the Facebook group as the platform for posting the vlogs and for the group discussions in the study is appropriate.

There are three significant findings from this study that can be added to the body of literature related to vlogging and to provide more evidence to support the conclusions made by previous studies. Firstly, vlogging can alleviate ESL learners' anxiety by providing them with the opportunities to use the language outside their classrooms, which corresponds to the findings reported by Anggraeni et al. (2020), Madzlan et al. (2020), Mandasari and Aminatun (2020), Saputro et al. (2020) and Ong et al. (2020). Secondly, with proper planning and supportive infrastructure, students' vlogs uploaded on social media platforms can be used as part of or totally replace face-to-face speaking assessments for distance learners. However, further research and careful planning are required to ensure that the assessment meets the principles of a successful assessment strategy which are validity, reliability and fairness, as stressed by Akimov et al. (2020). Finally, the availability of 'confidentiality' feature should be the main consideration when deciding which social media platform to choose for the class vlogging activities, especially when dealing with adult learners.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that incorporating vlogging and Facebook group as part of ESL instruction is viable, and if properly planned, they can become powerful teaching and learning as well as assessment tools, especially among adult learners. However, ESL educators should be cautious when evaluating the student's vlogs to ensure that the marks awarded are based on the students' speaking performance and not on their vlogging skills. ESL educators should work towards striking a balance between the issues of validity/reliability and practicality. An implication of this study for educational institutions is the call for better preparation for the world's post-pandemic new form of education, online distance learning (ODL). Face-to-face interactions will still be predictably minimised to adhere to certain standard

operating procedures (SOP) imposed by institutions of higher learning to ensure the safety of their students and staff; thus, incorporating the use of social media in ELT is becoming more important to compensate for the loss of face-to-face teaching and learning time.

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