Barriers in EFL online learning experienced by learners during the COVID-19 outbreak

Vivi Aulia[1]
[1]English Language Education Study Program, STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin

Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This research aims at reviewing the barriers in EFL online learning experienced by learners in five countries like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Jordan, and Ecuador during online learning gained from the research articles. This research was described descriptively with a qualitative approach. The data being investigated in this research were five research articles from different researchers in different countries where they conducted research about the barriers of EFL online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak viewed from learners' experiences. The results of this research showed that those five countries faced similar barriers in EFL online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. They were technical matters (internet connectivity) and social matters (limited interaction among teachers and learners). The conclusion stated that policymakers in each country should consider possible infrastructure for supporting high speed internet access, providing both technical and economic support to easily access it. Thus, for those who have barriers related to social matters, it was important for EFL teachers to create a strategy that made the class interactive and interesting as well as motivated the EFL learners to learn. Internal motivation from the EFL learners and teachers themselves to accommodate online learning creatively was needed.

Corresponding Author:

Vivi Aulia,
English Language Education Study Program,
STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin,
Jl. Sultan Adam Komplek H. Iyus no 18 Banjarmasin, Indonesia.
Email: viviauliavasa@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of today's COVID-19 outbreak has affected many worldwide changes. Not only do people around the world have to obey the official health protocol from the World Health Organization (WHO), but also they should make changes to the education industry. Face-to-face learning, in which all learners and teachers meet in the same location to carry out the instructional process, should be moved to an online learning mode. Both distance learning and online learning have become the only alternatives to carry out instructional processes at all educational levels during this situation. All people around the world are being forced to adjust themselves by moving from face-to-face classes into the online environment. Simultaneously, minimizing physical contact among the teacher and learners during an emergency the COVID-19 outbreak is one of the reasons for moving from traditional face-to-face learning to online mode in all countries.

Under the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, in early 2020, UNESCO's initial release regarding the number of students out of school is estimated to be around 290 million. Furthermore, according to UNESCO (2020), the closure of higher education institutions has impacted over 91 percent of the world's student population, with 23.8 million students expected to drop out or be unable to acquire admission to schools in the 2021 academic calendar. To address the global education issue, schools all over the world have

implemented online teaching methods to safeguard students' educational prospects as well as their health and life (Wang et al, 2021).

Online learning, which is also referred as web-based learning, enable the teachers and the learners to geographically meet in different location using such technology as a medium for communication. This situation strongly depends on using possible devices where they can see each other virtually (Li and Zhang, 2021). This online learning, in particular, provides learners with opportunities to learn and spend their most out of their learning efforts from the comfort of their own homes. As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, many countries temporarily closed academic institutions and switched regular classes to virtual mode. They used various ICT tools like Google Meet, Zoom, Youtube, Microsoft Teams, and other online applications like Google Classroom, Edmodo, Quiziz, etc., to continue their educational activities alternately, despite restrictions on gatherings and safety regulations to prevent the outbreak of COVID-19.

As the high frequency and mobility of using ICT tools since the early months of the COVID-19 outbreak to carry out online learning, it remains a fact that its implementation relies heavily on digital teaching tools. Dealing with this, Van and Thi (2021) underlined that online learning focuses on both the online content and the support of obvious technology in order to provide meaningful as well as successful lessons. Moreover, this obvious technology gives a reaction to the absence of either the teacher or the learners by providing a vast variety of teaching tools that are accessible over the internet. Besides that, it allows virtual interaction between learners and teachers instead of regular face-to-face interaction.

Dealing with the new experience for most of the learners around the world during the COVID-19 outbreak, Seifert (2021) emphasized that the successful implementation of online learning is largely determined by its design, the characteristics of learners, and the teaching methods used. There are some points that contribute to learning in online courses. They are: (1) employing content organization and presentation based on learners' needs; (2) choosing acceptable course goals and identifying evaluation objectives; (3) interaction – improving human relationships; and (4) utilizing appropriate technology. These become the keys to getting successful outcomes from implementing online learning. Another additional issue comes from Boardman et al., (2021) who state that learners' self-motivation is crucial in online courses. Learners must be able to complete their assignments on time, even when they are not supervised. Learners must motivate themselves to finish online activities. This indicates that internal factors from learners themselves determine the individual's learning progress.

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, four language skills should be taught in practice for learners to be communicatively competent. Online learning is more inconvenient than traditional language classrooms because it is difficult to include all four skills communicatively. During the COVID-19 outbreak, some new realities have emerged in EFL classes. Communication is one of the most important aspects of learning, and it is particularly important in the field of education. Interaction between teachers and learners has the potential to improve the teaching and learning process and create a welcoming environment. However, in an online class, the learners are physically separated from one another. They use electronic devices to communicate, and the new barriers happen during this situation.

There is a research report conducted by Tümen-Akyıldız et al (2021) that shows throughout the EFL teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak, both reading and listening skills training were the priority activities the students had. Both of these abilities are passive, requiring no intentional communication. This situation is not specific to pandemic education. A lack of connection between students and teachers in online classes could have led to the current situation. However, because English is a worldwide language, the emphasis in face-to-face and online programs should be on communication. This indicates that there were difficulties in the four language skills learning in EFL classes due to the limitation of teacher-student interaction during online learning, as the main requirements of building communicative student practice.

The experience of having online learning presents various technical, academic, and social barriers happening. Some researchers conducted an investigation into EFL teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak. Volodymyrivna et al (2021) conducted a study on the challenge faced by EFL learners in Ukraine toward online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. It was found out that learners have anxiety problems in the process of learning a foreign language, such as low self-esteem, demotivation, frustration, fear of failure, etc. Therefore, those who should stay at home as the impact of quarantine measures showed the condition that they have lack interaction among others and pandemic-related stress. EFL learners in Ukraine believed that online learning is inferior to real classroom teaching. They do not have enough digital opportunities, a lot of individual tasks, and a lack of personal contact and connection. Many of them have a terrible internet connection at home, as well as a hostile learning atmosphere. It indicated that EFL learners in Ukraine try to adapt to the online learning environment hardly.

The second researcher from Iran investigated the EFL learners' attitude toward online learning during COVID-19 outbreak. Jalilinia (2021) investigated the Iranian EFL learners' perspective in the process of online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. The result revealed that most of them have negative views of

online learning and would not recommend it for future educational years. The majority of the learners had trouble interacting effectively. Furthermore, the majority of them had negative experiences with the learning platform they were required to utilize. The current learning environment could be upgraded and teachers should use ways to completely engage learners in the learning process during online sessions. This leads to the conclusion that Iranian EFL learners expect that the current platform must be refined in order to have effective online learning. Besides that, internet connection and speed issues should be addressed so that they will have a positive online experience.

The other one of the similar situation comes from Thailand. Sukman and Mhunkongdee (2021) reported that Thai EFL learners under this research stated no intention to learn online in the future. There were some comments on their preference for face-to-face training. Most learners encountered comparable obstacles while learning online, such as a bad or inconsistent internet connection, a lack of proper feedback and assistance from teachers, and limited interaction among them. Furthermore, numerous learners claimed that during online classes, they lost interest and desire in learning English. This is due to the fact that many of their classmates did not participate or engage in the lesson.

Relating to the consideration that previous research above showed the different countries remain the same negative experience faced by EFL learners engaging in online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak, this research would like to investigate the barrier of engaging online learning experienced by EFL learners in other countries, whether any of them have different feelings and experiences. The researcher expects that the findings of this research will become the future reference for EFL learners in each country on what they should prepare before joining online learning in the situation of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is expected that those EFL learners' technical, academic, and social things as the meaningful preparation will help them reduce any barriers and problems facing online learning so that they can achieve EFL learning outcomes effectively during the COVID-19 outbreak.

2.   RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a descriptive design with a qualitative approach aimed at reviewing the barriers in EFL learning experienced by learners in five countries like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Jordan, and Ecuador during online learning. In particular, this research investigated whether any of the EFL learners in those five countries had different feelings and experiences in online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. There were five research articles as the research report from different researchers in different countries to describe the EFL learning situation during the COVID-19 outbreak to be reviewed. Each article described the learners' experience and their points of view on the barriers they faced when learning English as a foreign language from home.

Documentation was used to collect data for this research. It illustrated the condition of online learning learners experienced in five different countries and their barriers. The data for this research were obtained by searching for research articles on the subject in ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) as an authoritative database of indexed and full-text online article resources.The researcher presented the abstract from all the articles as the summary of the research report. Then, the researcher gave narration as well as elaboration on it as the findings of this research.

In order to get the detailed findings from these five research articles, the researcher constructed the criteria of investigated items in the form of a table as the instruments. These criteria were presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The investigated items on the research articles

No	Country	Year of publication	Aspect of barriers (give checklist)			Detail information
			Technical	Academic	Social	
1	Indonesia	......				.....
2	Saudi Arabia	.....				.....
3	Algeria	.....				.....
4	Jordan	.....				.....
5	Ecuador	.....				......

After the investigated items on Table 1 above were filled completely, the researcher summarized the research report and gave narration as well as elaboration on the findings of this research. Subsequently, the findings that present the narration of the abstract from those five research articles were analyzed by Miles et al. (2014) qualitative data analysis. They were: data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusion. First of all, in data condensation, the researcher involved herself in reading the abstracts of these five research articles critically, found the main points of the issue about barriers in EFL learning experienced by EFL learners during the COVID-19 outbreak, and categorized them into the criteria on Tabel 1. Next, in the data display, the researcher provided the details information of the findings in the form of a description. Finally,

the researcher made the conclusion on the most barriers occur in EFL learning experienced by learners in these five countries. Then, the researcher synthesized them into a single new perspective about what the EFL learners should do in online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak to maximize their learning progress.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

As mentioned in the previous part that this research aims at investigating the barriers of EFL online learning experienced by learners during the COVID-19 outbreak. The findings of this study present the results of data exposing EFL learning barriers during the emergency COVID-19 outbreak through five research articles representing the EFL learning condition in five different countries

3.1 Results

The findings of this research were presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Findings of the research

No	Country	Year of publication	Aspect of barriers			Detail information
			Technical	Academic	Social	
1	Indonesia	2020		V		Unfamiliarity of learners with e-learning
			V			- Slow internet connection
						- Uncomfortable physical condition
2	Saudi Arabia	2020	V			Internet connectivity problem
				V		Difficulties in accessing class and downloading learning materials
					V	Limited access to interact with teachers
3	Algeria	2021	V			- Internet connectivity problem
						- Lack of teacher's experience in operating online learning platform
					V	Lack of interactions with the teachers
4	Jordan	2021	V			Poor online learning infrastructure
				V		Lack of engagement in learning
					V	Lack of connections with the teacher
5	Ecuador	2021	V			Internet connectivity problem
					V	Limited interaction between classmates and teachers

From the table 2 above, this research revealed that there were two main barriers to the EFL learning experienced by learners in the five countries being investigated. They were technical issues and social ones. In order to have more description of these barriers, the detailed situation of EFL learning during the COVID-19 outbreak in each country was presented as follows:

Table 3. Research article from Octaberlina and Muslimin (2020)

Title of Research	Abstract
EFL Learners Perspective towards Online Learning Barriers and Alternatives Using Moodle/Google Classroom during COVID-19 Pandemic	COVID-19 pandemic has made many countries adapt to new situations in different sectors including education. The Indonesia government has decided to adjust the education mode from face-to-face to online meetings using various learning management systems (LMS) such as moodle and google classroom. Moreover, the present research depicted the online learning barriers faced by students as well as their alternatives to cope them. The research implemented a descriptive mixed-method survey design. The participants were 25 students from the English Education Department. The instruments used to gather the data were the questionnaires and interviews regarding the topics. The results showed that students experienced three barriers during online learning including unfamiliarity of e-learning, slow internet connection, and physical condition e.g. eye strain. The alternatives they proposed were providing training to implement the LMS before the real class, converting high-definition or big-size files into smaller ones, and giving break during the online class. The conclusion stated that students had to be creative to find any solutions and innovations regarding learning barriers including maintaining good communication with teacher and understanding the best learning styles individually.

Table 3 above elaborated on the use of learning management systems (LMS) as one of the alternative platforms for conducting EFL online learning in Indonesia. Based on the researchers' investigations by interviewing and distributing the questionnaire to learners as the object of this research, there were three barriers of EFL online learning faced by them. They were unfamiliar with e-learning where most of the learners were not familiar yet with the form of LMS itself, unstable internet connection, and physical impairment due to the use of electronic devices during online learning. These barriers were mostly experienced by Indonesian learners under this research. As a result, they needed such improvement in the way of online learning to overcome it.

Table 4. Research article from Mahyoob (2020)

Title of Research	Abstract
Barriers of e-Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemi Experienced by EFL Learners	COVID-19 has disrupted most of the industries in the world. Education is the only industry that is completely transferred to online mode in most countries around the world. Online learning was the best solution for continuing education during the pandemic, especially in tertiary education. This study aims to determine the barriers and obstacles confronted by English language learners (EFL) in Science and Arts College, Alula, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia, during switching to online learning in the second semester of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The contribution of this study is to evaluate the learners' new experiences in online education and to assess the feasibility of the virtual methods of learning. This is achieved by analyzing 184 learners' responses to the survey-based questionnaire. A descriptive statistical method was used to test the validation of the study. It is found that the main problems that influence and impact online EFL learning during COVID-19 are related to technical, academic, and communication barriers. The study results show that most EFL learners are not satisfied with continuing online learning, as they could not fulfill the expected progress in language learning performance.

Based on the investigation of Mahyoob on the EFL learners at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia, it was found out that technical, academic, and communication barriers became the main issues for them during online learning in the COVID-19 outbreak. Furthermore, other information gained from this research relates to the learners' interaction with information technology tools in online learning and their satisfaction with the learning progress during the COVID-19 outbreak. They missed many tasks, duties, and communication with teachers due to limited interaction among them. It was also revealed in this research that EFL learners in Saudi Arabia mostly have barriers in internet connection and access to the online classes.

Table 5. Research article from Benadla and Hadji (2021)

Title of Research	Abstract
EFL Students Affective Attitudes towards Distance E-Learning Based on Moodle Platform during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Perspectives from Dr. MoulayTahar University of Saida, Algeria	The practice of the online learning system in Algeria is novel. However, with the spread of COVID 19, Algerian universities have been compelled to undertake remote and digital teaching. The University of Dr. MoulayTahar in Saida has arbitrarily hastened in implementing E-learning as an alternative teaching measure to maintain both positive educational outcomes and keep students safe and healthy. This research purports to examine how the University of Dr. MoulayTahar in Saida has used Moodle platform to facilitate the teaching process during the COVID 19. This paper, therefore, stresses the issues of distance e-learning that challenge both teachers and students alike. The researchers attempt to answer the following question: What are the affective attitudes of EFL students towards distance learning assisted with Moodle Platform during the Coronavirus? To supply an adequate answer to the raised question, the researchers have selected a sample of 157 participants. The researchers collected data through a questionnaire and delivered copies to the participants. The findings revealed that both the teachers and the learners were not well prepared for an online learning experience. That there are more disadvantages than advantages. The results of the research conveyed that the technical skills, the teachers' lack of experience as well as the social situation of the students have made E. learning a complex process. The analysis also revealed that Master students have negative attitudes towards e-learning, and they would prefer face-to-face interaction in the classroom and handouts more than virtual learning

The next researchers who investigated the EFL situation during the COVID-19 outbreak were Benadla and Hadji from Algeria. They conducted a research in 2021 on this issue, seeing from someone's perspective and found the complex implementation of EFL teaching as well as the negative attitude towards online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. Specifically, the findings of this research emphasized that the process of EFL learning during the COVID-19 outbreak in Algeria created a lack of effective learning outcomes. Technical things were frequently faced by EFL learners which led to reluctance and lack of motivation. High-speed internet access was also hampered by a lack of supporting infrastructure, particularly telephone lines. Besides that, online learning became a barrier for them due to the lack of experience of teachers operating the moodle platform and the social situation of learners. It indicated that the implementation of online learning was not easy for EFL learners in Algeria during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Table 6. Research Article from Hijazi and AlNatour (2021)

Title of Research	Abstract
	The sudden and rapid changes in the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a shift in the educational methods used in educational facilities. Barriers faced by both students and lecturers have led to a quality difference in the education provided. This research was carried out on students who joined EFL English-99 and English-101

Title of Research	Abstract
Online Learning Barriers Affecting Students of English in an EFL Context during COVID-19 Pandemic	courses that enforced online learning during the 2019/2020 summer semester at Yarmouk University. A quantitative approach was used to answer the question of this research: What are the online learning barriers faced by English language students in an EFL context during COVID-19 Pandemic? A questionnaire of 52 items was sent online to 1,200 students to find the causes of the quality change. The items aimed to determine the effect on the student experience of the following barriers: infrastructure, computer skills, coordination, teaching methods, motivation & willingness, assessment methods and social aspects. The results showed the severity of the barriers as following: teaching methods, social aspects, infrastructure, computer skills and coordination all showed a high degree of challenge, and assessment methods, motivation & willingness came with a moderate degree of challenge. The researchers recommend conducting further research to determine solutions for the barriers faced by students in an EFL context in the online learning environment.

The next investigation into the barriers experienced by EFL learners towards online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak was conducted by Hijazi and AlNatour (2021) as presented in Table 6 above. They conducted a research on the EFL learners in Jordan related to the online learning barriers they face. It showed that there were many complicated things they faced during the COVID-19 outbreak like teaching methods, social aspects, a high budget of infrastructure, and computer skills where not all students have the ability to operate such possible devices for supporting them in online learning. It was also stated in this research that many Yarmouk University students in Jordan came from rural communities where they preferred to use printed books and listen to the teachers' explanations directly in a real classroom as the sources of learning rather than learning alone using the internet.

Table 7. Research Article from Sevy-Biloon (2021)

Title of Research	Abstract
Virtual or Face to Face Classes: Ecuadorian University Students' Perceptions during the Pandemic	Due to the pandemic, classes have moved online for 2020-2021, and a return to face-to-face classes in the National University of Education (UNAE) in Ecuador is unknown. Students researching in the undergraduate program to be English language teachers are slowly adapting to this new form of E-learning, and some have found that they prefer online classes, while many are waiting for the day they return to classes. The objective of this research is to look at the pros and cons given by 69 students discussing why taking classes virtually or face to face is a better option for EFL and being an ELT professional in these turbulent times. Some prefer online learning for various reasons such as safety, comfort, economic reasons, and having more time in general. Some find E-learning difficult and want to return to synchronous classes because they feel there is little interaction between classmates and teachers, they cannot practice English authentically, cannot get clarification from the teacher, have a hard time concentrating online, and there are constant internet connection issues. In conclusion, this information has great importance for teachers today who are struggling to teach in this new medium and teach to the needs of their students to aid in their planning and will contribute to future teachers who will teach online.

The last research was conducted by Biloon (2021) among the EFL students in Ecuador toward online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. They had more concerns about the teaching and learning process during online learning as the main challenge. Specifically, online learning remains difficult for the teacher and students to interact actively. Besides that, it was difficult to get feedback and additional clarification at the end of the regular lesson. Similar to the situation in other countries, EFL students in Ecuador have barriers to internet connectivity during online learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Based on the results presented in Table 2-7, there were two important issues related to what EFL learners mostly have in the countries under this research. They were technical matters and social matters. The technical matter related to the issue of internet connectivity becomes the main barrier as technological supporting infrastructure to facilitate EFL learners under this research. Another one was a social matter related to the social relationship between the teacher and learners during online learning in the COVID-19 outbreak. It seems that there was minimal active interaction among them virtually in class.

3.2 Discussions

Online learning is the only learning model implemented by learners around the world accommodating face-to-face learning that cannot be carried out during the COVID-19 outbreak. UNESCO released its first estimate of the number of learners out of school in early 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The number of learners out of school is estimated to be over 290 million (Van and Thi, 2021). Furthermore, many schools and educational institutions throughout the world have resorted to totally online teaching and learning as a result of the rapid COVID-19 outbreak. They should stay at home and learn from a distance

using various kinds of applications and platforms. These conditions resulted in important insight. It is possible that online learning will become part of a future way of connecting learners around the world beyond the classroom.

Since the sudden implementation of online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak became the essential thing to note in its work, it has been shown that the learners have both positive and negative reactions to it. The emergency situation during COVID-19 outbreak also has an impact on teaching English as a foreign language as one of the language learning activities for those who do not speak English as their daily language. English who has language skills and language components should be learned verbally to achieve effective communication. Interaction between teachers and learners is the main factor in improving EFL teaching and learning. However, various new realities have surfaced in EFL lessons during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Based on the findings of this research, there are two main important realities to note. The first one is about technology infrastructure on the use of internet access as the only way to connect people. EFL learners in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Algeria, and Ecuador have the same problems related to internet connectivity to support them engaging in online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. They came from different geographical areas with different situations where not all of them lived with stable and high-speed internet access. Not all learners have good internet connectivity. Some learners suffered from network problems, lacking high-quality learning devices. As a result, the process of EFL online learning cannot work effectively due to this technical problem.

Digital technologies are the main supporting devices for those who want to engage in EFL online learning. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the learners use electronic dictionaries, websites, and other digital platforms more frequently than they did before. This is because they should learn everything from home that requires them to stay connected with EFL materials and other tasks to learn. Furthermore, they also use social media platforms like Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, and other similar applications to support their learning (Xodabande, 2018). Operating all of these digital media needs an internet data connection that should be spent in each session of the EFL online class. The truth is that not all EFL students have access to the internet.

Another issue as a result of this research's findings is a social issue. Mahyoob (2020) and Simamora (2020) explain that learning during the COVID-19 outbreak brings out unexpected changes. One of them is the interaction between the learners and the teacher in a different way in which the teaching-learning activities are celebrated in the virtual room, instead of the indoor classroom. According to the findings of this research, EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Jordan, and Ecuador have similar feelings that they are unable to achieve their best learning performance during the COVID-19 outbreak. They prefer face-to-face interaction in the real classroom more than interaction in the virtual room. It is understandable that EFL learning will be better be learned in face-to-face learning since it needs interactions between teachers and learners to represent the use and the practice of language in communication. Practicing English language skills and language components will become the barriers for them due to limited interactions in a virtual room among classroom members.

Dealing with the importance of interactions in EFL teaching as the barrier for learners to be implemented in an online way, Demir and Sönmez (2021) mention that in most EFL classes, learners and teachers maintain physical interaction and engagement through eye contact, body language, and information sharing. Nevertheless, teachers cannot accommodate the basic human communication requirement in online classes since the learners can see each other on the computer screen but cannot communicate actively in person. As a result, classroom management becomes a major issue because it is difficult for teachers to provide feedback, resulting in low student engagement and motivation. To put it another way, fewer communication opportunities mean less interaction among them.

Another additional barrier related to interaction happens when the teacher mostly has problems in seeing the physical appearances of all learners. It is difficult to make sure that all EFL learners pay attention to the teacher's explanation of the materials. Some of them turn on the video cameras to show that they are with the teacher, whereas some of them are not for the entire online class (Batmang et al., 2021; Rahayu & Wirza, 2020). It seems that the learners are busy with other activities at the same time beyond the online class. This situation is described in the research by Biloon (2021) who found that Ecuadorian EFL learners tend to turn off their video cameras. It is understandable that the off-video cameras will contribute to the stability of the internet network the learners have. However, limited interaction among teachers and learners exists during class time since most of them do not respond communicatively to the teacher's explanation.

Based on the findings of this research, EFL online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak seems good in practice. However, in fact, there are a lot of barriers the learners have in learning activities, particularly in achieving the learning outcomes. What should be noted in an online class is although the process of teaching and learning seems to be running well; it does not guarantee the success of learning and teaching activities.

Again, it should be remembered that the online class tends to simplify the teaching-learning goals by exaggerating the luxury of digital platforms. Whether they sit in high-level schools with privileges or not, the learners are faced with a big problem in learning because they cannot focus on what to learn. Every learner has similar barriers in an online class. Their teacher may have done the best in teaching service, but the learners undergo extraordinary boredom during online classes because it is a pseudo-class in which they feel as if they are in the class, however, they are in each of their homes (Hermanto et al., 2021; Agung & Surtikanti, 2020). All realities in an online class are not real so that the interaction built among the teacher and their friends is also not real too.

From the two aspects of the issue seen from the technical matter and the social one, it is important to note that the EFL teaching and learning in online classed during the COVID-19 outbreak needs extraordinary energy that should be prepared and held in which the learners and the teacher should be ready to work with the limited interaction and internet connectivity barriers. In limited interaction, they should have the strategy to make the class interactive and interesting, motivate the EFL learners' interest in learning, and the teacher should motivate themselves to have high motivation to teach. In addition, dealing with internet connectivity barriers which is experienced by all the EFL learners in this research, possible infrastructure for supporting high speed access internet should be considered by the policymakers in each country, providing both technical and economic support to access it easily. Furthermore, internal motivation from the EFL learners and teachers themselves to accommodate online learning creatively is needed. They can create possible EFL learning activities that can be accomplished without always depending on the existence of internet connectivity, such as: doing case-based method learning and project-based learning.

Furthermore, Efriana (2021) in her research suggests to EFL teachers on the need to implement platforms with simpler operations like WhatsApp or Telegram groups that can be reached by learners in a rural area. Almost all people around the world use this application to communicate with each other. Minimizing the problem of connection, this application can be one of the alternative media to teach EFL learners in online learning. Finally, to conclude the suggestion for the long-term condition where the emergency of the COVID-19 outbreak is unpredictable, it is important for the institution as policymakers to be concerned about this issue. Providing an applicable LMS (learning management system) for learners can be one of the possible ways to facilitate them in EFL online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak.

4. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that technical matters on the internet connectivity issue and social matters dealing with the limited interaction among teachers and learners constitute the barriers experienced by EFL learners in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Algeria, and Ecuador. Those five countries represent the need for adequate network infrastructure in the emergency of the COVID-19 outbreak as well as human interaction in the situation of online learning where they should work with technology. All the EFL learners under this research state that learning EFL needs communication and interaction among others physically to create an effective communication goal. Otherwise, online learning can not accommodate this maximally due to its condition where they meet and learn only in front of cameras and computer screens.

Some suggestions are derived based on this way of learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. Dealing with a technical matter, it is needed for each country to provide an accessible LMS to facilitate EFL online learning. Therefore, for those who have barriers related to social matters, it is important for EFL teachers to create a strategy that makes the class interactive and interesting as well as motivates the EFL learners interested to learn. Internal motivation from the EFL learners and teachers themselves to accommodate online learning creatively is needed. They can create possible EFL learning activities that can be accomplished without always depending on the existence of internet connectivity, such as: doing case-based method learning and project-based learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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