

## Unravelling students' emotions of online learning during the pandemic through metaphors: A poetry analysis

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### Abstract

In 2020, the unpredictable COVID-19 pandemic shook many parts of the world, including Indonesia. The pandemic affected almost all walks of life, and the education world was no exception. This study aims to unravel the students' emotions about online learning during the pandemic through metaphors in the poems they wrote. This study draws on theories of metaphors, and the data were gained from poems written by five second-year students majoring in English Language and Literature Program. The metaphors analyzed in the poems revealed that students generally had negative emotions towards online learning, leading to feelings of frustration, despair and demotivation. A number of external and internal factors contributed to such feelings among students. This study calls for the need to listen to students' voices in order to create mutual understanding between teachers and students and to create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the year 2020, the unpredictable COVID-19 pandemic shook many parts of the world, including Indonesia. The pandemic affected almost all walks of life, and the education world was no exception. Teaching and learning activities were disrupted because of it, resulting, in many cases, in a shift from the face-to-face mode of teaching to online learning. In such circumstances, students often feel alone because they were cut off from socializing with their friends; instead, they

became confined within the walls of their homes. Many students, as indicated by (Fitriyani et al., 2020) became demotivated in learning, and some even found the situation frustrating and stressful. Furthermore, students' experienced high academic stress and had low learning motivation doing online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic (Marliana et al., 2022). Online learning also has an effect on students' interest in learning as many easily get bored and become disengaged (Yunitasari & Hanifah, 2020).

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Highlighting the metaphors used in the poems, this study explores the feelings and emotions associated with online learning, as expressed by a number of second-year students studying at the English Language and Literature Program. Up until the writing of the poems, these students had never experienced face-to-face learning in the university classroom. They were, indeed, ‘products’ of the pandemic. In view of this, poetry writing has been seen as a powerful tool to express one’s feelings (Nirwana, 2016), and hence helps students to de-stress themselves from the anxiety they were experiencing during the lockdown as well as from the ‘trap’ of online learning. As poetry is a form of creative writing, it allows students to show the many colors of their emotions and thoughts, allowing them to move beyond the boundaries and confinement of academic writing. Messages in poetry usually convey the poet’s personal and social experiences (Chitra et al., 2018).

Metaphors have commonly been employed in poetry writing (Semino & Steen, 2008). In creating rhetorical effects, metaphors are often seen as one of the most powerful poetic devices to convey one’s feelings and emotions. A metaphor is a figurative language that compares two unrelated notions yet having similar characteristics in order to provide better comprehension. Metaphors are important in poetry as it facilitates people to express what they really want to say. In view of this, metaphor’s purpose is to help people express their thoughts and emotion, and thought, while ‘elevating’ the language use. While many research studies have focused on metaphorical analysis in poems, the relatively recent context of the pandemic that this study foregrounds provides a somewhat different nuance and theme to the existing studies on poetry. Specifically, the present study aims at unravelling students’ emotions of online learning during the pandemic through the use of metaphors expressed in their poems. Albeit small scale, it is hoped that this research can provide a medium for teachers to better understand their students, helping to develop better mutual understanding and to create a warmer, more

friendly classroom atmosphere for both students and teachers alike.

### Poetry and Metaphors

Poetry is a kind of fine art that beautifully expresses aspects of human life through the use of language to stimulate emotions. Citing Wordsworth, Hall, (1992) highlights that poetry embodies a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (p. vii) in which elevated form of language is frequently used to create a vivid mental image in the listeners or readers’ minds. In so doing, the poet often uses figurative language—that is, representing a person, a thing or an idea by something else—to ‘awaken’ the readers’ senses, and this may be in the form of a metaphor, hyperbole, simile, synecdoche, personification, metonymy and symbolism. Among the different kinds of figurative language, metaphors can be said to be one the most frequently used devices in poetry writing.

According to Hall, (1992), metaphors allow people to apply a term or a phrase to something in order to suggest resemblance, hence they help people to see things in an altered way. To exemplify, the word ‘mouth’ in the phrase ‘the mouth of a river’ is metaphorical, drawing on the human physiology to illustrate certain state found in nature. The physiological ‘mouth’ and the ‘mouth’ of a river are unrelated; however, they both represent some kind of opening. This way, the use of metaphor is expected to help people to better understand the meaning of an utterance or sentence. In addition, metaphors allow people to be more creative in conveying their thoughts and emotions.

Drawing on the ideas of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), people need metaphors as a tool to communicate effectively in expressing their ideas. They used the famous example ‘affection is warm’ to clarify the idea; for some people, it may be difficult to describe what affection feels like, but through the use of the metaphor ‘warm’ people can get a better picture of the term. Extending beyond poetry, Lakoff and Johnson argued for the important function of metaphors in daily life. In

their book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), they emphasized that “what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (p.3). According to them, metaphors do more than shroud something in poetic ways; metaphor is like a design that expands people’s point of view and facilitates them to learn and see a different nuance of a sentence. Metaphors can help people express and interpret ideas better. Metaphors, they said, have permeated into the subconscious human minds so that they use it daily. Without thinking about it, people, for example, naturally talk about ‘time is money’ or ‘silence is gold’. Ideas might be hard to express, but metaphors can help add deepness to the details of the idea. As Knowles & Moon (2006) pointed out, “by using metaphors, much more can be conveyed, through implication and connotation, than through straightforward” (p. 9).

In poetry, metaphors need to be distinguished from simile, a comparison style that uses ‘like’, ‘as’, ‘seems’ or ‘appears’ as in ‘my mother is always as busy as a bee’. Metaphors also have to be distinguished from synecdoche, which, according to Hall, (1992) is using particular features of people or things to define them; an example of this would be calling someone with auburn hair by the nickname ‘Red’ (Redden, 2017).

Since this study deals with the use of metaphors in expressing students’ emotions toward online learning during the pandemic, the following section discusses the challenges of such mode of learning.

### **Online Learning**

Online learning is a form of distance learning that gives an experience of learning through technology (Carliner, 2004). However, as reported in Rahayu’s (2021) study about online learning, she reported that online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is different from online learning that has been implemented before; online learning during the pandemic is an emergency remote education in which both the teacher and students have to quickly learn to adapt to. Yet, in

its implementation, social inequities and digital divide were apparent across the nation. The COVID-19 outbreak started in March 2020 and spread globally as a pandemic. According to UNESCO (2020), as cited in Rahayu (2021), up to April 2020, 188 countries, including Indonesia, were closed and shifted to online mode where learning was conducted via various online platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. Some teachers also provide audio-visual materials that could be accessed on social media like YouTube and WhatsApp (Padhilah, 2022).

Despite the new technological innovation, there were many challenges that students’ faced during online learning. Technically, students struggled with inadequate learning facilities, having sufficient internet data, and the problem of poor internet connection. These technical issues have been reported to affect students’ academic performance and their wellbeing (Padhilah, 2022). A study by Amaliah (2022) indicated that learning online lacked engagement and interaction. She also reported that due to the sudden shift from offline to online mode of learning, many students felt anxious due to the lack of emotional relationships with their friends and teachers.

Numerous researchers have focused on metaphor as the main topic of their research. These studies mostly focus on the use of metaphors in song lyrics (Darmawan, 2022; Fairuz & Firza, 2021; Handayani, 2021; Kifriyani, 2022; SARI, 2021; Sukmaningrum, 2019) and politics (Lubis & Purba, 2021; Pasaribu, 2016; Ritonga, 2014). In poetry, the metaphors explored mainly focus on the notion of love (Jaberi et al., 2016; Kochar, 2020; Rahman, 2018; Rorimpandey et al., 2021; Sofyan, 2022). Limited research, however, has been done on metaphors pertaining to students’ emotions toward online learning during the pandemic. A study on students’ emotions towards the pandemic involving reader-response theory has been done by Sabila (2021); however, the study did not particularly focus on metaphorical analysis. For this reason, the present study aims to contribute to the literature on poetic analysis of metaphors by foregrounding the current context of the pandemic.

## METHODS

This study is qualitative in nature, focusing on content analysis as it aims to analyze students' poems on online learning. Citing Creswell & Creswell (2018), a qualitative research study is defined as "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants' setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible writing structure" (p. 330).

In this study, the data are in the form of poems written by five second-year students majoring in English Language and Literature Program. These students were 'products' of the pandemic as they had never been in an offline class prior to the poem writing. Only five poems were chosen. Two major criteria were set in selecting the poems; first, they had to contain metaphors, and second, the poems had to be more than three stanzas in length, as longer poems were perceived to convey a better picture of the situation encountered by the narrator. It needs to be noted that this study does not focus on categorizing the metaphors found in the poems but rather on unravelling their meanings in relation to the students' emotions.

The poems are titled (1) "7.00 a.m. death" by Indah, (2) "On the other side" by Nindia, (3) "If I could drown time in the water" by Sonita, (4) "Behind the unseen" by Adira, and (5) "In the midst of dust" by Fina. All of the writers' names above are pseudonyms.

In analyzing the data, a close reading of the whole poems was crucial, as it helped to convey the general theme, tone and context of the poems and thereby identifying the underlying emotions expressed by the writers. Next, the metaphors were then identified and scrutinized. In scrutinizing the metaphors, contextual clues given in the poems were of paramount importance. These clues provided a broader understanding of the purpose

of a given metaphor, hence helping to avoid misinterpretation. Through contextual clues, we were also able to understand the poet's intention better. For example, through the contextual clues given in the poem '7 a.m. death', readers were able to infer that the repeated use of the word 'death' referred to a symbolic death rather than a literal physical one, implying a profound sense of despair and a feeling of being trapped.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section we present and analyze the five poems chosen; in order to appreciate the students' poems in their entirety and to better understand the contextual clues given surrounding the metaphors, we analyze the five poems one by one.

### 7.00 a.m. death (by Indah)

*I died this morning*

*I died as the screen was loading*

*As the meeting was finally starting*

*As the uninvited inner demon started devouring*

*I died this morning*

*I died as I rot from the monotonous cycle*

*As my focus starts fading*

*As I realized the only hope I have is miracle*

*I died this morning*

*I died as your voice become distorted*

*As the face of my classmates melted*

*As I realized I have no control of anything*

*I died this morning*

*I died as I fear that I miss everything*

*As I weep about my grades dropping*

*As I realized I have 12 assignments missing*

*I died this morning*

*I died as my tears ran dry because I missed the due time*

*I died as my soul eroded due to inner chaos over time*

*I died as I lost myself, my grades, and my everything*

*I died this morning*

*The inner demons have won and began destroying me further*

*That is why I seemed to you and the class, like a goner*

*That's why I died this morning*

*And that is why I seemed dead to you.*

The poem '7 a.m. death' expresses a student's feeling of intense desperation as she faces online learning during the pandemic. As the underlined words and phrases indicate, this poem contains a number of metaphors, of which "died" is given highlight throughout. The word "died" signals the narrator's own emotion of the situation, encapsulating a sense of both helplessness and hopelessness. In the second stanza, she also indicated of being drown in demotivation, expressing it through the metaphor "rot" that signals some sort of disintegration of self. The monotonous state the student was situated in made her lose focus and fail to engage in the learning process. All this is hinted through her saying "the face of my classmates melted", that indicates her mental state of being. The repeated act of 'dying' further emphasizes the negative mental state she was experiencing. This feeling emerged as a result of her being overtaken by negative thoughts, which she metaphorically compares to the "inner demon" that "started devouring" and caused all sorts of "inner chaos": lacking focus, missing assignments, dropping grades until she finally felt that she "lost" herself, her "grades" and her "everything", as indicated in the fifth stanza. The sense of demotivation and negative emotions were so overpowering to the point that she admitted that "the inner demons have won" and destroyed her further; this time, by giving the impression that she is not existent—expressed through the simile "like a goner"—to the lecturer and to the class. Through the poem, the writer implies online learning as a site of distressing and tiresome struggle. The figurative language used in the poem helps to better portray the devastating situation the student was in as she struggled with the difficulties of online learning.

#### **On the other Side (by Nindia)**

*There is a cursed place that has no peace in the morning  
That can't be solved by just leaving it  
And the clock will always be ticking  
Then my name would be marked absent  
Without you try to hear anything  
Because you would close your ears to know it*

*Sitting quietly for two hours  
But you just focus on people with brilliant minds*

*The rest of us are just like ghosts  
Present but missing the courses  
And you would not know the feelings  
Because you don't want to know about us*

*Spending a lot of time in front of the screen  
Doing all the instructions like a machine  
Till I forget to take care of myself and my surrounding  
And when I'm late for submitting  
You started to see us all equally  
That all of us are able to finish it easily*

*Then I started to wonder  
Did I get anything from all of this?  
or did I miss anything?  
Then one answer comes  
I missed everything.*

The poem 'On the other side' paints a picture of what it was like to belong to the unnoticed group of students during online learning—it is frustrating, yet it is inescapable. The narrator compares the situation to a "cursed place", a place that is much hated and scorned. These metaphor is emotion-laden and helps to set the tone and mood conveyed in the poem. Given the nature of online learning, where the teacher is not always able to see the students on screen, the narrator accuses her teacher of being negligent—not even trying "to hear anything" or, perhaps, seeks to find out if the student is experiencing connection problems; instead, the teacher simply marks her "absent". Right from the first stanza, the narrator has already hinted at the challenges of online learning students like herself faced, implying that the mediocre would go unnoticed on screen and they just sat "quietly for two hours". Their silent presence, she marked, was "like ghosts"—a simile that describes their invisible existence.

In the 3rd stanza, she further emphasizes the struggle of online learning: "Spending a lot of time in front of the screen" and do assignments "like a machine", another simile that encapsulates the idea of non-stop work. The narrator is so engrossed in the work that she "forget[s] to take care of [herself] and [her] surrounding". In this stanza, she, once again, accuses the teacher of being unfair; first, she was unfair in treating the mediocre students "like ghosts", but when it comes to doing

the assignments, the teacher expects these students to be as good as the “brilliant minds”—that they all are capable of finishing them easily. Yet, the narrator’s confession of her late submission, despite her efforts, indicates her struggles to get through. As if losing a battle, in the last stanza, the narrator pessimistically admits that she has “missed everything”, which can be interpreted that she did not get anything from the class both because of the teacher’s ‘ignorance’ and because of online learning that makes her feel burnt out.

**If I Could Drown Time in The Water (by Sonita)**

*If I could drown time in the water  
I will drown it and look for my identity  
I will let it float in the water  
In the middle of reality*

*If I could drown time in the water  
I want to fulfill the hope that has been lodged in the dream  
without missing and causing a danger  
without missing a thing and scream*

*If only I could drown time and disappeared  
40 percent-worth grade means nothing  
Replaced by the beauty of identity that appeared  
Replacing something that has no meaning*

*But isn't this what I've been dreaming of?  
The nested hope has become value and meaning  
Is there something that I'm actually afraid of?  
The change I wanted was bland in meaning*

*Giving up is not better than surrendering  
A difficult conversation causes reluctance to stay  
I just need something interesting  
A strong reason that I can pay*

*If could drown time in the water  
I don't need to embrace the difficulty into pressure  
Waiting for a number that won't make me shiver  
Hoping for something I don't even know for sure.*

The poem ‘If I could drown time in the water’ expresses a student’s sense of hopelessness and desperation over what is going on, which makes her want to stop the time and “drown” it “in the water”, as reflected in the title. The title itself is metaphorical as “time” is compared to a being that can be submerged. It can be considered as a metaphor because it brings a fresh nuance, expressing the writer’s emotion. The idea contained in the first and second stanzas appears to

be interconnected, which highlights the search and the revealing of one’s identity, as indicated in the third line: “I will let it [my identity] float in the water”. The word ‘float’ here can be seen as another original metaphor and be interpreted as letting one’s identity be known to the world. Continuing to the second stanza, the writer expresses her wish to fulfil her hope, which all this time has been ‘lodged’ in the dream. Here, the idea of hope is thought to resemble a living creature that temporarily resides in a home called “dream”. She thus wishes to make her dream come true.

In the third stanza, the writer then shifts her focus to academic context, where she talks about the insignificant value of grade in comparison to “the beauty of identity”. The line that says “If only I could drown time and disappeared” indicates her desire to break free from the shackle of academic demands and focus on the value of the self instead. The stanza hints at her wanting to be valued as who she is as a person with her own persona, rather than valuing her through her achievement and grades, suggesting the idea of quality over quantity.

However, the fourth stanza indicates uncertainty and self-doubt: “The change I wanted was bland in meaning”. She seems to question whether the endeavor to change was worth it. She indicates that she is facing a difficult situation and is in despair. Although it is not explicitly stated with whom she has problems communicating, taken into the academic context she mentioned earlier, it may be assumed that she could have a difficult conversation with her own teacher. This idea is supported by what the writer says in the last stanza “waiting for a number that won’t make a shiver”, in which the “number” here seems to refer to a grade, which makes her anxious. Again, in this last stanza, she appears to highlight the idea of embracing the good and the bad in one’s self, judged through her own personal qualities, because being judged by grades only make her feel burdened, anxious and uncomfortable.

**Behind the unseen (by Adira)**

*I'm in a dark elevator  
Struggling with my grades  
Fighting with my virtual competitors  
It's just like a heavy race*

*Every day is getting harder  
When my head says no  
But my phone keeps doing 'redo'  
So I can't even go*

*When blue sky pours its light  
When butterfly flies  
But I'm home telling lies  
Past the long, long night*

*Fighting my bad mentality  
Finding my hidden potential  
With all the classes  
And all the quizzes*

*I might burn to the ground  
Longing for my far mates  
Just beating for nothing around  
Because it's just like a match*

*Through the screen  
Behind the unseen  
We even never meet  
Only together virtually for a bit.*

This poem expresses a student's frustration over grades and the exhaustion caused by the competition one has to enter during online classes. This poem begins with the sentence, "I'm in a dark elevator" in which "dark elevator" reveals the narrator's mental situation. The idea of a dark elevator conjures an image of a narrow, scary space in which one can barely move and breathe. Considering the context of the text, the dark elevator here indicates the narrator's emotion towards online classes during the pandemic.

In the fourth line of the first stanza, there is a simile "It's just like a heavy race" and race in here is interpreted as a competition that refer to the third line "Fighting with my virtual competitors" which is his classmate. The second stanza also captures the idea of being fatigued because of online classes: "Every day is getting harder". Such mental state is further emphasized through the words "When my head says no", indicating physical and mental resistance; yet, despite the narrator's extreme fatigue, she has no choice but to plod along, doing the online classes, as indicated in the third line "But my phone keeps doing 'redo'".

The third stanza starts with a metaphor: "When blue sky pours its light", which can be interpreted as warmth entering her home, while also illustrating the beauty found in nature captured by the idea "when butterfly flies". But all this is destroyed by the mental state the narrator is in, despairing, as expressed in her use of the metaphor: "I might burn to the ground". The phrase 'burn to the ground' itself can be interpreted as extreme exhaustion that may be due to constant competition the narrator has to endure with her classmates. In the last stanza, the title of this poem is mention once again in the second line, "Behind the unseen", which sums up as all the things that happen behind the scenes—the struggles and exhaustion that cannot be seen through the screen.

### **In the midst of dust (Fina)**

*With no excuses,  
time goes by and the world spins  
everything shifts and begins*

*I am here in the midst of dust*

*Inside this blue square zoom  
the face of my window's room  
same day same moon*

*not bright enough to bloom*

*There is life in the midst of dust*

*The chilled wind laughs through the window  
mocking my confusion and frustration  
but the life on my desk gave no sign of salvation*

*In the midst of dust, I found another life*

*One day I stare into my screen  
dissolved into a pile of poems with serene  
I can hear and feel that life is here*

*In the midst of dust, life is talking to me*

*Every day, Control C, Control V  
staring into the void of the tree  
but life is here in front of me  
it is here with me*

*In the midst of dust, everything is clearer*

*I am taking in all the voices and the noises  
the word gratitude is the only one that I can think of*

*the dust that is like me floating in the air above  
everything that I get from this virtual room is full of love*

*In the midst of dust,  
I believe that life is still here.*

This poem is both about insecurity and optimism of a student facing online learning situation. The title of the poem itself is metaphorical: “In the midst of dust” metaphor. The metaphor ‘dust’ can be interpreted as her classmates, but the word ‘dust’ also encapsulates the idea of unworthiness. She says, “I am here in the midst of dust”—she is one among many, and she has no choice. “Inside this blue square zoom” referring to her presence on an online platform. The word ‘face’ in the expression ‘the face of my window’s room’ is metaphorical, which refers to the part of the room she is displaying through Zoom. The word ‘window’ can also be interpreted as the laptop or personal computer, as both resembles the shape of actual windows. In the fourth stanza, the narrator starts telling her insecurity through the metaphorical expression “not bright enough to bloom”, which reveals her true feeling being in the online class—not an outstanding student. Then, in the fifth stanza, she hints that there is still life despite the seemingly dead situation, showing a sign of optimism. Although “the life on my desk gave no sign of salvation”, indicating the hardship of online learning, she finds hope of not being abandoned: “in the midst of dust, I found another life”. From this line onward, she displays increasing optimism. Even though she may just be “dust” that can easily be blown away “floating in the air”, she is able to see a silver lining through the dark cloud. She says, “life is talking to me”, indicating that something convinces her to move forward and be grateful, despite all the circumstances. Her increasingly frequent use of the word ‘life’ and the word ‘love’ towards the end of poem indicates a shift of emotion occurring within her.

### **Unravelling Students’ Emotions of Online Learning through Metaphors**

Every emotion that we feel can be triggered by a multitude of reasons. Yet, the five poems

indicate similar emotions triggered by the emergence of online learning during the pandemic: frustration and despair. Online learning, as evident in the poems, demotivated them. The poem by Sonita, for example, depicts online classes as frustrating because it lacks engagement and ‘personal touch’ (“If I could drown time in the water/ I want to fulfill the hope that has been lodged in the dream/ without missing and causing a danger/ without missing a thing and scream”). Indah also implies in her poem the trouble students have to deal with due to unstable internet connection (“I died as your voice become distorted”), which exacerbates the lack of teacher-student communication. The worst-case scenario students have to face is being marked absent (as indicated in Ninda’s poem “Then my name would be marked absent without you try to hear anything”) because the connection was so poor that the teacher was not able to hear the students’ responses. The challenges expressed in the students’ poems apparently resonate with Padhilah’s (2022) findings in which she pointed out that technical troubles posed a major challenge for effective online learning. Such issues are demotivating, which in Indah’s case further leads to loss of concentration, the missing of assignments and dropping grades, hence affecting her academic achievement. A number of studies have indeed marked online learning as negatively affecting students’ achievements (Fitriyani et al., 2020; Marliana et al., 2022). Online learning, as the poems indicate, poses anxiety to students; the lack of face-to-face interaction makes them feel isolated (as indicated in Indah’s poem “I died as I rot from the monotonous cycle”). The fact that both classes and assignments take place at home makes the situation overwhelming. Up until today, the word ‘home’ was never associated with formal learning; home is a place to return to after a long day—a place to relax and recharge. So, when a home becomes a ‘workplace’, it creates a stressful environment and other negative emotions.

It is interesting to note that most of the poems raise the issue of grade as a source of anxiety. Falling grades and learning loss, it turns out, became major issues emerging due to the



pandemic (Padhilah, 2022). The technical obstacles hindered students to learn optimally, and students are often too afraid, shy or nervous to ask to seek clarification, hence acting as if everything was okay. As Amaliah's (2022) study indicated, communication is another aspect that is affected during online learning; such learning mode limits interaction among students and teachers. This lack of communication leads to a negative emotion, as shown in Adira's poem; not being able to meet with friends is frustrating and makes her feel isolated and disconnected ("Through the screen/ Behind the unseen/ We even never meet/ Only together virtually for a bit."). The lack of 'personal touch' created by online learning can also exacerbate feelings of self-doubt, as illustrated in Sonita's poem ("But isn't this what I've been dreaming of? The nested hope has become value and meaning. Is there something that I'm actually afraid of? The change I wanted was bland in meaning") and insecurity, as illustrated in Fina's line "not bright enough to bloom". The missing emotional bond with their classmates and teacher, it turns out, has manifested in negative emotions and anxiety. It can thus be said that the negative emotions that the students felt stemmed from both external and internal factors.

Despite the similar emotions conveyed in all the five poems, Fina's poem stands out from all the rest because it depicts a shift of emotions and ends with a positive tone, reflecting a spirit of revival and gratitude towards life. She, unlike the other poems, displays optimism and is able to see the good from the bad ("In the midst of dust, I believe that life is still here"). Her positivity reinforces the idea that every cloud, indeed, has silver lining.

## CONCLUSION

This study has unravelled students' emotions about online learning during the pandemic through the use of metaphors expressed in their poems. The findings revealed various feelings experienced by the students during the pandemic: frustration, despair, self-doubt, anxiety, isolation, loneliness and demotivation. All of these feelings, however, led to one kind of emotion:

negativity. This negative emotion has been caused by both internal factors and external factors. The internal factors, as the poems indicate, stem from the feeling of being disconnected, the feeling of being overwhelmed by assignments, and the feeling of insecurity and being 'invisible'. Meanwhile, the external factors were mostly caused by poor internet connection, lack of engagement shown by the teacher, as well as lack of communication and emotional bonds among the students themselves. Despite the generally negative tone conveyed through the poems, one poem indicates a shift of emotions that ends in an optimistic outlook.

The pandemic, indeed, is challenging for many students, and the idea of pouring out their emotions on paper in the form of poetry writing can help to de-stress and provide a feeling of being heard, hence being re-connected once again. Listening to students' voices also gives teachers ways to reflect on their teaching, providing a pathway to improve and to create a more engaging and enjoyable classroom atmosphere.

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