Formulating EFL Writing Lecturers' Expectations: Lessons from Islamic Tertiary Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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This research was designed to investigate which factors influenced the formation of lecturers' expectations amid online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak in an Indonesian Islamic university. The recent study employed an exploratory case study by observing online EFL writing learning activities, interviewing the three lecturers, and collecting documents. The data was then analyzed qualitatively using an interactive model. Lecturers' expectations in this study were viewed from the key focus of expectation: feedback provided by lecturers. They established class-level expectations, not individual ones as primary and secondary levels. This study elucidates Islamic university lecturers' factors contributing to form expectations: lecturers' past teaching experiences and teaching self-efficacy. Lecturers have not highly adjusted to any change that emerged in online learning. Accordingly, they have not shown firm belief in grouping students and assuring students' originality in composing essays. At the same time, the students' demographic factors were motivation and gender. Female students showed higher motivation through participating more often during discussions. It yielded more learning feedback they received. Implications of this study were noted for self-reflection among lecturers to establish high expectations for students to enhance their learning.


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berpartisipasi selama diskusi, sehingga mereka menerima umpan balik pembelajaran yang lebih banyak. Implikasi dari penelitian ini berupa refleksi diri para dosen untuk menetapkan harapan yang tinggi bagi mahasiswa sehingga dapat meningkatkan pembelajaran mereka.

INTRODUCTION

The study of teacher expectation has prevailed for more than 50 years. It was inherently marked by the seminal work of Pygmalion in the classroom proposed by Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968a). Teachers in the Oak school judged based on students' scores on IQ tests at the beginning of the year. Students who were identified as bloomers would get increments in their later achievement tests and vice versa. In their experimental study, Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968b) depicted that at the start of the school year, teachers were led to believe that some pupils could show significant enhancement in school during the course of the year. Accordingly, they treated students based on expectations and responded to their students based on their needs. Rubie-Davies (2010) confirmed that teachers' expectations influence students' behaviour and subsequent performance. Friedrich, Flunger, Nagengast, Jonkmann, & Trautwein (2015) contended that teachers' projections for students' future achievement at school or opinions about students' current capacity for academic success had been used to measure teacher expectations. A study executed by Spoel, Noroozi, Schuurink, & Ginkel (2020) indicated considerable differences in teachers' perceptions of their expectations and experiences with online instruction. Only teachers with a moderate amount of ICT experience found remote instruction to be more beneficial than they had expected. If teachers become more aware of the possibilities of using technology, the gap between what teachers expect and what they encounter will be measured.

Wang, Rubie-Davies, & Meissel (2019) reported classroom exchanges of high and low expectation teachers viewed from five key focuses. First, the teacher's teaching statements were found in different categories: orientation, previous knowledge, and explanation/instruction. Second, teacher questioning. Third, the teacher responds to students' answers (e.g. positive comment, negative comment, feedback, question more, repeat the answer, explain, and repeat or rephrase the question). Fourth, procedural statements deal with establishing routines at the semester's first meeting. Fifth, teachers used behaviour management statements to manage student behaviour. At last, feedback consists of praise, criticism, and learning feedback. Praise was defined as positive comments to a student or group, while criticism comprised unfavourable words that targeted an individual or a group. Whilst, learning feedback was limited to a few phrases in which students were informed about their progress on a task. However, the researchers in this study would concentrate on teachers' feedback.

Lecturers' expectations at the tertiary level are now a flourishing area. Lecturers establish class-level lecturers' expectations since students are more homogeneous in terms of study skills. A study conducted in the two Chinese universities highlighted that lecturers established normatively class-level expectations when they held high expectations for a particular class. Therefore, they will also hold a high expectation for other classes (Li & Rubie-Davies, 2016). In another study, lecturers in Dutch higher education tend to form their expectations concerning students' motivation and prior academic performance (Wijnia, Loyens, Derous, & Schmidt, 2016). In the following two years, Li & Rubie-Davies (2018) reasonably claimed that essential sources of lecturer expectations in a Chinese university emerged from students' demographic and lecturer-related factors.

Four student-related factors contributed to lecturer expectations. First, students’ previous academic accomplishments is as the source of lecturers’ expectations. It has been obtained from the College Entrance Examination. They viewed such scores as the essential representation of students' academic achievement before beginning their higher education. However, a study conducted by Batten, Batey, Shafe, & Gubby (2013) found that the teachers’ expectations of high
and low prior achievement did not differ significantly. It makes the finding on this factor remains inconclusive. The second factor came from students’ motivation. The teachers predicted that students would achieve well because of their desire to get their university degrees and get a promising career. Third, lecturers have frequently emphasized the importance of independence and self-driven study for students’ study skills. And fourth, lecturers developed stereotypes of interdisciplinary differences in language learning. Lecturer-related factors, i.e. teaching experience and self-efficacy, also contributed to lecturers’ expectation formation. A study noted that beliefs in one’s capabilities to “bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 783). Previous research conducted by Li & Rubie-Davies (2018) revealed that lecturers seemed to be expecting similar achievements of present students based on their work experience with previous students. Lecturers with high efficacy had the concrete belief in their competence to enhance students’ learning. Contrarily, lecturers with poor efficacy tended to have a low expectation of overcoming students’ perceived deficiencies.

Conversely, teachers set expectations for individual students in primary and secondary levels as they are more reliant on their teachers. Furthermore, most students rely on their teachers for knowledge and follow the teacher’s precise instructions. We learned that teachers in the primary and secondary levels formed their expectations with more references to students’ demographic factors. Student gender (Catsambis, Mulkey, Buttar, Steelman, & Koch, 2012; Watson et al., 2019), socio-economic status or SES (Gregory & Huang, 2013), and ethnicity (Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016), were frequently referred to as moderate teacher expectations in both primary and secondary education. The study conducted on Dutch primary schools by Timmermans, Kuijper, & van der Werf (2015), yielded teacher expectation bias for student gender and socio-economic status. Teachers tended to establish higher expectations for females and students from high-SES.

Motivated by the aforementioned findings, the present study attempted to explore factors that influenced lecturers to form expectations, especially from lecturers’ feedback. Only a few studies have explored the determinants of lecturer expectations in higher education that were conducted in the different areas (China and Netherlands universities). Different contexts of study may result in different findings as well. Nevertheless, no studies explore the basis of lecturer expectations in Indonesian tertiary education. The critical contribution of this study is it provided information that lecturers based their expectations in EFL writing courses. Such information could assist the lecturers in being mindful in treating their students to establish high expectations for all students. Therefore, students are motivated to learn vigorously. Furthermore, there is a dearth of qualitative studies on lecturers’ expectations. Accordingly, to address these gaps, the present research records the findings of Islamic university lecturers’ expectations in the teaching of writing during online learning in the outbreak of COVID-19.

**METHODS**

A case study was employed because the described topic calls for a detailed and "in-depth" description of a social phenomenon. At the same time, the researcher does not control the events (Yin, 2018). This research was conducted for a semester that was completed in two parts. The first part focused on exploring the lecturers’ expectations in writing, which focuses on feedback given by lecturers. In the second part, the researchers explored further Islamic university lecturers’ reasonings behind their expectations.

Three university lecturers (a female and two males) along with their 106 students (approximately 33-37 students per class) were recruited. This research was conducted in the second semester of the English Education and Letters Department in an Islamic university in a small city in Indonesia. It was chosen regarding ease of finding the participants, and they were...
eager and accessible to be investigated. Two lecturers taught in the Argumentative Writing course while a lecturer taught in English for Professional Communication course. Each consists of 14 meetings followed by a mid-term and a final exam. Complete demographic information from lecturers and students is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

### Table 1: Demographic details and pseudonyms of lecturer participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Work Experience</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lecturer D</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lecturer F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lecturer I</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Demographic details of student participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>89.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>97.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To maintain the ethics, consent was obtained from the participants and the head of the departments. In the initial part, lecturers were observed during their online learning. The synchronous meetings were accomplished through Google Meet, WhatsApp Group, and Google Classroom, while asynchronous ones were conducted through giving assignments that must be submitted in Schoology, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp Groups. Before observing online learning, the researchers collected the documents of the semester learning plan developed by the lecturers. In observing the online learning, the researchers were non-participant observers in which they did not engage in any learning activities. Each online learning was recorded in the video during Google Meet and screen capture of WhatsApp Group, Google Classroom, and Schoology. Online observations aimed to obtain data about how they expected students viewed from their feedback and the factors contributing to forming their expectations.

Subsequently, the researchers interviewed lecturers in the Indonesian language to investigate the factors beyond their expectations. The researchers adapted the questions developed by Li & Rubie-Davies (2018). Semi-structured interviews were employed in both online and face-to-face interviews as lecturers preferred. They were interviewed twice for each. The interviews were conducted after the sixth meeting. Each was conducted for approximately an hour. Each lecturer provided different pieces of information; hence all of the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. To ensure that there was no error during transcription, the researchers checked the transcripts three times and asked help from a postgraduate student to recheck.

The collected data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014). In the early step, the researchers condensed the collected data. Those data were categorized, focused, and coded, while unused data were discarded. The
researchers used first and second-cycle coding. After that, the obtained data were grouped into the form of a topic or theme. Secondly, the process displayed the data that have been sorted to find the most frequent codes built in the most salient categories. Eventually, the researchers concluded and verified the conclusion. The framework for this research was based on teachers’ expectations viewed from teacher’s feedback (Rubie-Davies, 2007; Wang et al., 2019) and possible factors that influence university teachers in forming expectations (Li & Rubie-Davies, 2018).

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This exploratory case study found shreds of evidence that Islamic university lecturers established class-level, not individual lecturer’s expectations. They gave praises and criticisms towards students’ responses. Nevertheless, they gave learning feedback to students’ essays randomly on particular appropriateness criteria. The limited-time also influenced them in giving learning feedback. They based their expectations upon lecturers’ and students’ demographic factors. Some students’ characteristics that have been widely documented in primary or secondary schools as the main bases of teacher expectations, like their ethnic group (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007), socio-economic status or SES (Gut, Reimann, & Grob, 2013), did not emerge from the data analysis in the present study. Two themes emerged from the factors that lecturers used to form expectations in the writing classroom, especially viewed from lecturers’ feedback as one of the keys focuses in lecturer’s expectations. Following is a more detailed description of elicitation:

**Students’ Demographic Factors**

a. **Students’ Motivation**

Students’ motivation was considered a factor that influenced the formation of EFL writing lecturer expectations at the Islamic university level. Female students in Lecturer D’s class showed high motivation through participating in the discussion. He has taught that class since the previous semester so that students know the way he taught. In each meeting, at least three students asked questions in the WhatsApp Group. Lecturer D gave feedback in praise and more learning feedback on their essays in a synchronous meeting through Google Meet. Feedback in the form of criticisms was also given by Lecturer D for students who arbitrarily composed the essays by grabbing information from the internet without noticing the sources.

The other interesting findings portrayed that students who were accustomed to asking in the WhatsApp Group were also actively asking and sharing opinions in Google Meet. Even when Lecturer D gave learning feedback on their drafts, they could thoroughly clarify and ask for further explanations. In this way, Lecturer D demonstrated a positive bias in evaluating the work of high expectation students, interacted with them in a more compassionate and supportive manner, and provided them with more opportunities to respond to more challenging questions and more praise (Jussim & Eccles, 1992). As a result, after their essays were reviewed, fifty per cent of students improved their essays. The following transcripts confirm the findings of online observation.

> “Students showed their progress. Hence, half of them showed progress, while the remaining did not show any improvement.” (Lecturer D. Interview. March 30, 2021)

Students in Lecturer I’s class had high motivation as well. She always strengthened students’ understanding by reviewing the previous meeting material and giving learning feedback on three of the students’ drafts, appropriate, medium appropriate, and inappropriate. Students were allowed to share their opinion. Thus she praised those who answered appropriately. However, those who have not answered correctly were given any further explanation. She often asked students the components of argumentative essays to ensure students included them in their drafts. Students who further asked questions improved their essays based on the online observations. The result from the interview leads to similar findings.
“Many students made improvements. Even on Sunday, some students texted me whether their assignments have been reviewed yet. After I gave a review in class, students revised their drafts.” (Lecturer I. Interview. June 5, 2021)

Students in Lecturer F’s class did not frequently ask questions. Conversely, in the tenth meeting, it was portrayed that students were quite active in asking about how to make an application letter. It is important to note that students’ motivation was reflected in their essays, which have not been original. Lecturer F only provided learning feedback at the end of the meeting on students’ mid-term and final tests. The following interview chunks provide evidence of this phenomenon.

"Students have not encouraged themselves to write originally.” (Lecturer F. Interview. April 11, 2021)

Students’ motivation was decidedly highlighted since they generally decreased in this distance learning. In the online observations, we could notice that students complained about an unstable internet connection that made them quit Google Meet. In this case, technological issues in distance learning (Ozkara & Cakir, 2018). It yielded low involvement because they did not thoroughly listen to the lecturers’ explanations. They only submitted assignments to meet the requirements because the writing course is the prerequisite course for the writing course in the next semester.

Students’ motivation was considered a factor that influenced how lecturers establish expectations. Lecturers treated students differently based on their motivation, not their prior writing achievement. A similar pattern was obtained in Wijnia et al. (2016), who revealed that students’ motivation and engagement as the base lecturer form expectations. It suggests that this high expectation has valuable effects on students’ learning (Good & Brophy, 2008). Teachers who have such expectations treat students with more feedback and learn.

b. Students’ Genders

Lecturers implicitly viewed students’ gender as the basis of their expectations. Our findings on online observations in Lecturer D’s and Lecturer I’s classes hint that female student were more active and engaged in the learning. Lecturer D’s class consists of twenty-eight female students and eight male students. Female students in his class eagerly asked questions after watching an explanation video on his YouTube channel. Nevertheless, only three male students asked queries through the WhatsApp Group. Female students submitted their assignments at the top turn. Consequently, Lecturer D gave more detailed learning feedback on their essays. On the contrary, he only gave learning feedback to the three male students, in which two of them were provided slight learning feedback as the time would be over. This phenomenon has asserted that Lecturer D has different expectations among them. He also reported these fruitful findings in the interview.

“I think male and female students are similar, but I established higher expectations for females as they had higher perseverance. Because of the higher number of female students, I established higher expectations. They also have proven their scores.” (Lecturer D. Interview. March 30, 2021)

Further findings were depicted in I’s classroom, consisting of thirty-three female students and four male students. She also established different expectations for the female students through feedback in their drafts. Although the drafts being reviewed were appropriate, inappropriate, and medium appropriate, those always belonged to female students. Whereas Lecturer I has activated all of the students to participate in online learning, only a male student shared his arguments during the thirteenth online observation. Lecturer I reported:
“Female students were active. Males were not regularly active, even I texted two of them. Boys, your assignment has not been appropriate. However, they reasoned about their limited signal and internet quota.” (Lecturer I. Interview. June 5, 2021)

In contrast, Lecturer F did not establish different expectations for female and male students during online observations. He answered students’ questions normally the same between them. While pupils in his class tended to be less active, those who often asked questions were female. This finding is by a finding reported in an interview with Lecturer F.

“Female students were more active, I have not heard male voices during Google Meet.” (Lecturer F. Interview. April 11, 2021)

Contrary to the findings of Wijnia et al. (2016) and Li & Rubie-Davies (2018), we found that students’ gender played an important role in how lecturers established expectations. The three lecturers implicitly had higher expectations for female students as they more often asked questions and argued some opinions. Lecturer I often questioned more female students who could answer correctly. She often praised them for their correct answers. When they could not answer a specific question, she tended to wait for them, paraphrasing the questions to be easier. This result ties well with previous studies wherein high expectation teachers tend to provide more feedback to the high achieving students, give them higher-level questions, and give more extended time to answer (Wang et al., 2018). Besides, teachers viewed females more than males, especially positive oral feedback. A similar conclusion was reached by Chen et al. (2011) that female students receive more positive oral feedback from teachers than male students.

Lecturers-Related Factors
a. Lecturers’ Past Teaching Experiences

Lecturers have high expectations of student’s academic achievements, the same as their past teaching experience. Lecturer F expected students to write as original in a conventional classroom. Nevertheless, he has less experience engaging students in life writing practice. The lecturers did not have past teaching experience regarding giving feedback in online learning. Thus the learning feedback was given randomly based on criteria of appropriateness level. The result from the interview revealed that he held a similar expectation with the previous students before the pandemic.

“I will expect the same way with the previous class before the pandemic. However, we have a different learning process.” (Lecturer F. Interview. June 7, 2021)

The same problem yielded in Lecturer D’s classroom. He acknowledged that he had difficulties monitoring how students finished the assignment because they were doing it at home, not in an online on-the-spot essays classroom. Some students described the object not based on their five senses in the descriptive essay. He praised students’ original product although it was simple. However, he criticized students’ long but not original essays. This appears to be the same case with Lecturer F. Lecturer D had the same expectation of students’ academic achievement being related to the condition before the pandemic attack.

“My expectation is the same as the previous students, and I expect them to write appropriately.” (Lecturer D. Interview. March 30, 2021)

Students in Lecturer I’s class often did not compose paragraphs as instructed because they did not pay much attention to the explanations. Hence, they missed any elements of introduction, body, and conclusion of argumentative essays. Alternatively, Lecturer I has highlighted students’ common mistakes that must be avoided as she expected students would give the best result in the final essay. She expected students to perform as her past teaching experience in the conventional classroom from this standpoint. An identical result was seen in an interview with Lecturer I.
Lecturers responded that they appeared to have consistent expectations for different students they taught, believing that their previous work experiences and previous students’ achievements were likely to repeat themselves in their present class. Even though the conditions before and after the pandemic were entirely different, lecturers held the same expectations for students’ academic achievement. They strive to achieve their learning objectives as mentioned in their lesson plans. Their behaviour and judgments are based on the beliefs that they have developed in their past teaching experiences. This is consistent with what has been found in a previous study conducted by Nespor (1987), which concluded that teachers’ beliefs and actions are shaped by their previous experiences.

b. Teaching Self Efficacy

Another factor that came from the lecturer is teaching self-efficacy in which two aspects emerged in this study. The first teaching efficacy is related to grouping students. The lecturers were less confident in their abilities to activate students in group work. While lecturers were still hesitant to group students since they were worried they had not recognized each other. Li, Zhang, & Parr (2020) elucidate the needs of small-group students talks before individualized writing, which is beneficial in enabling students to generate content, language, and organization for subsequent individual writing; providing opportunities for collaborative linguistic problem-solving; allowing them to organize the group and scaffold each other collectively to manage the task’s ongoing process; and helping people communicate their feelings and maintain group peace on the surface. From the online observations, Islamic university lecturers did not show firm beliefs in involving students in a group task and notified professedly low expectations for their students. The following are excerpts in interviews that support the findings in online observations.

“I did not use Project-Based Learning because this pandemic does not enable us to monitor who was involved in doing the tasks.” (Lecturer D. Interview. June 9, 2021)

"Students could not brainstorm their ideas, or listen to other friends’ arguments. It is seemingly complicated to make a group in this pandemic era.” (Lecturer I. Interview. June 5, 2021)

“Even in this pandemic era, students have not met and recognized each other. ..., they did not know their friends’ characteristics.” (Lecturer F. Interview. June 6, 2021)

Students would be more isolated since they could not interact in conventional learning because they did not have social relationships. Also, lecturers might use inadequate visual or verbal cues for socialization and communication in online learning. This basic finding is consistent with research showing that if students could communicate with one another face to face, they were more motivated (Ozkara & Cakir, 2018). Lecturers’ efficacies in not grouping students were also caused by their less past teaching experiences in online learning. To figure out the problem related to students’ activeness and both lecturer and students isolation, Huang et al. (2020), who implemented open educational resources (OER) and open educational practices (OEP) in China, suggested lecturers should design courses around OER (open educational resources) and provide students with the task of finding content to solve problems, create reports, or do research. Precisely, open educational practices (OEP) such as available teaching, open collaboration, and open assessment should be implemented to maintain student motivation and engagement throughout this long term of remote learning.
Another promising finding regarding teaching self-efficacy was stressing students’ originality product. The lecturers only established a rule that plagiarism is prohibited, but they did not provide any activities to develop students’ awareness to avoid plagiarism. Furthermore, institutional policy and regulation on plagiarism has not been clearly described to students. Students who plagiarized would get their scores decreased. Besides, the lecturers neither established different forms of assessment to prevent plagiarism nor engaged themselves in anti-plagiarism pedagogy. An approach suggested by Ellery (2008) was that teachers could incorporate plagiarism-related issues into an academic writing tutorial module. The online observations showed that lecturers did not have rigid beliefs in preventing plagiarism. The results of the interview found clear support for the online observations.

“I asked students to explain their essay in Google Meet .... I asked whether it was authentic or not, if it was authentic, they could not explain, there was no voice.” (Lecturer D. Interview. March 30, 2021)

“I would check in detail. If they plagiarize ..., I think they would not achieve the learning objectives. Their products have met my expectations so far, but I did not know their processes.” (Lecturer F. Interview. June 6, 2021)

“Students took little information from several sources, from several articles written in the Indonesian language that was translated in Google Translate.” (Lecturer I. Interview. June 5, 2021)

The lecturers showed low teaching efficacy in detecting students’ product originality. Gamage, de Silva, & Gunawardhana (2020) demonstrated that in a remote online exam, students could cite different sources and look for the help of a friend or a freelancer to complete the questions promptly. Students may perform academic misconduct or plagiarize since they lack knowledge about plagiarism as well as referencing. Based on interviews, lecturers could not control students doing assessments at home. Assessing students during distance learning is laborious in terms of originality as they were asked to produce an essay at home then submit it to the lecturers. As mentioned earlier, lecturers’ low efficacies were caused by their less past teaching experiences in maintaining students’ writing originalities.

CONCLUSION

Three Islamic university lecturers hold class-level expectations in the online writing courses during the pandemic. Those expectations were viewed from lecturers’ feedback. A limitation of this study is that the number of lecturers researched. The current study has a similar limitation in that there was no variety of semesters being observed. Additionally, only a key focus of lecturers’ expectations is being scrutinized in this study. Therefore, any generalizations based on existing findings are limited. The emergent factors that influenced them in forming their expectations differed from the previous study because of the different study contexts. Three lecturers in this study based their expectations upon students’ gender and motivation, lecturers’ self-efficacies, and past teaching experiences. This is a fruitful finding in understanding lecturers’ expectations since it resulted in the lecturers’ different behaviour. Understanding a lecturer’s expectations will increase the lecturers’ awareness that their expectations influence their teaching practices. Besides, lecturers need to develop high expectations to boost students’ abilities. The study about the factors that influence the formation of lecturers’ expectations will give additional resources on what factors influence lecturers to expect. Further research should gain an in-depth understanding of how lecturers established expectations in the EFL classroom for each skill is possible through contextually qualitative research. In this case, lecturers needed to join any workshop or training related to increasing self-efficacy in dealing with online learning. Also, this efficacy will bring to the expectation they establish.
REFERENCES


