

## **Shedding Light on EFL Students' Readiness and Problems to Face Online Learning in the Pandemic Era**

**Meladina**

[meladina@fdk.ac.id](mailto:meladina@fdk.ac.id)

Universitas Fort De Kock

**Hermi Zaswita**

[zaswitahermi@gmail.com](mailto:zaswitahermi@gmail.com)

STKIP Muhammadiyah Sungai Penuh

### **Abstract**

The pandemic era has changed many aspects of the community lifestyle. It also includes the English teaching and learning process. Many teachers and students have to do teaching and learning online. They find some difficulties problems during that process. This research aimed to find out the Students' Readiness and problems to face online learning in Pandemic Era. It was qualitative research which was conducted at Fort De Kock University from July to October 2020. The population was all of the students who learn English at Fort De Kock University. Using a purposive sampling technique, the nursing and physiotherapy students in the third and fifth semesters were chosen as the samples. The data were taken from the questioner and in-depth interviews. Then, they were analyzed by computerization and transcription. This research found that most of the students had difficulties joining online learning such as signal, internet budget, lack of understanding and focus, and the interactions. By analyzing the results of this research, it can be concluded that the students are not ready to face online learning. It is suggested to the stakeholder to be more creative and innovative to face those problems.

**Keywords:** students' readiness; online learning; pandemic era

### **INTRODUCTION**

Covid-19 (Corona Virus Disease-19) is a new kind of virus invented for the first time in Wuhan, China, in 2019. This virus can be transmitted through the air and the objects that touched one another. It is a dangerous virus that does not have any vaccine to stop it. Because of that, it becomes a global health problem faced by people around the world. Moreover, to prevent the spread of this virus in Indonesia, the Indonesian government limits the community activities outside. This policy has many impacts on Indonesia's human life, for example, economic, social, physiological, and educational sectors. In the educational sector, to save students, teachers, and education stakeholders from Covid-19, the Indonesian government closed all Indonesian institutions. It started from kindergarten until higher education from March 2020 until an uncertain time. Because of this phenomenon, education policies had changed. They try to prepare some methods that can be used to distance learning, change the schedule and method of examination, and design online learning that can be accessed by all of the students.

This regulation makes students, teachers, instructors, and education organizations feel shocked. They have to adapt to the situation they have to keep social distancing and make effective online learning. Besides, it also needs humanity and unity. It means that online learning is essential to protect and save our students, faculty, academic staff, communities, societies, and the nation as a whole (Dhawan, 2020). However, the application of online learning or online course also gives some problems.

According to (Adnan, 2020) who researched Pakistan, two problems appear in online learning. First, from the main point of view, it is related to online education's effects and efficacy. The capacity to successfully teach digitally is different from the goals of teaching and learning of the educational institution and the priority. Moreover, online learning has many terms, such as e-learning, online classroom, or online education. Most of the online learning uses an internet connection to support the process. It is supported by (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020) stated that online learning uses the internet and some other vital technologies to develop materials for educational purposes, instructional delivery, and management of programs. Then, according to (Rapanta et al., 2020) online learning refers to a kind of teaching and learning process that students have distance from teacher/instructor, they use some form of technology to access the learning materials, they also use technology to interact with the tutor/instructor and with other learners and some kind of support is provided to learners. In short, online learning is a learning process that uses the internet connection and other technologies devices that can help the educational institution achieve the goals of certain activities. This process of learning does not require the students and teachers to stay in the same place. They only use media technology to interact with each other.

Since online learning is very different from conventional learning, the students are not physically present in a classroom. They do not have the opportunity to interact face-to-face with their instructors and classmates. Students in online courses have their responsibility for their learning as they decide when, where, and how long to access the learning materials (McMahon & Oliver, 2001 in (Wang et al., 2013). There some opinions about online learning, according to (Dhawan 2020). They were accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning and policy. Accessibility means online learning can be reached by students from all locations, both rural and remote. They do not need to get transportation modes and spent accommodation to reach the education institution. Then, flexibility. It means that the students can schedule or plan about time for completion of courses available online. The students also may learn anytime and anywhere, thereby developing new skills in the process leading to life-long learning. However, in Indonesia, online learning may become new problems in this pandemic era. Based on the researcher's preliminary survey conducted at Fort De Kock University, most of the students found problems in the teaching and learning process in the Covid-19 pandemic era through online learning. First, it was hard for them to connect with the class because of the signal. It made them late to join the class and postponed to collect the task given. Second, they do not have enough internet budget to attend the class because they come from a low-standard economic status family. From this preliminary research, it needs to conduct research related to students' readiness and problems found to face online learning in the Covid-19 era. Fort De Kock University is one of the universities in Bukittinggi, West Sumatera. It is located in the city of Bukittinggi. The students of this university come from many provinces near West Sumatra, such as Riau Island, Jambi, North Sumatera, and South Sumatera. There is a large number of students, and they are different from one another. They are also different in assessing the internet connection because they stay indifferent and various places. Moreover, Because of this pandemic, most of them came back to their village and had to do online learning to achieve the goals of the teaching and learning process. One of the learning that they have to attend an English subject. In Fort De Kock University, the

students learn English as their general subject. However, they have to master it and understand the skills provided.

Because of the problems above, it is useful to analyze students' readiness and problems found to face the online classroom in the pandemic era. Since Fort De Kock University students' come from various places, it needs to explore the readiness and the problems that they found to face online learning, especially in English subjects.

## METHOD

It was qualitative research by using questioner and interviews. This research was conducted at Fort De Kock university from May to August 2020. The population of this research was all of the students who took the English subject. By using purposive samples, the nursing and physiotherapy students in the third and fifth semesters were chosen as the samples. They were 113 students. The data were collected through an online questioner survey technique to gather data about students' readiness and problems regarding online learning. A modified version of (Bernard et al., 2004) 14-item the questionnaire was used to assess the effectiveness of online learning. Then, the data were analyzed by frequency of standard students' responses and were stated in percentages. Demographic data were obtained using the Likert scale and are reported in the percentage of students' responses. Furthermore, to get students' responses deeply, the interview had been done after distributing the online questioner. All of the students have been interviewed. This interview was used to cross-check the data from the questioner was valid. Then, the interviewees' responses to each question were transcribed. Last, the answers were analyzed based on the research objectives.

## FINDINGS

### Online questioner data

The questioner was distributed to know the students' condition in online learning and the problems that they faced. The statements of the question can be valued as Agree, Somewhat Agree, and Disagree. The result of the questioner can be seen in the following table:

**Table. The Result of the Questioner**

No	Statements	Agree	Some what Agree	Disagree
1.	I can use a laptop/computer.	77.7%	17%	5.4%
2.	I feel convenient to communicate online.	30.4%	50.9%	18.9%
3.	From my point of view, there is no difference between an online class and an offline class.	2.7%	17%	80.4%
4.	Online learning more motivating for me than conventional learning.	4.4%	23.9%	71.7%
5.	In my opinion, all of the courses on the campus is more effective when I lean it through the internet.	1.8%	23.9%	74.3%

6.	It is easy for me to complete my task through the internet.	29.2%	39.8%	31%
7.	Face-to-face contact with my lecturer is essential for me.	95.6%	4.4%	0%
8.	Learning in the class and the house are the same for me.	3.5%	23.9%	72.6%
9.	I can learn grammar from my house quickly.	29.5%	52.7%	17.9%
10.	I can improve my listening skill on the internet rather than in the classroom.	17.7%	41.6%	40.7%
11.	I can finish my task through internet media without finding some problems.	23.9%	46%	30.1%
12.	I can manage my time effectively and efficiently to accomplish my online class.	22.1%	44.2%	33.6%
13.	I can discuss well with my group team during my online class.	14.2%	41.6%	44.2%
14.	My reason to have lack of internet access	Cost	Signal	I don't know how to operate it
		31.9%	55.8%	0.9%
				11.5%

From the result of the questioner above, it can be analyzed that questioner number 1 investigated students' capability in using technology to support online learning. 77.7% of them were able to use a computer. It means that the skill to use technology was not the problem in online learning. Only six from 113 students had difficulties in operating the computer. It indicates that mastering the use of technology was not the crucial problem in online learning for the students. Then, questioner numbers 2, 7, and 13 showed about online class communication and students' ability in doing collaborative learning with their friends. From the table above, it can be seen that 50.9% of the students somewhat agreed that they feel convenient to do online communication with his/her friends or teacher. Sometimes, they felt difficulties discussing the materials during the online class (44.2%) with their classmate. It means that most of the students found some problems in discussing something with their classmates, such as the materials, the task given by the teacher, and others. Then, most of the students (95.6%) stated that face-to-face contact with the teacher was essential in the teaching and learning process. It is also in line with (Martin & Bolliger, n.d.) who stated the engagement between learner and instructor is a crucial part rather than learner-to-learner or learner-to-content engagement. It short, it can be concluded that in online learning, some of the students felt difficulties in doing communication and collaboration with their friends and their teacher. It was comfortable for them to have direct communication. It is free for them to ask their friends and their teacher related to the materials. Then, they thought that face-to-face contact with the teacher is essential for them.

Moreover, the statement number 4, 3, and 8 investigated students' opinion about online and offline class (conventional). There were 81 students (80.4%) stated that they disagreed

about online learning more motivating them than conventional learning. It means that they preferred to learn in the classroom than learning online. According to (Presence & Chen, 2017) motivation is the most crucial factor that should be considered in online learning. They also suggested that how to increase students' motivation in learning online by designing an online course that increases the students' motivation, especially their intrinsic motivation. In conclusion, the students found different senses in learning online and conventional learning. They also had a lack of motivation of the students in learning online rather than in the regular class that has face-to-face contact with the teacher. Because of this problem, teachers should create an excellent online course that can improve students' motivation to learn by designing an efficient and effective online learning method.

Furthermore, students' ability to improve their skills in the online class is expressed in statement number 6, 9, 10, and 12. More than half of students felt quite challenging to accomplish grammar tasks through online class without attending the class and guidance from the teacher directly (59 students or 52.7%). Then, 40.7% of students did not agree that they can improve listening skills through the internet rather than in the classroom. The students somewhat agreed that they could finish all of their tasks without finding the problems (46% or 52 students). From these data, it can be inferred that not all the students can improve their English skills and complete their tasks well in the online class. They found some problems that can make them cannot finish the task well.

Next, the questioner number 5 and 12 showed about students' time management and effectiveness of joining online learning. 80.4% of the students stated that they disagreed that all of the courses on the campus are effective if they learn it online. Some of them felt somewhat agree that they can manage their time effectively and efficiently to finish the task given by the teacher in an online class. In short, the students also found some problems in managing time to submit the task. Sometimes, they could do it on time, and sometimes they could not collect the assignment in the time that has been set together.

Last, based on questioner number 14, it is inferred that the reason why the students had limited access to the internet was the signal. Since the students came from different are of living, not all the area has an excellent signal to support online teaching and learning. There were 55.8% of 113 students said that they had a problem with the signal.

Based on the data above, most of the students did not agree with online learning. There were many problems related to online learning. First, they had difficulties doing communicating with their friends and the teacher. Because of that, they did not have a good collaboration in learning. Second, they thought that the online class process was very different from the offline class they have to adopt it more. Then, it was hard for them to improve their English skill in an online class, and sometimes they found difficulties in managing their time in learning. Last, the most crucial problem for them was the signal limitation that may disturb their teaching and learning process in the online class.

### **Data from Interview**

In the interview section, some of the questions were adopted from the questioner to know the profound reason why did those problems happen. The interview was also used to clarify if the data in the questioner were valid and reliable. The data from the interview can be concluded as follow: Most of the students preferred face-to-face learning rather than online learning. They had several reasons why the students liked to learn in the classroom or conventional class. First, in the classroom, they can catch the materials given by the teacher quickly. If they have a problem with doing something, they can directly ask and do not need much time to wait for the answer. They can also see the expression of the teacher when pointing



out the vital point when explaining it. Second, the students thought that the interaction between students and the teacher in the classroom is essential. They felt that the teacher is the role model in the English classroom. They can directly imitate the ways the teacher speaks when doing the interaction with them. It could also be supported for them to support their language more. Third, most of the students also did not fully concentrate when joining an online class at home. Many factors may disturb their focus when learning, such as their environment. Sometimes the member of their family asks them to do something when they are listening to the teacher explanation, or they had to their household duty at the same time with their class. Because of that, the students lose their concentration and could not understand well the materials offered by the teacher. Next, in doing the group work or group discussion. Most of the students stated that it was hard for them to discuss something with their friends in online learning. They did not make the maximal effort with their friends in the group discussion and tried to do their job without sharing the ideas between them.

Furthermore, in completing the task, when the teacher asked them to collect the task at a particular time, most of the students felt under pressure to do it. They tried to do it in a hurry and did not consider whether it is correct or not. They felt worried that the teacher does not want to correct their task when it is late in submitting. On the other hand, if they are in the classroom, they can ask the teacher to give additional time, and they can feel relax and completing the task. The next problem that they found in submitting the task was signal. Sometimes, it was hard for them to collect the task on time because they lose their connection. They could not confirm their teacher about it so they might not have the mark for that meeting. In conclusion, based on the data from the interview above, it can be stated that there were some problems faced by the students in online learning that make them preferred to choose face-to-face or conventional classes. First, it was hard for them to understand the material well because it was hard for them to ask or give feedback directly to the teacher. Second, there was no interaction, or they did not feel the role model that can be imitated. Third, it was hard for them to have full concentration in learning because many factors may disturb it, such as their environment. Then, the students also hard to do collaboration or discussion to share their ideas in the group work session. Next, they felt under pressure when completing the task. Last, signal or connection.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the data that analyzed and the research finding, it can be concluded that online learning may come up like a new problem for the students. Since the students come from different places, they had different problems. However, most of the students in Fort De Kock Bukittinggi likes to learn face-to-face learning rather than online learning. They state that face to-face learning more effective and motivating than to learn especially English subjects. Besides, they can improve their skills in English in the class because they can directly ask the teacher and share with their classmate. Then, it was hard for the students to do they collaborate or cooperate with their friends in group work. The communication could not run well if it is only by using a cellphone or email because it is not free to explore what they want to say. The other problem is the lack of internet connection. Some of them live in a place that far from the city. It makes it hard to find a good connection to join the class and submit their task on time. In short, the students do not ready to face online classrooms in the pandemic era. Some problems faced by the students when learning online.

Moreover, it is suggested that the teacher to create and design a teaching method that makes the students can learn the materials well in this pandemic to make the goals of the

learning can be achieved. The government should take in part in finding the solution to these problems. It is not enough by providing the quota for learning; the government should increase

the connection of the internet provider not only in the big city but also in the rural area. It hopes that all of the students in all of the places can access the internet well without facing a problem with the signal anymore. Last, in this pandemic situation, good collaboration between students, teachers, and the government is needed to solve the problems related to online learning. The further researcher is expected to do to explore more about online learning to make teaching and learning in the pandemic era can be achieved well and maximal.

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