The use of online learning EFL lecturers' experiences in Sambas' border area

M. Sabiqul Huda[1], **Syahruddin Usman**[2], **Amrah Kasim**[3], **& Misykat Malik Ibrahim**[4]

[1]Institut Agama Islam Sultan Muhammad Syafaruddin Sambas
[2,3,4]Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia
Correspondence Email: muhammadsabiqulhuda@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

During COVID-19, online learning is considered an effective model for English courses. Unfortunately, implementing the instruction has some obstacles, especially in Indonesia's border area. Interestingly, while COVID-19 is close to the end, EFL lecturers in this area have used the model until today. This paper explains why EFL lecturers in the border area still use online learning after the pandemic. In addition, it explores how this online learning is used. This study conducted a case study using a qualitative nature with two EFL lecturers in one of the border areas in Indonesia. The interview-driver discussion was provided narratively. The finding likely reaffirmed that online learning provides lecturers in the border areas more attractive and flexible instruction than traditional offline learning. Furthermore, in the border area, online learning in English courses could be modified into blended learning using social media in its application. Due to its limitation, however, further research is suggested to employ a more comprehensive method. For instance, special attention should also be placed on the role of students' perspectives since this issue was not discussed in this research

Keywords: Online learning; post covid-19; EFL lecturers; border area

1. INTRODUCTION

English is the most used language in the world. By mastering the language, people could take many benefits, such as job opportunities, confidence to explore the world, access to world-class education systems, and entertainment from around the world

(Mahu, 2012). Some of Indonesia's areas are directly bordering other countries. Therefore, people living in that area should master the language to benefit both countries.

Given this situation, two universities in the border area require their students to take English courses for three semesters. The three-semester English course aims to equip students with better communication skills, writing, reading, and understanding of English literature. With this skill, they are expected to afford global competition. To achieve these goals, English lecturers must consider approaches to teaching English. This approach should adapt to the times (Khalil & Brunhielda, 2020). Lecturers not only use conventional approaches but also can use more modern approaches, for example, by integrating online learning.

Online learning is commonly beneficial for many education courses, including English ones. This instruction can assist educational EFL practitioners in teaching and learning (Fitria, 2021; Sutrisna & Dewi, 2021). The impact is not only on the student's achievement but also on the student's attitude toward the English course. Shahi (2016) stated that online learning makes students more comfortable, making the class activity less stressful. Unfortunately, online learning has many obstacles, especially with inadequate internet infrastructure.

In early 2020, the world community was surprised by the emergence of the COVID-19 outbreak. This epidemic spreads quickly, so many countries have instructed quarantines and lockdowns in their territories. The Indonesian government had also imposed restrictions on activities outside the home. All non-essential activities must be carried out from home. This was done to prevent the virus from spreading further. This activity restriction has significantly changed several sectors, including tourism, public services, public transport, economics, and education (Arora & Srinivasan, 2020). Schools, training centers, and universities were closed to avoid face-to-face meetings between teachers/lecturers and students.

In Indonesia, the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia ordered all educational institutions to shift from offline to online learning. This was done to maintain the stability of national education. However, Yani (2021) argued that not all educational institutions were ready to face this change, especially those where the areas were far from the city center, like remote and border areas. Thus, there was a dilemma for teachers/lecturers in implementing online learning during Covid-19.

Previous research has noted several problems when using online learning in the border area. For instance, a study highlighted that unstable internet access is a problem teachers and students face (Tirta, Yuliana, & Sada, 2022). This made the teaching-

learning activity ineffective. Economic issues are the following problems for teachers and students. Family low welfare has become a central problem for teachers to use online learning because they cannot afford to buy the internet quota continuously (Batubara et al., 2021). Even though the government has provided a quota subsidy for teachers and students, more is needed because the online teaching and learning process needs a large amount of data. Similarly, the researchers added that some students also need help with low economic income. As a result, they need help to spend money to buy internet quotas. Many cannot even participate in online learning because they need laptops, cell phones, or other supporting devices (Djidu et al., 2021).

Another obstacle the teachers and students face is the need for knowledge of online learning applications (Batubara et al., 2021). Most teachers in border areas are not used to applying online learning. When the government required online learning, many teachers and students struggled to incorporate various online learning applications into the teaching and learning process.

Although research on implementing online learning in EFL Teaching during COVID-19 has shown a growing trend, there needs to be more information concerning how EFL lecturers in border areas overcome their problems using online learning. There are exciting phenomena in two universities in a border area in Indonesia. Their EFL lecturers keep using online learning in the classroom, although they face many difficulties when using online learning. The government has relaxed the community's activities in many sectors, including educational institutions. It means that the implementation of education can be carried out face-to-face. Therefore, to fill in the gap in the research body, this present study aims to answer the following research questions: (1) Why do EFL lecturers in the border area still use online learning? (2) How do EFL lecturers in the border area use online learning?

2. METHODS

This research was a case study using a qualitative approach. A case study is assumed to successfully concede and give the individual complexity within a social group (Duff, 2008; Padilla, 2006). Two EFL lecturers were invited to participate, named April and Tika (pseudonym). Time and resource limitations prevented the researcher from gaining the ideal number of participants (6-10) (Campillos, 2010). However, this study still provides an idea of implementing online learning in the post-COVID-19 experienced by the participants. Moreover, the researcher used indicators to determine which participants could be involved in this research. It is necessary to complement the small number of participants in this research.

First, April and Tika were chosen as they worked as EFL lecturers who fitted the selection indicator. They have taught EFL at the university level for around eight years. They taught in the border area where their province has Indonesia's 5th lowest human development index. Although living in such an area has many limitations, they consistently kept teaching EFL using online learning. Of course, it leads to the researcher's curiosity regarding their struggle in the EFL teaching process.

In order to collect actual and deep data, a semi-structured interview was undertaken in August 2022. The researcher modified an interview guide by Febrianto, Mas'udah, and Megasari (2020) for a similar study in Madura, Indonesia. The interview was conducted in a casual situation. The participants were permitted to speak in Bahasa Indonesia to make them feel comfortable. The interview was recorded for 25 minutes and 20 minutes for April and Tika consecutively. After collecting the recording, the researcher transcribed it using software for transcription, Express Scribe.

This research did not use statistical computation because this research was a qualitative approach. Thus, the research was analyzed and discussed narratively. To begin with, the audio data were converted into text. Then, the manuscript data was reduced to determine that only the necessary data was managed. Afterward, the researcher brought the data to a coding process. The data was labeled and arranged according to their similarities (Creswell, 2002). The researcher attempted to reduce and group the data into several small categories.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the interview-driven discussion purposing to answer the research questions. To

To be noted, this research seeks to explore the following research questions:

1. Why do the EFL lecturers in the border area still use online learning?

2. How do EFL lecturers in the border area use online learning?

Reasons for Using Online Learning on English Course in the Post Covid-19

Although teachers/lecturers encountered difficulties using online during COVID-19, April, and Tika consistently applied online learning after the COVID-19 pandemic. From the interview, this researcher noticed they have two shared reasons: more attractive and flexible.

More Flexible

Online learning has become a new and significant educational trend (Michael et al., 2019; Gacs, Goertler, & Spasova, 2020). Online learning offers interaction between teachers and students without the requirement to be present face-to-face at the same time and place. Most teachers conduct online learning using Zoom, Google Meet, Edmodo, Google Classroom, and social media (Hurlbut, 2018; Bardakci, 2019). In other words, online learning is instruction in a non-physical classroom. Ozdamli Karagozlu (2022) said that the students can learn independently to use the appropriate media based on their interests and needs. Thus, online learning can be an alternative to learning in any condition.

The instruction can be done in another place and at another time (Flannery & McGarr, 2014; Erstad & Vooght, 2018). The interview with April and Tika found that they utilized online learning as a platform to share and discuss information related to English learning in online groups at any time, even when the regular class has ended. April said, "The day before the lesson begins, I often send videos that will be discussed at the next meeting. In addition, Tika stated, " I allowed students to ask questions through the WhatsApp group if they had any difficulties related to English After class. I also used this group to share additional information. Moreover, some activities could not be carried out in class because of time limitations. Therefore, students were instructed to make dialogue videos and share them on Facebook". With this flexibility, the teaching and learning activities became more efficient and not monotonous.

More Attractive

Students have become familiar with the latest digital technology devices in the digital era. They can operate many devices efficiently, like computers, laptops, smartphones, and other digital technology devices with internet access. In addition, with the devices, they actively connect with other people worldwide via email, social media, blogs, video conferences, teleconferences, and even online games (Agung, Widiputera, & Widodo, 2019). The development and convenience of information and communication technology make students more interested in interacting with this technology than the people around them. Therefore, April noted that "teachers/lecturers should accommodate students' interest in digital technology through online learning."

Online learning offers students a fun learning experience through various media formats, such as photos, audio, or video. Tike shared that "the students are more excited when asked to share their video assignment on Facebook. They will prepare it better than the assignment they do in the classroom". Interestingly, this finding was quite similar to Zuana's study. Zuzana (2018) claimed that the students in his research were

more interested in the storytelling videos they had made. The activity of making the video is challenging but fun. Another interesting story can be cultivated from April's story. She pointed out that "this instruction is relevant to their daily activities. The students are used to posting their ideas, photos, audio, or video. The students were more motivated to learn English when I conducted online learning in the class". However, the findings alert that the lecturers/teachers should look for social media close to the students.

The Implementation of Online learning in English Courses after Covid-19 in Border Areas

This section elaborates on how EFL lecturers in border areas resolve their obstacles in online learning in the post-COVID-19 era. Based on the interview, blended learning and social media solve the difficulties.

Blended Learning

Blended learning offers many benefits that contribute to the innovation of teaching methods and improvements in the student's learning process. In the context of the EFL teaching and learning process, blended learning may improve the student's English skills (Damayanti & Sari, 2017; Ginaya, Rejeki, & Astuti, 2018). They agree that the use of blended learning English subjects is a model to enrich the students' English proficiency.

Blended learning combines traditional face-to-face and online learning (Collis & Moonen, 2001; Graham, 2006). This model may be a solution for teachers with problems with online learning. Lecturers/teachers can determine what learning activities can be done online or face-to-face. The findings of the current study prove this phenomenon.

Previous studies argue that online learning has problems (Tirta, Yuliana, & Sada, 2022; Batubara et al., 2021). To overcome the problems, participants in this research had identical perspectives. They did the teaching and learning process not only using online learning but also using face-to-face instruction. Tika, for instance, pointed out that the "teaching and learning process is currently carried out face-to-face. However, online learning is still used as a support, such as sharing additional references or making videos as student assignments". Similarly, April stated that she "conducts online learning when students do assignments." Meanwhile, she still preferred to use face-to-face instructions to deliver the teaching materials. These interviews implied that the participants had carried out blended learning. However, face-to-face instruction was more dominant than online learning, mainly used to support teaching and learning.

Social Media

Online learning can take many forms, including blogs, video conferences, teleconferences, and discussion groups on social media and other digital communities (Batubara et al., 2021). The application is beneficial in the learning process during COVID-19. Unfortunately, in some areas, it is not possible to use teleconferencing-based applications. This is due to an unstable internet signal. Tika commented, "Limitations on internet infrastructure, so the media that sustain it to be used in my area is social media, like Whatsapp and Facebook."

In addition, such teleconference applications typically require a large amount of internet usage. April said, "… I used to have Zoom meetings. However, I do not use them anymore because the internet access does not support and the internet quota runs out quickly". Thus, many students in border areas find it challenging to use the application. She continued, "Now, I use YouTube as media for my student to share their assignment. Therefore, social media can be an alternative solution for areas with unstable internet access and limited internet quota.

Social media is a web-based tool that allows users to enrich social connections and networks among other users for having conversations, exchanging ideas, information, and messages, or having social contact (Mubarak, 2016). In EFL, social media facilitates the students to communicate in English, either in spoken or written form, with other people. The study reported that the students perceived some enrichment in English skills after using social media in the EFL teaching and learning process (Nasrullah & Khan, 2019). The activities that students can do by using social media are connecting with people from abroad, sharing a post in English, following accounts that use English, chatting in English, having video calls using English, finding reading material that uses English, and watching videos using English (Pitaloka, Anggraini, & Sari, 2021). Moreover, social media is a platform that is accessible and handy so that the student can learn English every time and everywhere (Ismail, Zaim, & Mukhaiyar, 2019). Thus, they have chances and experiences to connect with native English through social media.

4. CONCLUSION

The use of online learning in areas far from the city center faces various problems. However, the EFL lecturers in the border area of Sambas Indonesia still use online learning in the teaching and learning process. They feel online learning has benefits to support in Teaching English as a Foreign language. First, the class can be more flexible because they can learn English and practice it everywhere and every time. Therefore, the class is more efficient and not monotonous. Besides that, the benefit of online learning is more attractive. The class activity involves students using digital technology. The students can share their photos, audio, and video during and after the class. The

lecturers/teachers even facilitate the students to play online games relating to English subjects.

However, EFL lecturers use a blended learning model and social media to accommodate the implementation of online learning in border areas. They chose blended learning as their model in post-COVID-19 because this model combines online learning with face-to-face instruction. The lecturers adjust their portion. For example, the lecturers conduct face-to-face instruction for the core activity, while for the evaluation activity, they apply online learning. The lecturers can ask their students to submit their assignments on social media. Moreover, social media offers interesting features and does not need a large amount of internet quota. Hence, this model and media are very helpful for the areas with unstable internet access and do not waste internet quota.

Eventually, the researcher realizes that this research could be more extensive in scope and generalizability. Therefore, further research using intensive observation is highly suggested to describe how the teaching-learning process occurs among the learners. By observing, the research can elaborate on implementing online learning in more detail. Finally, special attention should also be placed on the role of students' perspectives since it was not discussed in this research.

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