

“What are Left from Learning during the Pandemic?” EFL Students’ Problems and Strategies in E-Learning Platform

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to review the implementation of online learning and EFL students' problems and strategies in learning English using the E-learning platform during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research design implemented a qualitative approach by using narrative inquiry. The data collection technique was done by semi-structured interviews, while the data analysis used Braun and Clark's thematic analysis. The result showed that learning English using E-learning at Senior High School covered downloading learning material, forums, and exercises. In the implementation of online learning, several problems were faced by students, including the difficulty in managing time, equipment, and technical needs such as weak signal, limited quota, inadequate gadgets, teacher's lack of explanation in learning material, and listening skills, which were not effective. Meanwhile, students utilized these strategies to overcome challenges. It included organizing time management, utilizing free internet data packages, utilizing diverse abilities in the learning environment, asking subject teachers via private chat via WhatsApp, requesting assistance from classmates (peer tutoring), performing autonomous learning, and searching for additional references or sources and supporting videos. Thus, this study depicts the challenges encountered by EFL students that teacher can use in encouraging their students to solve problems using these strategies.

KEYWORDS:

Covid-19 pandemic;
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Introduction

Tracing back to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia called up activities and advised them to be postponed and replaced with teleconference activities or any other online activity. Thus, in the middle of the Covid 19 pandemic, the learning process has shifted its focus to the deployment of synchronous and asynchronous learning. In this way, technology integration in accommodating learning needs is unavoidable. With its online-based learning, EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

has regarded the media such as E-learning as an alternative to learning, much as it does with other disciplines. E-learning is an interactive learning in which students receive feedback on their automatic learning activities and are given access to online learning resources and materials.

However, previous research related to the online English learning process exhibited different results. A study by Eka et al. (2020) showed that learning English online has challenges to face, such as the economics of students in relation to the difficulties of acquiring gadgets/smartphones with particular specifications that may be utilized to enhance learning, as well as providing quotas, networks, time, extra learning resources, and various student skills in comprehending learning materials. Meanwhile, research by Lumbantobing et al. (2021) resulted in the fact that (1) students have the necessary tools to participate in online learning; (2) The deployment of online learning can be done with more flexibility, and it can motivate students to engage in more active forms of self-questioning and learning, and (3) long-distance learning encourages social behaviors to maintain distance and minimize the growth of crowds of students who are thought to reduce Covid-19 spread potential in the school environment.

Online English learning is quite effective because it is supported by many learning media so that students' desire and excitement for learning might be increased. In addition to this, it was anticipated that learning via online platforms may help break the chain of transmission of the Covid-19 virus. Hence, teachers are tasked with generating and arranging suitable learning strategies in order to design teaching and learning activities in line with the fundamental learning abilities. Based on the research gap described above, each study has different results to examine the problems that affect it. Therefore, the researchers examine the implementation of online education and the issues and methods of students in it.

During the pandemic, online learning was not only granted for the university but in high school (senior high school) education because of the restrictions on the face-to-face school system. Taking advantage of E-learning, students are given material so that students can instantly understand the material that teachers convey through E-learning in the learning process. In addition, students are also given assignments by the teacher and send their report results to the system. E-learning is one of the alternatives to providing material and problems without using print media (Damayanti, 2020).

However, the implementation of an online learning system creates many obstacles for practitioners and participants in the world of education, namely teachers and students, particularly in terms of readiness, such as the availability of online learning support tools, such as cell phones and laptops, and the knowledge of how to use learning applications.

Teachers and students have smartphones or laptops and can connect to the internet, based on the preparedness of the infrastructure utilized for online learning, so that online learning can occur effectively (Khoiruman, 2021). The important thing to be prepared for in this online learning system is not only facilities and infrastructure but also the ability to teach with all learning materials that will be taught through virtual classes. If the learning materials are sent in soft file form, then at least the teacher also has to prepare learning videos so that students can understand the material (Khoiruman, 2021).

There are obstacles that students face when learning English online during this pandemic. Common problems encountered are insufficient devices or intermittent signals due to an unstable network. In addition, for problems faced on the basis of language skills, for example, in listening skills, the teacher cannot supervise optimally to teach how to learn correctly by listening and paying attention to the correct pronunciation of native speakers as well as students finding problems when doing the actual pronunciation/speak as shown by the teacher. This makes listening skills less effective with this kind of online learning (Efriana, 2021). Similarly, in writing skills, students are not convinced of their language structure because they do not understand the correct structure and grammar and have problems with word selection because of limited vocabulary (Yunita et al., 2021). For speaking, students feel doubtful and afraid to make mistakes when uttering or saying words using English. This might be due to the lack of direct practice, like learning in traditional classrooms, and students' lack of vocabulary. It usually happens in speaking skills (Ying et al., 2021).

The difficulties students encounter in online English learning using e-learning is that students find difficulties in understanding vocabulary, determining main ideas, detailed information in content, and making inferences usually occur in reading skills. While the general difficulty in online learning during this pandemic is that they are not ready; both students and teachers experienced several problems, especially those affecting psychological factors that can reduce the motivation of both in the learning process; internet data problems; lack of participation in the learning process.

Online platforms play a crucial role because they may transform traditional (face-to-face) learning into online learning and usher in an educational revolution. So, teachers and students must be ready and familiar with online platforms for online learning during this pandemic. Therefore, during the present Covid-19 pandemic, students are also obliged to study languages independently, in the sense that they must try to comprehend and overcome the obstacles posed by learning (Badriyah & Rahmawati, 2020). Many previous studies investigated online learning, but the analysis of English learning through E-learning remained very restricted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this research, the authors

want to review the process of English learning and students' problems and strategies in learning English using the emerging E-learning platform as an alternative to the online learning process during the epidemic, as well as how students respond, will be discussed.

Method

This research discussed students' experiences in Senior High School and explored the use of E-learning. By narrating participants' stories, the authors could state their actions, connect their relationships with others, and express and negotiate their feelings. Therefore, this study used narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a research design that focuses on humans' stories about their experiences. It was selected since the participants are able to disclose their whole life experience to the researchers while using E-Learning.

In Senior High School in Central Java, Indonesia, this study was conducted with a semi-structured interview and documentation to collect the data. The present study involved five students from Senior High School. The participants consist of males and females around 17-18 years old. The authors chose them because they used E-learning as a tool in English learning and were willing to share their narratives. Before conducting the interview, the participants were asked to sign a consent form to participate in this research, and their personal information was kept confidential.

Table 1. List of Participants

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Description
1.	Budi	Male	17	He used the E-learning Platform months ago and is still using it.
2.	Tono	Male	18	He has been using the E-learning Platform since a year ago.
3.	Ana	Female	18	She has used the E-learning platform since her new student year and is still using it.
4.	Mawar	Female	17	She used the E-learning Platform months ago and is still using it.
5.	Putri	Female	18	She has been using the E-learning Platform since a year ago.

Results & Discussion

This section describes students' experience of learning English using the E-learning platform as well as their problems and strategies to overcome them. The following is a summary of the facts pertaining to the process of learning English as well as the issues and techniques that students use when learning English via the use of an online learning platform throughout the pandemic.

Table 2. Methods, problems, and strategies in using e-learning

The method of studying English through the utilization of E-learning platform	EFL students' problems and strategies in using E-learning platform
E-learning System	Problems:
Download teaching materials	Difficulty in managing the learning time
Forum	Equipment and technical needs (unsupported signal, full gadget memory, E-learning error, E-learning takes up much quota).
Exercise	
E-learning Content	Lack of explanation
The learning materials sent via E-learning are dominantly only given in the form of plain text (Text-based Content) or PPT.	Listening skills are not effective
	Strategies:
E-learning Infrastructure	Time Management
E-learning infrastructure is the form of an internet network and multimedia equipment.	Free internet data package assistance
	Utilizing diverse abilities in the learning environment (asking friends, peer tutoring, using online dictionaries, looking for other references).
	Learning video

Using the E-learning platform to teach English to Senior High School students during the Covid-19 pandemic, the authors discovered that the students exhibited comparable responses. They have some experience with E-learning during the process of learning English. However, the teacher sent only material to the E-learning platform without a more detailed explanation from the teacher regarding the material sent. A similar case was also reported by Wakhidah et al. (2021) that teachers are confronted with a number of

challenges in the classroom as a result of the epidemic; the best way to address these challenges is for educators to go beyond just assigning tasks. Thus, they should improve their teaching skills in the field of Internet and Technology (IT).

Meanwhile, during the Covid-19 pandemic, some Senior High School students expressed various problems encountered in using the E-learning platform. Most of these were encountered in the learning devices used, that was, in mobile phones, such as gadgets that do not support learning, weak signals, and limited internet quota. The authors focused on EFL students' strategies as well as the problems they faced. Based on the responses of the students, the authors discovered that they had different strategies for dealing with problems during the English learning process using E-learning during a Covid-19 pandemic like this. Looking for other references, asking peers, using online dictionaries, increasing vocabulary, and even having a private chat with the teacher are all options. The individual differences in seeking solutions relate to autonomous learning. Holec (1981, as cited in Ariebowo, 2021) stated that an autonomous language learner could control his/her learning situation by setting the learning objectives and choosing the method and techniques to be applied in his/her learning process.

The process of English learning using an E-learning platform during the Covid-19 pandemic in Senior High School

1. E-learning system

Download learning materials

In line with the findings in the form of student answers regarding the process of learning English using E-Learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at Senior High School, it could be seen that "Learning English is usually done by being given material through e-learning" (Ana, personal communication, November 19, 2021). Another response was from Budi's interview. He said, "The teacher delivers material or assignments using e-learning. And students can learn the material that has been delivered" (Budi, personal communication, November 19, 2021). From the statements of the participants, it can be concluded that learning English at Senior High School is carried out by means of the teacher providing/uploading learning materials through E-Learning then, and students download the submitted material in the E-Learning, students must carry out this activity with the aim of enriching learning material (Hartanto, 2012).

Forum

Using the E-learning Forum feature in online English learning is expected to result in effective learning; apart from being a face-to-face substitute, it also allows students to acquire optimal learning skills and minimize obstacles. Nevertheless, one of the students participating in this study argued that face-to-face learning is more accessible because it can ask what things are not understood than learning through E-learning. This is in line with the findings of student interviews reported in the following paragraph:

"Learning English using the E-learning platform in my opinion is a little difficult because there the teacher only sends material without a learning video explaining the material sent and in E-learning also cannot directly ask the subject teacher (such as learning face-to-face). And I think the learning is easier when we meet directly with the teacher because we can ask anything that we don't understand" (Tono, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

According to the participants, the face-to-face method of learning English is considered "better" than using the E-Learning platform. This is due to the fact that, in the face-to-face method, students are able to interact directly with the teacher in order to ask questions directly, whereas in the E-Learning method, the teacher only sends material without providing an explanation of the material, and also due to the fact that there is a lack of interaction between teachers and students. Face-to-face instruction is preferred. Students will be required to participate actively in the learning process if the method of instruction is both efficient and enjoyable.

Utilizing a wide variety of instructional strategies and techniques allows for the facilitation of active learning in the classroom. Pupils will be more engaged in the learning process if their teachers are able to utilize a variety of innovative, diversified, and more concentrated learning approaches in the process of developing the potential of their students. This is what is commonly referred to as a face-to-face technique, which is also sometimes referred to as traditional learning or conventional learning.

Exercise

Every student must carry out this activity with the aim of testing the ability to absorb the learning material being taught. It can be seen that "We are given questions via cbt which is in E-learning. Sometimes we are also given assignments which are also

collected through e-learning by uploading the results of assignments to K14" (Ana, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

Sending/collecting assignments can be done directly in E-learning because, in this application, assignments can be done anywhere and anytime (some were given a deadline) as long as the network remains smooth. Students can send assignments via E-learning at any time as long as the internet network they have remains smooth.

2. *E-learning content*

This content and the accompanying instructional materials could be presented in the form of Text-based Content (text-shaped content as in ordinary textbooks) or Multimedia-based Content (interactive multimedia). It can be seen from Putri's interview that "The material is not clear to understand because there is no more in-depth explanation from the subject teacher, the teacher should at least send the video which is explaining about the material being taught" (Putri, personal communication, November 19, 2021). It can be concluded that the learning materials sent via E-learning are dominantly only given in the form of plain text (Text-based Content) or PPT without any explanation from the teacher, and this can be one of the causes of learning not running effectively.

In a similar manner, students' English skills can improve through the use of e-learning, particularly in the areas of reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. This is possible due to the fact that students are directly involved in a sequence of learning activities ranging from searching for texts, paying attention to texts, obtaining, comprehending, storing, and using information (Haqien & Rahman, 2020). It is different with speaking and listening skills which require continuous practice (as in conventional learning) to get used to it, so E-learning is deemed less effective for "speaking" and "listening" because it cannot improve their skills. From the four English skill competencies, speaking and listening are challenging to master because of difficulties in capturing the meaning and information of the listening material that is heard.

3. *E-learning infrastructure*

Regarding E-learning infrastructure (especially in terms of the internet network) there are problems in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, either directly caused by the implementation process or due to factors outside the learning process, such as an unstable internet network. This is in accordance with what Tono said below "I run out of quota and it's hard to signal because E-learning takes up quite a lot of quota and requires a rather strong signal" (Tono, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

The limitations of facilities and infrastructure, particularly in terms of technological support and internet networks, are one of the challenges that have been encountered during the implementation of learning through the use of e-learning, among other challenges (Basar, 2021). The online learning process will be easier for families who can financially meet the needs of the technology infrastructure used in the online learning process. Online learning is not only a problem for rural communities with minimal access to facilities and infrastructure. As for underprivileged families in urban areas, online learning requires them to fulfill all their online learning needs, such as gadgets and the internet; this aims to keep the online learning process going (Badriyah & Rahmawati, 2020).

EFL students' problems and strategies in using an E-learning platform during the Covid-19 pandemic in senior high school

1. Difficulty in managing time

This was conveyed directly by Budi. He said, "The obstacle that I often experience is time delays. Due to limited time, I am late in submitting assignments" (Budi, personal communication, November 19, 2021). Time is a resource that must be managed effectively and efficiently to support activities. Time management cannot be ignored and should instead be a top priority in terms of achieving targets. The role of time management is essential in teaching and learning activities.

2. Equipment and Technical needs

The shortcomings and obstacles in online learning are that it requires additional equipment. This was also expressed by Putri that "The memory is full, the signal is difficult, and the material is not clear to understand because there is no more in-depth explanation from the subject teacher, the teacher should at least send the video which is explaining about the material being taught" (Putri, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

Facilities and infrastructure are considered to be very important in helping to make the teaching and learning process run more smoothly. In order to make it straightforward for students to listen to the online teaching and learning process, facilities like laptops, computers, and cell phones should be made available to them (Fatoni et al., 2020). In addition, according to Mawar, the EFL students' problems in using the E-learning platform during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely the availability of internet quota, she said that "The signal is sometimes difficult, there is no quota,

sometimes the e-learning error occurs during learning hours" (Mawar, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

In line with Mawar's explanation, the problem EFL Students encountered in learning English using E-learning is that the device is inadequate. Besides internet access, which is often slow, and some students do not have quota packages. The accessibility of internet services presents a barrier to the process of education through electronic learning (online). A minority of students connect to the internet using their school's wifi, while the majority do so through their cellphone data plans. Students from outside the region who were attending Senior High School made the decision to leave after the school adopted the online learning policy.

The main difficulty they face is the signal because when they are in their respective areas (especially those who live in mountainous areas), the signal is not supported, and even if it does exist, it is rather poor. The implementation of online learning for pupils in senior high school is a difficulty in and of itself. Learning using the internet can be hampered when internet services are unreliable and when students are unable to comprehend the rationale behind or the specifics of their teacher's instructions (Astuti & Febrian, 2019).

3. *Lack of explanation*

Learning using E-learning is considered very effective as a solution to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus in the educational environment, but it also causes problems in its implementation. It can be seen that "the material is not clear to understand because there is no more in-depth explanation from the subject teacher" (Putri, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

Tono also expressed the same voice "The teacher only sends material without a learning video explaining the material" (Tono, personal communication, November 19, 2021). From this, it can be concluded that the teacher does not provide a detailed description of the learning material. For example, the teacher gives questions that will be sent through the application media that has been made. Then students do their assignment and collect the results on the application media that have been made.

4. *Listening skills are not effective*

Other problems in using the E-learning platform during the Covid-19 pandemic, as revealed by Ana below:

" and there are also problems when there is material listening, which we should listen to, but because learning is via online so we can't listen to the

teacher reading material about listening, because before the pandemic there was listening to material the subject teacher read or went to the language lab to do listening via YouTube. But because in e-learning the limit for uploading the file is very small so the teacher doesn't include an explanation video, so it becomes one of the problems in learning English" (Ana, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

The teacher generally teaches listening skills by reading a text and asking students to listen. After having the material read to them twice or three times by the teacher, the students are given the opportunity to respond to the inquiries posed by the teacher. So, according to one of the EFL Students learning English through E-Learning at Senior High School, it can be said that it has not been effective because the learning method applied for listening skills is only by sending material. It should be at least by sending a learning video containing an explanation of the material sent.

EFL students' strategies for dealing with problems in English learning using an E-learning platform during the Covid-19 pandemic in senior high school

1. Time management

Budi made a strategy from the problem he was facing. He mentioned that "I usually deal with various problems, I always make the best use of time by not procrastinating on sending assignments" (Budi, personal communication, November 19, 2021). One of the students' problems is related to time accomplishment. The main key so that students can collect assignments according to deadlines is to manage time because time management does not only refer to time management but is more likely to utilize time. Time management has a significant role in the individual success.

2. Free internet data package assistance

One of the strategies to deal with the main problem in distance learning is that the Ministry of Religion provides free internet data package assistance to students (Mulyana et al., 2020). According to the Director General of Islamic Education, this assistance is to ease the burden on parents whose children are undergoing distance learning. The Ministry of Religion cooperates with several internet provider companies, namely Telkomsel, Indosat, XL Axiata, Tri, and Smartfren. The data package is provided free of charge in the form of a starter pack for prepaid SIM cards. The amount of the quota varies according to the cooperation agreement with XL Axiata (30GB), Indosat (30GB), Smartfren (30GB), Tri (27GB), and Telkomsel

(10+11GB). The mechanism for distributing free quota assistance is carried out by distributing SIM cards to schools throughout Indonesia. The school will later arrange the distribution to students (Mulyana et al., 2020).

3. *Utilizing diverse abilities in the learning environment*

From the problem faced, then Ana conveyed a strategy or solution to overcome these obstacles, she said that "If there is material that cannot be understood, I usually ask the subject teacher in question through the whatsapp group of the subject, or study with friends who already understand the material" (Ana, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

One of the alternative strategies by EFL Students in learning English through E-Learning that can be used to overcome the problems mentioned above is the WhatsApp application. Mawar, in her statement, mentioned that "The strategy that I did to overcome the problems I faced in learning English through E-learning was by not only using the materials given by teachers in e-learning as a guide, but I also look for reference materials from various media/websites to increase my knowledge" (Mawar, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

In line with Mawar's statement, Putri responded that "When I don't understand the material that has been given, sometimes I ask the teacher directly, but if I cannot rely on the material provided by the teacher, I can look for other references to add insight and knowledge" (Putri, personal communication, November 19, 2021). The facilities in online learning that are available in internet technology, as well as a variety of software programs that grow and develop, can help to facilitate the electronic enhancement of learning materials. Given that students can access sources that have been packaged electronically through internet-connected learning platforms, students can interact with these learning resources at any time and from any location.

In addition, according to Tono, initiatives for addressing the issue in English education by using online learning environments during the Covid-19 epidemic have been developed. He said, "The strategy I did was to try to be more independent and be able to understand each chapter that was given by increasing the English vocabulary that I memorized to make it easier when learning the language English in e-learning" (Tono, personal communication, November 19, 2021). A person's capacity to recognize, interpret, and utilize words appropriately and correctly through hearing, speaking, reading, and writing is vocabulary mastery. Mastery of vocabulary is important so that students can understand words or terms and use them in language acts, be it listening, speaking, reading, or writing. Vocabulary mastery is crucial in life,

particularly in communication. With adequate vocabulary mastery, a person will be able to speak well and fluently.

Another strategy for dealing with problems in English learning using the E-learning platform during the Covid-19 pandemic, as Budi revealed, "for material that I do not understand, I usually ask friends, parents, or who understand the material. And for difficulties regarding the meanings in the material I usually use the help of an online dictionary" (Budi, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

The findings show that EFL students who use mobile dictionaries to learn English improve their language skills more than those who use printed dictionaries. The high speed and easy access to online/electronic dictionaries encourage students who are learning languages to use online or electronic dictionaries in the learning process frequently. Students who are learning languages will continue to use online/electronic dictionaries because they realize that when using online/electronic dictionaries increases the likelihood of learning words they do not know and understand (Esterberg, 2002)

4. *Learning video*

Regarding learning listening skills which are considered ineffective by students, they suggest providing learning videos, as described by Ana, that "maybe the subject teacher can provide learning videos through e-learning" (Ana, personal communication, November 19, 2021). If students still do not understand the material sent via E-learning, then at least the teacher adds by sending a learning video. In addition, the fact that the video was entertaining and does not make students feel bored while they are studying helps to boost the drive of pupils to learn. Students have had the impression that the approach taken by the instructor catches their attention, which allows them to concentrate on the content that is being supplied by the teacher. Videos can be used to develop listening skills and evaluate what has been seen/heard. Video media sources can be videos made by the teacher himself or from YouTube selected by the teacher according to the teaching material so that students can listen and see carefully.

Conclusion

To sum up, the study offers the result that during the implementation of E-learning, there are some activities that they experienced. These include downloading the learning material, joining the forum, and practicing through exercises. During the implementation of E-learning, some obstacles hinder them. These include students' difficulty managing their

time, problems in gadgets being used (for instance technical problems which cover the weak signal, limited quota data, and improper gadgets), and lack of teacher's explanation of learning material. The strategies employed by students, cover discipline in time allocation, the trick in using a free internet data package, and utilizing various aids in the learning environment, which include asking the teacher's assistance through WhatsApp private chat, asking for help from peer tutoring process, learning autonomously through video and other references).

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