Problems of Online Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic in EFL Classroom and the Solution

Leli Efriana
Universitas Islam Labuhan Batu

Abstract

This literature study aims at analyzing online learning difficulties faced by EFL teachers and students, and students' parents during the Covid-19 pandemic and solutions to solve them. Research data sources are collected through textbooks in print or online form, articles from periodical journal websites, law regulations, and other sources which are relevant to the research problem. The data was analyzed qualitatively with an interactive model, covering data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. The implementation of the online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in EFL learning, caused various problems for teachers, students, and parents, as indicated in the current study.

Keywords
Covid-19 pandemic, online learning, problem, solution

Corresponding author:
Leli Efriana, Universitas Islam Labuhan Batu, Indonesia
Email: rianaleli92@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Corona virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) has spread very fast and to almost all countries, so the World Health Organization (WHO) declared this outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020 (BBC, 2020). All life sectors are affected. To break the chain of the spread of Covid-19, several institutions have implemented a new policy, namely working from home so that there are no services at the office. Even if there are services in the office, the number of employees and visiting is limited, and health protocols are strictly implemented.

Several studies have found a phenomenon that the Covid-19 pandemic has also a major impact toward the education sector (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020). In the education sector, the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture in all countries has implemented a learning policy, namely learning from home. The learning from learning policy allows the teaching and learning process to continue even though teachers and students do not meet directly at school. Teachers can still deliver the teaching material, and students can still receive the lesson without leaving their homes.

Learning from home is implemented with a distance learning system. A study conducted by Chun, Kern, and Smith (2016) summarizes that distance learning is an education system in which learners are separated from the educator and the learning process uses various resources through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In the implementation, the distance learning system is applied through an online learning approach. In the Covid-19 pandemic condition, this learning method can be a solution so that the teaching and learning process can continue.

Online learning is a part of distance education that specifically combines electronic technology and internet-based technology or ICT in learning. Online learning is a program for organizing online learning classes to reach a broad and massive group of students. Online learning refers to the use of internet-based technology features, which are highly dependent on the availability of information technology. Dabbagh and Bannan-Ritland (2005) proposed the characteristics of online learning as follows:
- Constructivism
- Social interaction
- Inclusive community of learners
- Computer-based Learning
- Digital classroom
- Interactivity
- Independence
- Accessibility
- Enrichment

Online learning is a learning system without directly face to face between teacher and students (Allen & Seaman, 2007). The online learning requires an internet network. The teacher and students carry out learning together, at the same time, but in different places. Various applications and platforms can be used, such as whatsapp, telegram,

zoom meeting, google meet, google classroom, edmodo, and others. To support this online learning, the main device needed is computer or android connected to the internet network.

Facts among the public actually show that this online distribution system creates several difficulties and problems. A study conducted by Ahmad (2016) found a phenomenon that EFL learning which requires a lot of practice for its application also experiences obstacles when the learning system is applied. In listening session, for instance, the ICT equipment used by teachers to train students who are in separate and distant places is often ineffective. Teachers also cannot maximally supervise students when giving listening exams. In speaking course with the distance or online learning, students also find problems in imitating the way of speaking exemplified by their teacher, and the teacher also cannot optimally train the students to speak.

Another problem is that some students' parents and students do not have computer or android device, as found in a research conducted by Wahab and Iskandar (2020). Such condition makes them difficult in facing the reality. On the one hand, there is a demand for the fulfillment of educational services for students, as mandated in the constitution. On the other hand, they are faced with a lack of supporting facilities.

The problem is not only in the lack of learning equipment or facilities, but also in the absence of the internet quota. Providing internet quota requires a high cost. This difficulty is felt by students and parents from middle to lower class economies. They do not have adequate budget to provide the internet network.

It doesn't stop there. Even though the internet is in their hands, students still face difficulty accessing the internet network because of the places they live. A research carried out by Nashruddin, Alam, and Tanasy (2020) confirms that some students live in remote rural areas that are not covered by the internet. In addition, their cellular network is sometimes unstable, due to the geographical location which is quite far from the signal coverage. This is also a problem that occurs in many students who take online learning, so the implementation is less effective.

Another problem is the unpreparedness of teachers for online learning. The transition from conventional learning systems to online systems occurred suddenly because the Covid-19 pandemic was not preceded by mature preparation. A number of teachers do not have ICT skills so they are unable to adapt the change, namely technology and information-based learning. Even though, it is inevitable for teachers to use technology to support their teaching. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, like or not, ready or not, ICT-based learning must be implemented so that the learning process can keep running.

In essence, the teacher's role cannot be replaced by technology, however sophisticated it is. The use of technology in education is only to facilitate the teacher in transfer of knowledge, not on building the students' character. In line with what the education experts such as Cviko, McKenney, and Voogt (2014); Oomen-Early and Early (2015); and Turnage and Goodboy (2016) reveal that the technology cannot replace the teacher's position.

Robots were then discovered, but robots are just teaching, not educating. The educational task can only be done by a teacher directly (Verseput, 2008). It was also emphasized that the 4.0 industrial revolution will not be able to replace the role of teachers as educators.

The modern technologies demand that teachers train how to apply and integrate these technologies in their teaching (Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997). Therefore, this new technology implementation increases the teachers' training needs. Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) emphasize that teacher's responses toward computers are the main factor in the successful implementation of ICT in learning and teaching.

From the description, it is understandable that online learning is an alternative solution for the learning process, including for EFL students, in the Covid-19 pandemic condition. Although it raises a number of problems, for teachers, students, and students' parents, all parties must be ready to implement it. Therefore, this library research is carried out to solve research problems, namely how the online learning problems faced by EFL students during the Covid-19 pandemic and how to solve those problems. The researcher hopes that the result of this literature study can be used as information and reference for teachers, students, schools, parents, and the government, to make policies in carrying out the online learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This type of research is literature study or library research. Literature study is carried out to obtain the necessary data by reading the literature sources. The data sources were taken from printed textbooks and e-book, articles of periodical journal, law regulations, and other relevant sources. The data collected was then analyzed qualitatively. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), activities in qualitative data analysis were carried out interactively and continuously to completion which was described in four steps. The four steps are data collection, data reduction, data display, and verification or conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Online learning is a learning system that uses an interactive model internet based and Learning Management System. Online learning is a program of organizing online learning classes to reach massive groups and wide target. Online learning has become an inevitable choice for education institutions. Teachers can still teach, and students can still study in their own homes, during this Covid-19 pandemic. However, online learning is highly dependent on the availability of information and communication technology.

1. Problems of Online Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic

The first problem is the understanding on the subject materials. For example, the content of reading material delivered online may not be understood by all students. This is because the material content is presented in the e-book form which is presented per chapter, teaching materials in the PowerPoint form, and in video form. Students may be

able to understand these materials, but it is not comprehensive. Students understand the material based on their own interpretation or their point of view. This is evidenced by the number of students who then phone directly to the teacher to ask for further explanation about the material that had been presented online. Based on the experience of another EFL teacher, this online system is only effective for giving assignments and quizzes to students. This means, in one meeting, if the teacher presents the lesson material accompanied by assignments or quizzes, students will actively and enthusiastically study the material because of concerns if the assignment or quiz is not completed. In contrary, if the teacher posts materials without an assignment, students are only asked to learn the materials, then students are not enthusiastic in learning them.

The second problem is the teacher's ability to use technology in online learning. Not all teachers are capable of operating computers or gadgets to use in online learning activities. In some research results, there are some teachers who are able to use computers, but in operating them to support teaching, their abilities are still limited. Some of them are still unable in accessing any further related to internet network, using various learning applications, and making media/ own lesson videos. However, a number of teachers have mastered the ICT as a whole, have been able to produce EFL interesting learning videos, and some teachers have even become YouTubers.

The third problem is the limitation in the learning controlling. Teachers are limited in conducting the control during online learning. This is caused by the absence of a discussion forum menu in the application used. Even if the menu exists, many students do not use it well. Another phenomenon, some students fill the attendance list at the beginning, but after that, they are no longer active until the end of the learning, and some students even leave the online class to do other activities without being controlled by the teacher. This means that some students are not fully active from the beginning to the end of the lesson. However, it also should not be ignored at all; many students really keep active until the end of learning.

The researcher also reviewed the literature regarding problems encountered by EFL students in online learning. From the students' factors, some problems students felt in online learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic for listening material are found. The difficulties and problems faced by students are presented as follows.

The first problem, some students do not have devices such as gadgets or computers as online learning media, if any, they belong to their parents. To study online, a student often has to take turns using it with his parent. Another student sometimes gets a turn to use the device after his parent goes home after work. Some of the students' parents go home at night, whereas students' online learning schedules generally start in the morning until noon.

The second problem, some students are less enthusiastic to participate in online learning even though they are supported by adequate facilities, such as computers, androids, and the availability of an internet network. They are less concerned about the importance of EFL literacy and task submission. As a result, assignments that should have been submitted within one week period were often stretched to two weeks.

The third problem is that a number of students live in areas that do not have internet access. They cannot receive lesson materials and assignments delivered by teachers via the internet network. In addition, the duration of online learning that has been going on for months has caused students bored and lazy.

Apart from teachers and students, parents also experience problems with this online learning. The condition of the students' parents also affects the implementation of online learning. They generally work outside the home, such as working in government sectors, private sectors, and self-employed fields, so that they can hardly monitor, guide, and assist their children in learning to solve the difficulties they face. In addition, some parents complain that online learning adds to their expenses, namely internet costs.

2. Solutions for Online Learning Problems during the Covid-19 Pandemic

To minimize the barriers or obstacles in online learning faced by teachers, especially in EFL learning, the researcher find several solutions that can be applied.

a. Teachers should prepare learning materials as interesting as possible. The subject material presented in PowerPoint slides accompanied by learning videos will be felt more alive by students.

b. Regarding the limitations on IT mastery, teachers can use platforms with simpler operations, for example: WhatsApp application. However, teachers have to gradually improve their IT competencies, for example by following related workshops, learning to other teachers who have more abilities in IT field. Following the video tutorial on YouTube that presents many learning application uses, the steps for using them, and how to produce instructional videos, can also improve the IT skill.

c. The EFL teacher can also proactively contact students who are less active in participating in online learning, and personally contact the parents of those students. If the condition allows, the teacher can conduct a home visit to those students.

d. The EFL teacher assisted by guidance and counseling teachers tries to find information on what obstacles are causing the student to be inactive, by contacting the student's parents. If it is known that student is basically lazy, so the guidance and counseling teacher asks the student's parents to accompany him in online learning.

Furthermore, for students who do not have the device or take turns using it with their parents, or who do not have internet network access, they should still do the assignments manually. The main point is to keep studying and stay at home. Students with internet connection problems can be overcome by joining to other family members, or by saving data usage, namely connecting only when needed. The researcher adds that it can also be overcome by participating in educational programs through television broadcasts organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with the television station to facilitate the education sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

For students' parents, the problem can be overcome by communicating personally to ask them to immediately go home from work, so that their android can be used by their children for online learning. Parents should also allow time to take turns with their children in using their android so that their children can do assignments. Some efforts that can be done are:

- Asking the homeroom teacher for help to inform the students' learning progress through the WhatsApp group which consists of parents and the teacher.
- All parents are expected to be able to motivate and assist their children who pay less attention to the assignment from the teacher.
- The EFL teacher asks students to actively inform the assignment that they have not completed.
- The EFL teacher directly contacts students by telephone to ask about the reasons for not doing the assignment given
- The EFL teacher asks for help from counseling teachers to motivate students in learning.

The above explanation illustrates that online learning can work according to the condition experienced with various problems that arise either simple or complex. Every problem faced can be solved by presenting various solutions from teachers so that learning during the Covid-19 pandemic keeps continuing. The important point is that children keep learning even although learning from home.

In the application of online learning, teachers use various technological devices in education. EFL teachers must be able to choose applications that suit the needs and characteristics of lessons, students, and the environmental situation faced, to carry out the transfer of knowledge to all students. It is admitted that in this online learning practice, the more dominant thing is assignment, not material explanation.

After reviewing some previous studies, the researcher provides a solution that in principle, online learning or distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic should pay attention to the following points.

a. Safe

This is in accordance with the principles of teachers around the world who strive to reduce distractions and losses in learning.

b. Realistic

Teachers should have a realistic expectation of what can be achieved by distance learning, and use professional judgment to assess the consequence of the lesson plan.

c. Simple

Online learning should not overload students with burdensome tasks.

d. Meaningful

Online learning should provide a meaningful learning experience for students by implementing learning strategies and methods that are in accordance with the condition and the teaching material.

e.   Applicable

The teaching material presented should be focused on life skill education, particularly on prevention and handling the Covid-19 pandemic, and advice on clean and healthy living habits.

Those points are in line with Nadim Makarim's statement (Mendikbud, 2020) that the principle of education policy during the Covid-19 pandemic is to prioritize the health and safety of students, educators, education personnel, families, and society in general, and to consider the growth and development of students and psychosocial conditions in an effort fulfillment of education services.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic as the part of distance learning has various problems. Those problems are experienced by teachers, students, and parents. The problems faced by teachers include weak mastery of IT and limited access to supervision towards students. The problems of students are in the form of inactivity in following learning, limited supporting facilities, and internet network access. The problem of parents is in the form of limited time in accompanying their children during online learning. Those various problems can be overcome by implementing several of the strategies mentioned in this library research. Those strategies have been disclosed by previous researchers and several strategies have been added by the researcher.

REFERENCES

Ahmad, S. Z. (2016). The Flipped Classroom Model to Develop Egyptian EFL Students' Listening Comprehension. *English Language Teaching, 9*(9), 166-178.

Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2007). *Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning*. Newburyport, MA.: ERIC.

BBC. (2020). Coronavirus: Window of Opportunity to Act, World Health Organization Says.   Retrieved December, 2020, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-51368873

Chun, D., Kern, R., & Smith, B. (2016). Technology in Language Use, Language Teaching, and Language Learning. *The Modern Language Journal, 100*, 64-80.

Cviko, A., McKenney, S., & Voogt, J. (2014). Teacher roles in designing technology-rich learning activities for early literacy: A cross-case analysis. *Computers & Education, 72*, 68–79. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2013.10.014

Dabbagh, N., & Bannan-Ritland, B. (2005). *Online Learning: Concepts, Strategies, and Application*. Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Means, B., & Penuel, W. R. (2005). Research to support scaling up technology-based educational interventions. In C. Dede, J. P. Honan & L. C. Peters (Eds.), *Scaling up success: Lessons from technology-based educational improvement* (pp. 176–197). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mendikbud. (2020). Mendikbud dan mendagri gelar rakor dengan kepala daerah bahas pembelajaran di masa pandemi. Retrieved December, 2020, from https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2020/09/mendikbud-dan-mendagri-gelar-rakor-dengankepala-daerah-bahas-pembelajaran-di-masa-pandemi

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publication.

Nashruddin, N., Alam, F. A., & Tanasy, N. (2020). Perceptions of Teacher and Students on the Use of E-Mail as A Medium in Distance Learning. *Berumpun: International Journal of Social, Politics, and Humanities, 3*(2), 182-194.

Oomen-Early, J., & Early, A. D. (2015). Teaching in a Millennial World: Using New Media Tools to Enhance Health Promotion Pedagogy. *Pedagogy in Health Promotion, 1*(2), 95-107. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/2373379915570041

Rahardjo, A., & Pertiwi, S. (2020). Learning Motivation and Students' Achievement in Learning English. *JELITA, 1*(2), 56-64.

Raja, R., & Nagasubramani, P. C. (2018). Impact of modern technology in education. *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research, 3*(1), 33-35.

Ratheeswari, K. (2018). Information Communication Technology in Education. *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research, 3*(1), 45-47. doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.21839/jaar.2018.v3S1.169

Roschelle, J., Knudsen, J., & Hegedus, S. (2010). From new technological structures to curricular activity systems: Advanced designs for teaching and learning. In M. J. Jacobson & P. Reiman (Eds.), *Designs for learning environments for the future: International perspectives from the learning sciences* (pp. 233–262). New York: Springer.

Sandholtz, J. H., Ringstaff, C., & Dwyer, D. C. (1997). *Teaching with technology: Creating student-centered classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Selwyn, N. (2013). *Education in a Digital World: Global Perspectives on Technology and Education*. New York: Routledge.

Sheingold, K., & Hadley, M. (1990). *Accomplished Teachers: Integrating Computers into Classroom Practice*. New York: Center for Technology in Education.

Turnage, A. K., & Goodboy, A. K. (2016). E-Mail and Face-to-Face Organizational Dissent as a Function of Leader-Member Exchange Status. *International Journal of Business Communication, 53*(3), 271–285. doi: 10.1177/2329488414525456

Verseput, N. (2008). *Pictopal in practice: Integration of ICT-related activities to support early literacy in classroom practice*. Enschede: University of Twente.

Wahab, S., & Iskandar, M. (2020). Teacher's Performance to Maintain Students' Learning Enthusiasm in the Online Learning Condition. *JELITA, 1*(2), 34-44.

Wenglinski, H. (1998). *Does it compute? The relationship between educational technology and student achievement in mathematics*. Princeton, NJ: ETS.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research design and methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.