

**A CLOSER LOOK AT CHALLENGES IN THE EFL ONLINE TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC****Baiq Jihan Olvy Wanasatya<sup>1\*</sup>, Muhammad Amin<sup>2</sup>, Lalu Thohir<sup>3</sup>**<sup>1,2,3</sup> English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
University of Mataram, Indonesia\*Corresponding Author: [jihan.olvy@gmail.com](mailto:jihan.olvy@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Corona Virus spreading in 2020 caused all schools were temporarily closed and the learning process must be conducted online. Teachers had to adjust their learning method to the situation. It was new encounter for them to apply online learning which led to various challenges. The present study aimed to figure out how English teachers apply online teaching during the pandemic, what challenges they faced, and what strategies they used to overcome those challenges and turn it into opportunities so as they could succeed in online learning. This is a qualitative descriptive study which involved four English teachers in a state junior high school in Mataram. In obtaining the data needed, an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were applied. The obtained data were then analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that English teachers conducted online teaching via Zoom, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, and Google Form. The teachers faced some challenges such as unavailable digital devices, unstable internet connection, limited internet data plan, teachers and student's inability to use technology, and the lack of student's motivation and the teachers applied some strategies to overcome those challenges. Further, some opportunities were provided for the teachers such as online teaching which could enhance teachers' digital literacy and develop their competency in using technology.

**Keywords:** online teaching, challenge, opportunity, Covid-19

Received: May 25, 2022

Accepted: Dec 22, 2022

Published: Dec 27, 2022

How to cite (in APA style):

Wanasatya, B. J. O., Amin, M., & Thohir, L. (2022). A closer look at challenges in the EFL online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. *JEEF (Journal of English Education Forum)*, 2(2), 6-15.

**INTRODUCTION**

Since Corona Virus entered Indonesia on March, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, more than a million people confirmed to be infected (WHO, 2021). In following up this outbreak, the government took quick precaution by performing social distancing to minimize the virus spread. Herdiana (2020) explained that a policy aimed to reduce social interaction between people by preventing direct physical touch between humans is known as social distancing. The implementation of a social distance strategy influenced human in many aspects of life, limiting their cavity to carry out their activities. Furthermore, it has a considerable effect on many sectors particularly in education. Nevertheless, the learning and teaching process must continue. In light of this, Indonesia's ministry of education and culture issued circular letter No. 4, 2020, which contains educational regulations, one of which specifies that during the pandemic situation, learning and teaching process was conducted online for all levels of education.

Anderson (2008) perceived online learning as a way of learning in which teachers use the internet as a tool to enhance the teaching and learning process by updating materials and information. He also reveals some benefits of online learning such as it is more accessible, lively interactive, time saving, paperless, updated and students are able to perceives it directly.

Therefore, it is suitable for the pandemic situation where teachers and students have to carry out the teaching and learning from home.

In Indonesia, certain universities and institutes have introduced online learning. The majority of them create websites to allow participants to access materials, evaluate students' work, and connect to lecturers and other students. Due to the learning process cannot be carried out normally and occurs without any preparation, it brings some difficulties for teachers. Ferri et al (2020) classified the challenges of online learning into three types: technological challenges which deal with technological devices and internet connection, pedagogical challenges which deal with lack of teachers' competencies in using technology and lack of students' motivation, social challenges which deal with learning environment and parent's support.

Based on the preliminary observation, it is found that there were some challenges during the implementation of EFL online teaching class during the pandemic of Covid-19 in SMPN 8 Mataram, such as the lack of student enthusiasm, the lack of facilities that assist students attending online classes, and the lack of teachers' ability to use the technology despite having received IT training. Thus, this study aimed to explore challenges faced by teachers in conducting EFL online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## METHODS

This study used qualitative descriptive design due to this study investigated and explained the phenomenon of teachers' perception towards EFL online teaching challenges during the pandemic of Covid-19 in which this study involved 4 English teachers in SMPN 8 Mataram in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia.

The data were obtained through questionnaire and interview and the obtained data were then analyzed through 3 stages: *data reduction* in which the audio form of data were identified, classified, and transcribed into written form; *data display* where the data were displayed by arranging them into descriptive text so that they were easily understood; and *drawing conclusion* in which the data were concluded in the form of a concise statement that sum up all the data that had been presented.

## FINDINGS

During the pandemic situation, teachers used technology and learning platform to deliver material, provide assignment and information to students. In this study, some criteria were set to find out how teachers applied online teaching including media/tools, learning resources, teaching methods, assignment and assessment.

In terms of media used, teachers utilized various kind of technology and learning platform such as handphones, laptop, Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Form, and WhatsApp.

Table 1. Teaching Media and Tools

Items
Using Laptop, Handphone, or tablet to teach
Using video conferencing such as Zoom, Google Meeting to teach/interact with students during the online learning
Using instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Line, Telegram, etc. to teach/interact with students during the learning process
Using applications such as Google Classroom and Moodle to upload teaching materials and materials that would be given to students

Table.1 shows that most of teachers used all available learning media mentioned in the questionnaire items and only one teacher used WhatsApp for the purpose of providing assignments for students and Google Classroom to take final exam scores.



*“I only used WA as the media to provide assignment, present material, and conduct test for students. But in certain cases, we were asked to use Google Classroom in taking final exam scores.” (P2)*

P2 only used WhatsApp to present material, provide assignment, and conduct assessment for students. Yet, Google Classroom was used to take final exam scores. Teachers also used Google Meeting or Zoom to teach face-to-face.

*“I was teaching virtually through Zoom or Google Meeting.” (P1)*

Besides, Google Form was used to manage assessment and get students’ scores.

*“I did students assessment using Google form to get the score.” (P3)*

In terms of learning resources, 3 of 4 teachers used all kind of teaching material starting from PPT, learning video created by teachers themselves, books, modules, and other relevant resources taken form internet as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Learning Resources

Items
Using PPT to present material to students
Using learning videos that I make myself to present the material to students
Using teaching materials such as books, modules, and other relevant sources taken from the internet

Only one teacher utilized books and another relevant resources which were shared to Class Group on WhatsApp in form of PDF.

*“The material textbook and another relevant resource shared to Class Group on WA or Google Classroom in form of PDF” (P2)*

Teachers also made their own teaching material in form of learning video that was uploaded on YouTube and then shared it via WhatsApp or Google Classroom.

*“I made my own teaching videos using PPT and uploaded it on YouTube.”(P1)*

The method used by teachers encompassed lecturing, discussion, assignment, and Q&A methods.

Table 3. Learning Resources

Items
Applying the Lecture/conventional learning method
Applying the discussion learning method
Applying the assignment method

Table 3 above shows that most of teachers applied all teaching methods. Yet, one teacher did not use conventional method for the method made the students become passive during the learning process and the teachers were the active one.

*“I avoided using lecture method for I wanted students to be more active.”(P2)*

The last is conducting assessment. In conducting assessment, teachers carried out online test, used digital portfolio, and conducted final project.

Table 4. Assessment

Items
I held an online test/quiz
I used digital portfolio
I asked students to make a video or audio as a final project
I created a site/class as a place for students to submit assignments

Table 4 denotes that most of teachers conducted online test, used digital portfolio, and conducted final project such as students made their own video. Additionally, teachers conducted online test by adopting questions in textbook which they made it into 20 multiple choices and 5 essays.

*"I held an online test by adopting the questions in the textbook. Usually, the questions are in the form of 20 multiple choice questions and 5 essay questions." (P4)*

Teachers as well provided assignment by the means of Google Form in form of multiple choice and essay questions which were the submitted online.

*"I also provided assignment by means Google Form in form of multiple choice and test to students in form of essay." (P1)*

Due to online learning emerged without any preparation, some challenges appeared such as unstable internet connection, limited data plan, unavailable digital devices, the lack of students and teacher competence in operating technology, and the lack of students' motivation.

### Unstable Internet Connection

Most of teachers had problem with unstable internet connection. Interrupted internet connection made them difficult to conduct face-to-face meetings through Zoom. Unstable signal caused technical errors such as lagging while the teaching and learning process was ongoing.

*"Unstable internet connection both at home and school Wi-Fi made the face-to-face learning process via Zoom difficult to do." (P2)*

Furthermore, overloaded use of Wi-Fi in school as a result of a high number of teachers or students using Wi-Fi at the same time caused slower internet connection at school. Students were also unable to participate in virtual online learning since online learning was not possible without internet data plan or signal.

*"Maybe due to overload in use, so sometimes the internet connection in school became slow." (P4)*

*"Unstable signal made students could not participate in online learning" (P1)*

### Limited Internet Data Plan

Teachers revealed that many students did not have internet plan for their parents budgeting condition which made them cannot afford to buy internet plan or technology devices.

*"Not all students were capable to buy a cellphone or internet quota" (P4)*

That conditions made students could not attend online class, did their assignment, or conducted online test because online learning could not be done without the internet.



### Unavailable Technology Devices

The unavailability of technology devices was often faced by the students as well. Teachers complained that other challenges of doing online teaching was that many students did not have any handphone or laptops. This occurred as a result of the parents' poor financial situation in which parents could not provide facilities to carry out online learning.

*"My biggest obstacle when learning online was the facilities owned by students. As was known that not all students were capable to buy a cellphone due to their parents cannot afford it" (P4)*

In addressing those challenges, teachers utilized suitable learning platforms which were affordable and easy to operate. If technical errors occurred such as lags and disconnections due to unstable internet connection or limited internet quota, teachers continue the teaching process by means WhatsApp and Google Classroom

*"If the internet signal suddenly disappeared while teaching via Zoom, I would continue delivering the material via WA or Google Classroom." (P3)*

Teachers asked the students to collect their work offline and received material in form of hard copy in school with still implementing health protocol if they did not have any digital devices.

*"If students did not have cellphones or quotas, they could submit assignments directly to school and once a week took the materials in hard file form to each subject teacher with still implementing the health protocol." (P1)*

In addition, all participants used the school's Wi-Fi to access the internet also educational platforms if they have no internet data plan or unstable internet connection.

*"If there were obstacles such as limited quota or unstable signals, I usually come to school to use Wi-Fi that has been prepared." (P1)*

### Inability to Use Technology Devices

People who undertook online learning, such as teachers and students, needed the ability to operate learning apps or platforms in order for online learning to go well and the goals established to be met. However, quite a few of them had trouble using the technology. One of them could not operate technology due to age factor and being in the retirement waiting list which hindered teacher's capacity to recall all of the information presented during IT training.

*"I am a senior teacher that is about to retire, so my memory to absorb the material given during IT training was minimal, which made me difficult to operate technology or learning applications." (P2)*

Furthermore, the incapacity to use technology and learning platforms was also felt by students and it formed obstacle for teachers in conducting online learning. Teachers found it difficult to gather student assignments because the students themselves did not know how to do so by using the learning platforms.

*"We had difficulties on how to collect assignments. This was also caused by the lack of students' ability to use learning applications." (P3)*

The school supported IT training for teachers to overcome the issues related to the inability in using the technology and learning platforms. The teachers were taught how to use various learning apps, create slides, summarize grades, fill out grades in report book, and deliver material to students.

*"Mentors were also brought to teach us to use learning applications including how to make PPT, how to recap report cards, fill in report cards, including delivering material to students." (P4)*



### **The lack of Students Motivation**

The students' motivation can be seen from their participation in attending the online classes whereas only 20% of them were present during the class.

*"Only 20% of students attended online classes" (P3)*

Furthermore, low student motivation can be indicated from the overdue assignments collection or even the failure to submit them despite the fact that teachers had reminded them numerous times and the material had been provided.

*"Many students did not submit assignments on time even did not submit assignments even though I had billed them many times" (P2)*

This challenge can be overcome by teachers' collaboration with parents when students skip the assignments or online classes by creating a special WhatsApp group for parents, where teachers could notify parents if a student was absent or did not collect the assignments, while the parents' task would monitor, accompany, and guide students studying online, ensuring that they, the students, took online classes and collected their assignments on time.

*"If students did not submit assignments and did not attend online classes, we notified parents through a special parents group WA that the student was not attending class so that later the parents would reprimand the student." (P3)*

However, there are two benefits that teachers got from conducting online learning during pandemic situation, i.e., enhancing teachers' digital literacy and developing teachers' competence in using technology devices.

### **Teachers' Digital Literacy Improvement**

The implementation of online learning during Covid-19 pandemic can enhance teachers' knowledge in the form of various online learning platforms that can be used such as Google Meeting, Google Classroom, and Zoom.

*"In my opinion, online learning was very useful for both students and teachers. We learned that there were actually many applications which could be used for online learning such as Google Meeting, Google Classroom, and Zoom." (P2)*

Additionally, there was an application utilized to create interesting and fun caricatures named Canva Education which was beneficial for teachers to make the online classes more fun.

*"At that time, I just found out that there was an application called Canva Education where I could make caricatures and pictures so that learning in online classes became interesting for students". (P4)*

### **Teachers' Pedagogical Skill Development**

The IT training joined by teachers improved their skills in using technology. Previously, they could only use technology for a restricted number of applications. However, after joining the training, they were able to use all of the apps that they could not previously use. They were also taught how to use PowerPoint to create attractive slides and Canva Education to create learning video with graphics and fun caricatures.

*"The training that I attended was very useful for me. Thank God all the applications that I could not use, I could use. Starting from Google Classroom, Zoom meetings, and Canva education." (P4)*

Also, online teaching could improve their skills to manage online class, assist them to be more creative teachers by making an interesting material delivery such as using Power Point



with inserting a Sing a Song activity using video from YouTube so the students did not feel bored during the class.

*"Usually, students got bored quickly when online learning, so I made an interesting PowerPoint and inserted activities such as Sing a Song whose video I took from YouTube."(P1)*

## DISCUSSION

Since Covid-19 has been in Indonesia, it is known that the learning and teaching process has been disrupted. Teachers' methods for teaching and facilitating the learning process were altered. They needed to shift face-to-face classes into online classes. The findings of this study included descriptive information about how teachers conducted online teaching, the online teaching problems they faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, and how they overcame those challenges and turned them into opportunities for online learning success.

### The Implementation of Online Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic

Based on the data, teachers employed a variety of technology devices to conduct English online teaching and learning, including instant messaging apps, video conferencing apps, and other learning apps. Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) discovered five online learning tools namely learning management systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom and Moodle, assessment tools such as Google Form, video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Google Meeting, instant messaging tools like WhatsApp, and video streaming tools like YouTube. Based on the questionnaire and interview result, three teachers used all of the learning media listed, whereas one teacher only used WhatsApp and Google Classroom. According to Khaleyla et al (2021), Google Classroom and WhatsApp are the most often used platforms for online learning during pandemics. WhatsApp is more popular because students are more familiar with the features (Mpungose, 2019). While according to Okmawati (2020), Google Classroom is a learning tool that allows teachers to create online classrooms, distribute learning materials, and manage evaluations. In addition, three teachers used PowerPoint presentations, self-made learning videos, and other internet-based teaching tools. Whereas, one teacher only used materials from relevant sites. When doing online learning, the teaching methods were crucial. Only one teacher avoided using lecturing method and most of the teachers used a variety of teaching methods. Two teachers created and used worksheets in the form of pdf, Google Form, and live-worksheet. On the other hand, other teachers used Google Forms to conduct assessment.

### The Challenges and Strategies of Online Teaching

Teachers should adapt their teaching media, resources, and method to the changing circumstances as a result of Covid-19. Since it was a new experience for them, teachers faced a number of challenges in online learning. Teachers must devise solutions to the challenges in order to make online learning worked properly. The challenges and how the teachers dealt with them are listed below.

#### a. Lack of Facilities

The lack of facilities was a prevalent problem in online learning. English teachers faced difficulties due to instable internet connection. They also claimed that many students lacked access to technology and internet quotas. According to Code et al (2020), teachers have difficulty connecting with students who had limited internet access and devices. Sujarwo et al (2020) discovered that poor internet connections made it harder for teachers to provide material. While doing online learning, students and teachers have occasionally become disconnected. They discovered that parents and students do not have any android or computer



devices, as supported by Wahab and Iskandar (2020). As it is well known that online learning could be done from any location, if computers and internet connection were available, there would be no problem emerged. Technology and internet access are critical since online learning could not take place without them. Yuzulia (2021) further stated that most students are unable to purchase internet quotas due to the high cost. Students did not have gadgets or internet quotas due to their parents' financial situation. Teachers asked students to come to school to take tests, collect assignments, or took materials in form of hard files in order to solve this problem. Subject teachers who have a schedule will always be ready to greet students when they arrived at school. This were overcome by using suitable learning platform such as WhatsApp and Google Classroom which are both user-friendly and cost-effective.

### **b. Lack of Teachers and Students' Competencies in Using Technology and Learning Platforms**

Teachers must be able to use and understand technology in order to implement online teaching classes. The condition was undermined by the fact that the they did not have adequate knowledge and skills of technology integration to conduct an online teaching since teachers performed face-to-face classroom interaction before the advent of global pandemic (Nugroho et al., 2020). It is found that teachers were still unable to use technology and learning applications. This was further reinforced by Efriana (2021) who discovered that teachers' inability to operate technology are another online learning problems. In order to run online learning, teachers needed to be able to use technology effectively. There was no choice but to master the use of technology because if teachers were unable to do so, they would become confused with learning platforms, making online teaching impossible. To address this challenge, the school provided IT training for teachers to learn about how to use various learning platforms, including how to create PowerPoint presentations, input grades in report book, conduct test, and evaluate students' work. However, due to the age factor influencing their memory ability, one of the teachers was still unable to handle those digital devices. As a result, this teacher will need to find other strategies to keep online learning going. The teacher requested assistance from other teachers in operating the learning platform. Not only did teachers have challenge with their ability to access the internet or use devices, but students did as well. In this study, three teachers stated in the interview that many students were unable to submit assignments online because they did not understand how to use the learning platform, so teachers were forced to hold Zoom meetings with students to resolve the challenge or ask students to come to school to collect their assignments.

### **c. Lack of Students' Motivation**

Another challenge that teachers faced in teaching online was students' lack of interest in participating in online learning. According to Krish (2008), the major challenge with online learning is not the technology or subject matter; rather, it is motivating students to participate in class. The result shows that three out of four teachers experienced challenge with student motivation. "Only 20% of students take online classes."(P3). This showed that student engagement in online learning is quite low. In his study, Nambiar (2020) highlighted that students' poor attendance is caused by unstable internet connection in their home, a lack of sincerity, and boredom. "Many of the students do not deliver their assignments on time, even though I have billed them many times."(P2). This hampered students' assessment, as teachers were unsure how to write grades in the report book because no grades were gained from the assignments collected by students. As a result, teachers established a special group for parents in which teachers could directly communicate with them if both teachers and students were experiencing difficulties. It was easier to tell students to submit assignments and attend online classes with the help of a parent intermediary.





## **Opportunities of Online Learning: Teachers' Digital Literacy Improvement and Teachers Pedagogical Skill Development.**

During Covid-19, the transition from face-to-face to online learning was beneficial for improving proficiency and convenience in learning. Teachers were able to increase their professionalism as educators as a result of their experience.

### **a. Teachers' Digital Literacy Improvement**

Through online teaching during Covid-19, teachers were benefited by increasing their digital literacy. As mentioned by Novikov (2020), teachers became aware of various software and online learning platforms that can assist them enhancing their digital abilities as a result of their experiences using online teaching platforms. Many applications such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Form, Google Meeting, and WhatsApp have emerged as efficient teaching tools for teachers due to rapid technological advancements. Teachers were also aware of the application, which could be used to make videos with intriguing images and caricatures. Even though online learning is no longer implemented, the knowledge could help them to produce more effective and innovative instructional strategies.

### **b. Teachers Pedagogical Skill Development**

By means of online workshop, school provided IT training relating to devices and learning platforms that could be used in online education during the pandemic. According to Khodabandelou (2016), teachers had to attend IT training workshops, in order to empower and improve their skill to use technology. Emergency remote teaching, according to Sundrawati and Pahlevi (2021), enables teachers to improve their digital skills in their online teaching classes. Teachers can learn how to use Zoom and Google Meeting to conduct face-to-face online learning, Google Classroom to organize online classes and share materials, and Google Form to check their students' attendance and to conduct assessments. Through Canva Education, teachers can learn how to build attractive PowerPoint slides as well as to create learning videos with interesting photos and caricatures. Jaya et al. (2021) explain that after teachers learn how to use technology, they should try to create an enjoyable and easy-to-understand learning environment. In this study, it was found that one of the teachers did this by using a YouTube video of a sing-a song activity to be displayed through PowerPoint. As a result, even if the learning system was far away, the essence of a favorable and effective learning process could be preserved, and learning objectives could be met.

## **CONCLUSION**

Regarding to this research, it can be concluded that English teachers used a variety of learning platforms, including WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Form, and Zoom, to conduct online learning in terms of creating online classes, sharing materials, collecting student work, managing evaluation, and conducting assessment. The challenges found are: lack of facilities such as bad internet connection, unavailable technology devices and data plan; lack of teachers' and students' pedagogical skill in operating technology, lack of students' motivation such as low students' attendance and low participation to collect assignments. Various strategies were also applied to overcome those challenges; for example, teachers used suitable learning platforms, students collected their assignment in school, teachers asked for another teacher's help to use learning platforms, teachers collaborated with parents to monitor students' progress, and teachers created fun and interesting learning atmosphere. The opportunities that teachers obtained from online teaching such as online teaching could enhance teachers' knowledge about various learning platforms that could be used, improving teachers' skill to operate learning platforms, and becoming more creative teacher to build a fun online class by using learning videos made by themselves or taken from another resources.

**REFERENCES**

- Atmojo, A. E., & Nugroho, A. (2020). EFL Classes Must Go Online! Teaching Activities and Challenges during Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. REGISTER JOURNAL, 49-76. Vol.13 (1).
- Code, J., Ralph, R., & Forde, K. (2020). Pandemic designs for the future: perspectives of technology education teachers during Covid-19. Information and Learning Sciences.
- Khaleyla, F., Wisanti, W., Ambarwati, R., Rahayu, D. A., & Putri, E. K. (2021). Software preference for online learning of science and biology teachers under Covid-19 pandemic. JPBI (Jurnal Pendidikan Biologi Indonesia), 35–42. Vol.7 (1).
- Khodabandelou, R. (2016). Exploring the Main Barriers of Technology Integration in the English Language Teaching Classroom: A Qualitative Study. International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies, 53-58, Vol. 4(1).
- Krish, P. (2008). Language Learning in the Virtual World: Instructors' Voices. International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning, 113–129. Vol.4 (4).
- Mpungose, C. B. (2019). Is Moodle or WhatsApp the preferred e-learning platform at a South African university? First-year students' experience. Education and Information Technologies, 927–941. Vol 25(2).
- Nambiar, D. (2020). The impact of online learning during Covid-19: students' and teachers' perspective. The International Journal of Indian Psycholog, 783-793. Vol.8 (2).
- Novikov, P. (2020). Impact of Covid-19 Emergency Transition to On-line learning on International Students' Perceptions of Educational Process at Russian University. Journal of Social Studies Education Research, 270-302, Vol. 11(3).
- Okmawati, M. (2020). THE USE OF GOOGLE CLASSROOM DURING PANDEMIC. Journal of English Language Teaching, 438-443. Vol 9(2).
- Sundarwati, E., & Phlevi, M. R. (2021). EFL TEACHERS' CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING DURING THE Covid-19 PANDEMIC: NARRATIVE INQUIRY. Language and Education Journal Undiksha, 74-85, Vol. 4(2).
- Suwarjo, Sukmawati, Akhiruddin, Ridwan, & Siradjuddin, S. (2020). An Analysis of University Students' Perspective on Online Learning in the Midst of Covid-19 Pandemic. Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran, 125-137. Vol. 53(2).
- Wahab, S., & Iskandar, M. (2020). Teacher's Performance to Maintain Students' Learning Enthusiasm in the Online Learning Condition. JELITA: Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature, 34-44. Vol.1 (2).