# INVESTIGATING PROBLEMS IN ONLINE EFL TEACHING AT INDONESIAN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Abstract**

The rapid development of technology demands awareness from educators from any level of education to adjust their teaching practice including in the EFL classroom learning. Meanwhile, pandemic COVID 19 has dramatically changed all aspects of human life. Freedom of meeting one another is restricted by health protocol. In the context of teaching and learning activity, regular face to face meetings then turn into the virtual one. It means the existence of online learning both synchronous and asynchronous becomes inevitable. Of course, the implementation of online learning potentially leads to several problems. UPB UINSI Samarinda has a duty to organize EFL teaching activities and problems of online teaching are also inevitable. Therefore this study aimed to investigate problems in implementing EFL online teaching. The problems being investigated were taken from both lecturer and students perspective. This study was conducted at State Islamic University (*UIN*) Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris of Samarinda. One English lecturer and 35 students who took the EFL Course were selected to be the subject of this research. Design of this research is a case study using a qualitative approach. Data was collected by using an observation sheet and interview guide. This study reveals problems in online EFL teaching were mastery of applying the platform, learning interaction, and online supporting system. Online teaching differs from traditional face to face meetings and of course finding this study can be significantly used as the improvement in the future.

**Abstrak**

**Investigasi Permasalahan dalam Pengajaran EFL Daring di Perguruan Tinggi Islam Indonesia**

Pesatnya perkembangan teknologi menuntut kesadaran dari para pendidik dari berbagai jenjang pendidikan untuk menyesuaikan praktek mengajarnya termasuk dalam pembelajaran di kelas EFL. Sementara itu, pandemi COVID 19 telah secara dramatis mengubah semua aspek kehidupan manusia. Kebebasan bertemu satu sama lain dibatasi oleh protokol kesehatan. Dalam konteks kegiatan belajar mengajar, pertemuan tatap muka biasa kemudian berubah menjadi pertemuan virtual. Artinya keberadaan pembelajaran *online* baik *synchronous* maupun *asynchronous* menjadi tak terelakkan. Pelaksanaan pembelajaran online tentunya berpotensi menimbulkan beberapa permasalahan. UPB UINSI Samarinda memiliki tugas untuk menyelenggarakan kegiatan pengajaran EFL dan masalah pengajaran *online* juga tidak bisa dihindari. Oleh karena itu penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki masalah dalam menerapkan pengajaran *online* EFL. Masalah yang diteliti diambil dari perspektif dosen dan mahasiswa. Penelitian ini dilakukan di Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda. Satu orang dosen Bahasa Inggris dan 35 mahasiswa yang mengambil EFL Course dipilih untuk menjadi subjek penelitian ini. Desain penelitian ini adalah studi kasus dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan lembar observasi dan pedoman wawancara. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan permasalahan dalam pengajaran EFL online adalah penguasaan penerapan platform, interaksi pembelajaran, dan

sistem pendukung online. Pengajaran online berbeda dari pertemuan tatap muka tradisional dan tentu saja temuan penelitian ini dapat digunakan secara signifikan sebagai perbaikan di masa depan.

## Introduction

The current development of science and technology in the era of industrial revolution 4.0 has great impacts on human life. Many vocations have changed as a result of Industry 4.0. People are required to learn new, everyday duties, but they are also required to use high-tech devices, which are quickly becoming the most significant aspect in their professional lives (Tay et al., 2018). The rapid growth in demand for technology (mostly information and communication technologies) by industrial firms may fuel Industry 4.0's future and have positive spillover effects in several domains (Rabeh Morrar, Husam Arman, 2017).

One of the impacts of the industrial revolution is also dealing with the field of education in general and teaching English in particular. In Indonesia, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) has reached an all-time high. According to Internet World Stats (2018), the growth rate of internet users in Indonesia from 2000 to 2017 showed a very high increase, reaching 143.26 million users, up from only 2 million users in 2000. This growth rate corresponds to a 7.1 percent increase in internet users over the last 17 years. Although Indonesia's internet penetration has reached 63.7 percent, the country's population is estimated to be approximately 266,794,980 people in 2017. This quick increase demonstrates that the Internet is a universal medium for Indonesians seeking knowledge. These findings compel educators to investigate instructional teaching strategies that use information and communication technology right away. The data does not imply that the lecturer's function in front of the classroom, books, and whiteboards should be eliminated, but rather that a mixture, or hybrid, of traditional and virtual means should be established and implemented in light of our current educational scenario (Basri & Paramma, 2019). The use of information technology in education has had a favorable impact on the culture of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesian secondary schools. The internet, the World Wide Web, and/or social media can assist English teachers in planning their lesson materials, improving their classroom performance, and expanding their knowledge base (Rosmaladewi, Abduh, 2019). The use of technology then led to the implementation of teaching. EFL does not focus only on traditional patterns by having face to face meetings but it can also be complemented with online or virtual interaction.

Besides its significant impact and benefits, teaching online in general and ELT in particular is believed to lead to potential problems. Throughout its brief existence, technological advancements have called into question various downsides as well as benefits (Yuce, 2019). Furthermore, Many issues arise as a result of the teachers' online EFL learning from both students and teacher perspective (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020).

Based on theoretical perspectives and previous finding, several Problems related to online teaching include limited experience in technology, past experience, feeling unmotivated, personal cognitions, insufficient support, and technical issues (Akhter, 2021), Furthermore, The introduction of online learning as part of remote

learning during the COVID-19 epidemic poses a number of issues. Teachers confront issues such as a lack of IT knowledge and limited access to student supervision. Students' issues include a lack of interest in learning, a lack of support services, and limited access to the internet network (Efriana, 2021). Moreover, Universities, lecturers, and students were unprepared for the abrupt move to entirely online learning and teaching, but they sought to adapt and meet the new challenges by devising new ways (Coman et al., 2020). Furthermore, teaching online was connected to the issue of IT skill and adequate experience of lecturer and students to the new systems in online teaching(Shirley Bach & Smith, 2007) . Another statement argued that one of the keys to developing a successful online learning environment is collaborative knowledge acquisition. Deeper thinking is facilitated through activities that demand student contact and stimulate the sharing of ideas which relate to the theory of social constructivism (Donaldson, 2004). Discussion of problems related to EFL teaching in Islamic University context was rarely found and it needs to be enriched.

Unit Pengembangan Bahasa (UPB) Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris (UINSI) Samarinda is an institution which serves English courses for the first and second semester students. The implementation of current EFL online teaching in this institution is also believed to have some potential problems that might influence the process to achieve instructional objectives and they need to be academically identified. Based on the empirical point of view and research gap in the previous section, this study is intended to investigate problems in online EFL teaching at Indonesian Islamic Higher Education and in this case UPB UINSI Samarinda. Then the problem is formulated into following research question, What are problems in Online EFL Teaching at Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris (UINSI) Samarinda?

**Method**

Objective of this research is to investigate problems in EFL online teaching which is implemented in UPB UINSI Samarinda. Then this research belongs to a case study using a qualitative approach. The selection of a research design is based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed, the researchers' personal experiences, and the audiences for the study (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers purposefully examine and make note of small cues in order to decide how to behave, as well as to make sense of the context and build larger knowledge claims about the bigger picture. Paying close attention is the key to success (Sarah J, 2020). Much of case study research appears to be oriented toward a realist perspective, which assumes the existence of a single reality that is independent of any observer.

However, case study research also can excel in accommodating a relativist perspective (Yin, 2018). Another statement, a case study focuses on a single unit to produce an in-depth description that is rich and holistic. The underlying question is "What are the characteristics of this particular entity, phenomenon, person, or setting?" Case studies typically include multiple sources of data collected over time. (Donald, 2010).

This research was conducted in one class under UPB UINSI Samarinda. 1 EFL lecturer and 35 students in academic year 2020/2021 were selected to be subjects of this research. The instruments used in this research were an interview

guide and observation sheet. Interview guide was used to collect both lecturer and also students' responses to the questions referring to their problems. Meanwhile, an observation sheet was used to capture EFL online teaching which indicated the problems. Data of this research were analyzed using data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman which involves data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusion (Mathew B, Miles and A. Micahael, 2014)

**Finding and Discussion**

Based on data collected, this research reveals three major problems related to the implementation of EFL online teaching. Those problems are elaborated as follows,

The first finding is dealing with the mastery of applying or using a platform in online teaching. Data obtained from interviews and observation indicated lecturer and students had difficulty using some features in online teaching platforms. The platforms used in online teaching were Whatsapp, Zoom Conference, Google Classroom, and Youtube Channel. Lecturers and students claimed that they did not have any serious problem using Whatsapp since they were already familiar with the platform in their daily life. Lecturers and students also did not have any problem accessing and downloading related teaching and learning resources from various sites on the internet. Problems occurred when Google classroom and zoom conference applied in online teaching. They had difficulties to operate features of the platform at the early period of online teaching. There were problems in operating a zoom conference which started from scheduling and joining a meeting. At early use of the zoom conference app, students were not familiar with some features like how to get involved in the chat space, to use screen share when they want to share their power point slides presentation, and to activate and disabled both video and sound. As a result, the zoom meeting could not be smoothly done because it was interfered with by unexpected conditions. Similar case occurred when Google Classroom was applied in online teaching. Students had technical problems to operate the platform. They had problems joining the class, accessing material, and posting their assignment. Some of them were not aware when they failed to submit their assignments in Google Classroom since it had been locked if it was late even just a few seconds. They usually had to report personally to the lecturer to submit the assignment and communicate the problem as well. Students did not have any problem when they had to take a certain test using Google Form. Some students had problems submitting their assignments and they were required to save them in Google Drive and share the links in the class WA Group. Some students' links could not be opened because of permission settings. Technical problems of platform mastery happened only at the first or early period of online teaching. After 4 to 5 meetings, teachers and students were already familiar with the platforms and the problems gradually decreased.

The second finding refers to learning interaction. Data of this research indicated the significant difference between conventional face to face meeting and the virtual ones in online teaching. Students said they felt isolated in online teaching since they could not have direct interaction with their lecturer and classmates. In line with the previous section, the lecturer had problems recognizing and monitoring his students since few students did not activate their camera. Moreover, students could not activate mute/unmute properly and it caused two impacts. The

first one is when students wanted to present their assignment, their voices could not be heard because it was still in mute mode. On the other way around, some students were identified and forgot to mute the sound button. As a result, the room was interfered with by unexpected voices in the background and of course it made the instruction, explanation, and material could not be well delivered.

The last one is related to the supporting system. Based on data from this research, there were two problems in this section. The first one students claimed that the internet networks were not always stable. The worst condition occurred to the students who live in the area where the coverage internet signal was weak there. It was very difficult for them to join and access online teaching platforms especially when streaming activity was required as it was done in zoom conferences. It was found that some students were forced to turn off their video in zoom meetings because of an unstable network reason. Another problem was about the data package. Some students were supported by home internet providers (WIFI) but some others were not. Cellular data package was considered expensive especially if it was used to access, download, and upload large size files of learning materials and assignments. Youtube and zoom conference applications also contributed high data usage significantly. The government provided cellular data package aid for lecturer and students to support online teaching but it was not always given in each semester. When students were not supported by internet connection, they could not attend the course and they had to inform and clarify their absence to the lecturer. Based on the data found in this section, a zoom conference or meeting was usually in trouble when it was raining and it affected poor connection of the internet especially in streaming. If this situation happened, the lecturer usually switched teaching activity by using other possible platforms.

On the basis of findings of this research, it is obvious that online teaching in general and EFL in particular lead to some potential problems. It is in line with the previous related theories and research findings which had been discussed in the introduction section. It covered IT skill, adequate lecturer and learners' experience with the online teaching system, learners' enthusiasm and interest, and lack of support system as students have to access and interact with internet connection.

Referring to the finding and discussion above, it could be described that EFL online teaching has a universal problem. It means the problem being investigated in this research is approximately the same as the previous one. As a part of novelty, it is expected finding of this research could be beneficial to enrich the discussion of problems in online EFL teaching in general and Islamic higher educational institutions in particular.

**Conclusion**

Based on findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that there were three problems in teaching EFL. The first one is a mastery of applying or using certain online platforms. Another problem is about learning interaction which is different from conventional face to face meetings. The last problem being investigated in this research was about supporting systems. This research was conducted in a limited number of subjects. It is recommended for future research to explore more information in larger sizes of research subjects and in different educational settings to enrich the contribution to the body of knowledge in general and particularly in the context of EFL online teaching and learning. To all

educators, it is suggested to improve not only language and teaching skills but also IT skills to support and enhance the quality of online teaching in their classes. Lecturers and all educators also need to be wise to select the appropriate platform in their online teaching to make sure all students can access the platform smoothly and join the courses easily.

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