



Challenges of Online Learning Faced by Efl Students During Covid 19 Pandemic

Kurnia Ulfa

Fakultas Ilmu Komputer dan Teknologi Informatika, Prodi Teknik Informatika, Universitas Budi Darma, Medan, Indonesia
Email: kurniaulfa82@gmail.com

Abstract—Covid-19 pandemic brings changes in many aspects of peoples' lives throughout the world. The spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia affects the education system in this country. Face-to-face instructions are shifted into full online learnings from home. The findings disclosed that these EFL students' main challenges in attending online learning were the unsteady networks and the less direct interactions. These students mainly suggested the use of video conferencing applications such as zoom or Google meet, though some students chose assignments over those applications. The students also mentioned that they basically needed grammar related materials within the online classes. The findings bring forward the picture of full online learning condition during Covid-19 outbreak on EFL setting in Indonesia.

Keywords: Online Learning; Challenges; Suggestions

1. INTRODUCTION

On March 11st, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the novel corona virus disease (Covid-19) became a worldwide pandemic because the cases outside China rose 19 times and the number of countries with cases increased threefold over two weeks (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). The national government strived to hamper the spread of the virus. The unprecedented global pandemic, Covid-19, has completely swirled the fundamental daily activities, eliminating or minimizing direct human contacts but creating the new normal (e.g., social distancing, self/mandatory quarantine, virtual and contactless services, virtual hospitality activities)(“Sigala, M. (2020). Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and Implications for Advancing and Resetting Industry and Research. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 312–321. Crossref PubMed. - Google Search,” n.d.). This phenomenon has severely affected the entire educational landscape.

As the result, the Ministry of Education decided to transform the teaching model from face to face learning became online learning. Online learning was a teaching model that used existing institutional software and publically available digital platforms. According to Onno W Purba, online learning is a form of information technology that is applied in the field of education in the form of virtual schools (“Hartanto, Antonius Aditya Dan Onno W. Purbo. (2002) *Teknologi e-Learning Berbasis PHP Dan MySQL*. Jakarta. Elex Media Komputindo. - Google Search,” n.d.).

In terms of challenges, Tu's ethnographic study at an American university best sums up the obstacles that studies have suggested may contribute to EFL students' low social presence online learning. Moreover, Smith, Coldwell, Smith, and Murphy compared Chinese and Australian students' attitudes and learning behaviours when undertaking online problem-solving discussions at an Australian university (“Tu, C.-H. (2001). *How Chinese Perceive Social Presence: An Examination of Interaction in Online Learning Environment*. *Educational Media International*, 38(1), 45–6 - Google Search,” n.d.) (“Smith, Coldwell, Smith, and Murphy (2005) *Compared Chinese and Australian Students' Attitudes and Learning Behaviours When Undertaking Online Problem-Solving Discussions at an Australian University* - Google Search,” n.d.). The questionnaire and computer conferencing data from this study shows that the two student groups demonstrated similarities in their willingness to self- manage learning, but that the Australian students exhibited a significantly higher level of comfort with online learning than the Chinese students. The Chinese was also found to be less willing to utilise the Internet to search for learning materials or to communicate with others, and they contributed fewer messages online of an intellectual nature. The researchers suggest that these phenomena stemmed from a lack of instructor guidance, language barriers and, consistent with Tu's supposition [4].

Clearly, it could be assumed that even though online learning had some advantages such as convenience and flexibility (“Mejia, C. (2020). *Using Voice Thread as a Discussion Platform to Enhance Student Engagement in a Hospitality Management Online Course*. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 26, 1–11. Crossref - Google Search,” n.d.), online learning triggered some challenges such as the quality of educational instruction, such as students' dissatisfaction with their learning, lack of knowledge enhancement for their future career, low academic performance, and lack of students' accessibility to online learning due to lack of technological support (Gonzales, McCrory Calarco, & Lynch, 2020). Furthermore, Belawati (“Belawati, T. (2005). *The Impact of Online Tutorials on Course Completion Rates and Student Achieve- Ment*. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 30(1), 15–25. - Google Search,” n.d.) has observed that in terms of ensuring quality in learning processes, ‘the challenge of online learning in Indonesia is not only to ensure learner support that is both accessible and relevant, but also to encourage students to participate in and use support systems that ensure quality learning’ (p. 4).

Based on the explanation above, this research is carried out to analyze the challenges of online learning faced by EFL Students during Covid 19 Pandemic.

2. METHODOLOGY



This research used library research because the researcher analyzed about the challenges of online learning faced by EFL Students during Covid 19 Pandemic. According to Zeid ("Zeid, M.. (2004). *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan*. Jakarta : Yayasan Obor Indonesia. - Google Search," n.d.) "Library research was a research used library sources to get the data". On the other side, the library research used the library sources to collect and analyse the data. The researcher also drawn and integrated her ideas to make the conclusion synthesize. In this research, the researcher reviewed some journals as references.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The challenges that the students faced during digital learning are mostly related to network connections. Especially students who lived in remote areas told that it was difficult to have good and stable signals. A student even shared that there was no Wi-Fi network in her village, so she needed to buy internet package in stores. However, many shops were closed due to Covid-19. Therefore, it was more challenging for her to join online classes. This situation is actually expected since Indonesian archipelago consists of thousands of islands and the internet signals in every island are varied. This situation is similar to the findings in a study conducted by Mohalik and Sahoo ("Mohalik and Sahoo (2020) - Google Search," n.d.). Out of 318 student teachers participated in the study, only 25% of them who were having good internet connectivity.

The next problem was lack of effective direct interaction between students and teacher or among students. This situation led to less understanding of materials discussed in the online class. Again, this condition can also be caused by unstable internet connections. Different from circumstances in the classrooms that enable students to have direct interaction with their teacher, students communications with their peers and teacher in online classes depend heavily on the internet signal. Therefore, excellent internet connections becomes the main resource in online learning.

A student also expressed his opinion that minimum direct interaction might affect their success in real life. It actually makes sense since our daily lives are not a hundred percent happen online yet. Many working places, especially in Indonesia, still rely on direct interactions from person to person (Nugroho & Atmojo, 2020). Although some teachers have tried to add the experience of direct interaction by utilizing video conferences in their online classes, it still cannot substitute for the real-life communication since many problems such as unstable internet connection may hinder students from conveying their ideas effectively during language learning. Thus, these worries should be addressed seriously.

Another problem was about commitment in learning. This problem occurred since there were more temptations for not studying while joining online classes compared to when studying in offline classes. This is in line with a proposed study done by Kirovska-Simjanoska ("Kirovska-Simjanoska, D. (2019). *Digital vs in-Person Learning Environment in ESP Classrooms: Let the Students Decide*. SEEU Review, 14(1), 36–68. - Google Search," n.d.) and Inderawati et al ("Inderawati, R., Sofendi, Purnomo, E. M., Vianty, M., Suhendi, D. (2019). *Students Engagement in Utilizing Technology for Learning Support*. English Franca: Academic Journal of English Language Education, 3(1), 182-196. Dx.Doi.Org/10.29240/Ef.V3i02.1111 - Google Search," n.d.). They mentioned that the digital learning depended greatly on students' motivation. The learning process was dependent on distractions that the students faced when studying at home. Thus, low-motivated students should have more effort to keep themselves motivated by recalling their goals in learning the language. Meaningful but fun learning materials prepared by the teachers could also assist students with low motivation.

Suggestions proposed by students in the implementation of online learning is by using video conferencing applications such as zoom or google meet. The students believed by using these kinds of applications would give students more opportunity to have more interaction in online class. This suggestion is in agreement with a research done by Tanveer ("Tanveer, M. (2011). *Integrating E-Learning in Classroom-Based Language Teaching: Perceptions, Challenges and Strategies*. ... Conference 'ICT for Language Learning.'

Furthermore, a recent study done by Amin and Sundari (Amin & Sundari, 2020) was also in line with the suggestions proposed by students in the present study. Amin and Sundari found that student-participant agreed that WebEx Meeting video conferencing platform was beneficial for language learning. Some free video conferencing platforms such as WebEx Meeting, Zoom, Google Meet and Jitsi Meet can become solutions for the lack of direct interactions during the online learning.

A student even suggested the government or the university to make a special application for students in order to support the online learning. This suggestion could be a good way out from internet connection problem. Particular application that utilize specific internet access, apart from internet access for general public might be effective to overcome bad internet signals problems. However, further studies on this matter are clearly needed.



On the other hand, some students mentioned that they prefer doing assignments instead of joining face-to-face applications. This is in contrast with a study done by Alaidarous and Madini (“Alaidarous, K., & Madini, A. A. (2016). Exploring EFL Students’ Perception in Blended Learning Environment in Saudi Technical Education Context. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(6), 69–81. - Google Search,” n.d.). The study mentioned that students perceived their blended learning environment positively. In contrast, the student in the present study argued that using face-to-face application was not effective for learning due to unstable networks. This is in line with a study conducted by Alebaikan and Troudi (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010) which mentioned that blended learning programs are recommended to require only 25-50% of the course credit to originate from web-based instruction. The percentage is specified in order to preserve the value of face-to-face instruction.

Moreover, a study carried out by Al Zumor, Al Refaai, Eddin, and Al Rahman (“Al Zumor, A. W. Q., Al Refaai, I. K., Eddin, E. A. B., & Al-Rahman, F. H. A. (2013). EFL Students’ Perceptions of a Blended Learning Environment: Advantages, Limitations and Suggestions for Improvement. *English Language Teaching*, 6(10), 95–110. - Google Search,” n.d.) investigating the advantages, limitations and suggestions for blended learning stated that both students and instructors require appropriate orientation and training. The results of this study, however, indicated that sufficient training and orientation are probably quite difficult to be administered since the spread of Covid-19 limits people activities including education practitioners. Thus, the existing webinars for teachers are essential to provide guidance during the online learning. Universities could also arrange webinars for students in order to familiarize them with the Learning Management System owned by several universities in Indonesia.

As for the third research question, students also named learning materials they needed during the online learning. Most students answered that they need grammar materials. Other than grammar, many students wanted to get materials that can enrich their vocabularies. Materials related to newest issues such as Covid-19 were interesting for some students. Besides, students demanded learning materials that will be able to assist them during their study or to help the students for getting jobs. Similar to results reported by Polida (“Polida (2017), Some Students Aspired to Be Able to Write Good Reports, Get High Score in TOEFL Tests, Make Good CVs or Experience a Great Job Interview. - Google Search,” n.d.), some students aspired to be able to write good reports, get high score in TOEFL tests, make good CVs or experience a great job interview.

Furthermore, students also demanded not too difficult learning materials. Some students mentioned that they wanted to These requests are understandable considering students might get have songs, games, comics or movies as their learning materials or assignments. Bored in studying online at home with limited direct interactions with their peers. Therefore, online games related to the subjects learned are suggested by Uukkivi and Labanova (“Uukkivi, A., & Labanova, O. (2017). E-Learning Materials, Methods and Tools to Activate Students. *New Learning Scenarios in Digitalized World: International Workshop*, Page 31-39. - Google Search,” n.d.). They believed that games could make learning more enjoyable and effective. Implementing games in online classes could be a challenge for the teachers, thus, teachers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with educational games websites such as quizziz.com in order to provide meaningful games for their students.

Students’ request of materials that can enrich their vocabularies need to be addressed since a research done by Al-Jarf (Al-Jarf, 2016) indicated that online instruction had an effect on vocabulary development. It was proven that online instruction was a powerful tool for improving students’ vocabulary achievement. Online instruction also raised lowest-performing, average and good students’ performance. Moreover, learning activities through digital devices apparently suit the twenty-first century learners who are well-known as digital native generation (Nartiningrum & Nugroho).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings in the present study offers insights from EFL students about the implementation of online learning beyond classroom. Students shared their challenges in attending online learning classes. Unstable network, lessened social interaction that caused less understood materials and weakened commitment in learning are challenges faced by students during online courses in Covid-19 era. Some suggestions proposed by the students to overcome the challenges are the use of video conferencing applications such as zoom or Google meet, the development of a special application for students, the given deadline and the existence of fun learning activities. Moreover, most students considered that they needed grammar related materials. Many students also demanded materials that would enrich their vocabularies. Also, some students responded that they wanted to be able to write good scientific reports.

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