



EFL Students' Reflections on their Language Learning Shifts: Before, During, and After COVID-19

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Many ELT scholars have researched various issues in online language learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, only one study applies a Narrative Inquiry approach in researching students' stories as reflections regarding their learning shifts because of the pandemic. Inspired by John Dewey's (1933, 1986) notion and other scholars about the significance of learners' reflections in education, this study attempts to fill the gap by exploring the in-depth stories as reflections of EFL students from three different Indonesian universities about their learning shift experiences before and during the pandemic and their perceptions about learning trends in the future. Nine students as the participants were asked to share their experiences and viewpoints through an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The collected responses were then analyzed using the techniques and tools from Narrative analysis. The results reveal that most participants proposed Blended Learning (BL) with some required conditions for their effective learning: they loved to be taught with the assistance of online materials and applications but longed for more meaningful interactions in conventional face-to-face classes for the issues experienced in fully online learning. For them, the future BL needs to be managed with some relatively balanced proportions of both online and offline classes.

Banyak akademisi pada bidang pengajaran bahasa Inggris (ELT) telah meneliti berbagai macam isu dalam pembelajaran bahasa secara daring selama pandemi COVID-19. Namun, hanya satu studi yang menggunakan pendekatan Narrative Inquiry dalam meneliti cerita mahasiswa sebagai refleksi mengenai perubahan aktivitas belajar mereka akibat pandemi. Terinspirasi oleh gagasan John Dewey (1933, 1986) dan para akademisi lainnya mengenai pentingnya refleksi siswa dalam pendidikan, penelitian ini berusaha mengisi kesenjangan (gap) yang ada melalui eksplorasi cerita secara mendalam sebagai refleksi mahasiswa jurusan bahasa Inggris (EFL) dari tiga universitas berbeda di Indonesia mengenai pengalaman belajar mereka yang berubah sebelum dan selama pandemi serta persepsi mereka mengenai tren pembelajaran di masa depan. Sembilan mahasiswa sebagai peserta diminta untuk berbagi pengalaman dan sudut pandang melalui kuesioner terbuka dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Tanggapan yang terkumpul dari mereka kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik dan alat dari Narrative Analysis. Hasilnya mengungkapkan bahwa sebagian besar peserta mengusulkan Blended Learning (BL) dengan beberapa persyaratan tertentu yang diperlukan untuk pembelajaran efektif mereka: mereka senang diajar dengan bantuan materi dan aplikasi daring, tetapi merindukan interaksi yang lebih bermakna dalam kelas tatap muka konvensional karena pertimbangan masalah yang dialami selama pembelajaran daring secara penuh. Bagi mereka, BL di masa yang akan datang perlu dikelola dengan proporsi yang relatif seimbang antara kelas daring dan luring.



Keywords: COVID-19, EFL students, learning shifts, reflections

Introduction

Since the COVID-19 virus was first identified at the end of 2019, the world has changed a lot as new regulations in many different sectors should be set out to prevent further virus outbreaks and infection. In response to the pandemic, WHO instructed governments in most countries to urge their people to do all activities at home and restrict their movements (World Health Organization, 2020). In Indonesia, for example, many public places, including airports, shopping centers, offices, schools, and universities, had to be entirely closed to follow the new government policy (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia [MoHRI], 2019). This situation had inevitably affected many aspects of people's lives, including the sector of education (Moorhouse, 2020; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021).

As all people were obliged to stay home, learning and teaching activities in schools and campuses could not, therefore, be realized under normal circumstances. The only possible thing to do was to have classes online and adapt to new types of learning environments (Moorhouse, 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Murphy, 2020). In Indonesia, following the Learning from Home (LFH) policy, all schools and higher education institutions were instructed to conduct classes through online video conferences and learning management systems using various platforms such as Zoom, Google meet, and Microsoft Office 365 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia [MoECRI], 2020). This kind of teaching mode seems to have been going on both in schools and universities until today, although educators in some countries have already begun to apply a hybrid learning approach, which combines face-to-face classes with the use of online learning tools (Hall & Davidson, 2007). Schools in some countries have begun to open, but students still have to obey the health protocols and the compulsory vaccination programs (UNESCO, 2022). As a result, students from all levels of education must have experienced an unexpected shift in learning from the conventional way to the virtual one (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). This learning shift must have been a big challenge for both students and teachers since they needed to adjust to uncommon learning methods and environments, which might affect their learning motivation and mental health (Macintyre et al., 2020).

Even though integrating technological tools in education has been quite common in recent years, the pandemic situation seems to have made everything completely different in terms of how the tools were utilized and the proportion of their use. Long before the pandemic came, technology had already been used to support classroom activities, and this approach is called Blended Learning (BL). Similar to Hybrid Learning, Bonk and Graham (2006) define BL as a system that "combines face-to-face interaction with computer-mediated instruction" (p.5). Many studies also examined how BL has proven to effectively help learners attain positive growth, such as stimulating their learning motivation, enhancing their ability in autonomous learning, constructing their learning behaviors, and eventually improving their academic achievements (Siemens et al., 2015; Wang & Zhang, 2022). In the context of language learning and teaching, students also have positive attitudes and perceptions regarding the implementation of BL in class (Istifci, 2017; Wang, et al., 2021; Wright, 2017; Wu & Liu, 2013). Nevertheless, it is apparent that what teachers had been applying during the pandemic time was not exactly BL itself, but E-learning, which is definitively different from BL. In this sense, E-learning relies heavily on computers, smartphones, and any other devices that are connected to the internet. In fact, E-learning classes can also be taken from anywhere at any distance, while BL, by design, still requires the physical presence of both students and teachers in class (Banditvilai, 2016).

Concerning the LFH policy during the time of COVID-19, many studies exploring the impacts of E-learning and online teaching have been conducted. More specifically, in Indonesia, some research on such

topics has revealed important findings and implications. The research held by Pasaribu and Dewi (2021), for instance, shows that although online learning is advantageous for students, some drawbacks of the learning mode are real, such as students' little engagement and a lot of tasks that both teachers and students have to bear. Another study also reveals that online learning issues in Indonesia have to do with unequal distribution of infrastructure regarding internet access and teachers' inadequate knowledge in applying all the tools used for online teaching (Agung et al., 2020). These issues are the major challenges Indonesian students face when participating in online classes. Considering the above findings, this study tries to identify similar issues from different perspectives with deeper analysis by situating learners' stories as the core resources for reflections to unveil how they make meaning of their experiences and use them to make their lives better as pointed out by an education philosopher, John Dewey (1933, 1986). Dewey (1933) states, "We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflection on experience. Reliving of an experience leads to making connections between information and feelings produced by the experience" (p. 78). In doing so, the researchers applied the Narrative Inquiry approach in an attempt to explore the EFL students' stories and perceptions as reflections about their learning shift experiences and predictions about language learning trends in the future by answering the following questions:

1. What problems and challenges did EFL students face in their learning shifts from normal to E-learning before and during COVID-19?
2. How do EFL students perceive their learning shifts and the future conditions after COVID-19?

Literature Review

The Framework of Online Language Teaching and Learning

From the perspective of sociocultural theories, an individual learns effectively through social interactions, and one's competence significantly improves when the learning activities that take place are facilitated by more knowledgeable and competent people (Vygotsky, 1978). This goes without saying that a child cannot learn on his/her own because a child has his/her capacity to do so. In addition, through social interactions with more capable others, a child has the opportunity to develop much more compared to when s/he studies on his/her own. The difference in the levels of development is called the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and this concept has become very popular among scholars and educators and has been applied as a fundamental principle in education, particularly in second-language teaching. Brown (2007) describes ZPD as "the distance between learners' existing developmental state and their potential development." (p. 24). This suggests that to expand the ZPD, social interactions are urgently needed for learning to take place. Drawing upon the concept of ZPD, Storch (2002) and Febrianto (2019) discovered how the scaffolding in the forms of social interactions constructed by both teachers to students and students to other students can help the students improve their communication skills. As Gibbons (2015) points out, scaffolding is an intentional and strategic structure of learning designed to meet students' needs as the fundamental goal of education.

Today, due to the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the scaffolding processes can be carried out through the use of the internet. The COVID-19 pandemic also seems to have been one of the pressing external factors that force people worldwide to get used to online learning. In fact, the pandemic has finally led to a situation where all teachers are not only able to apply the so-called Blended Learning approach, but they also have to experience running their entire teaching activities online. In this situation, however, both teachers and students might have faced various challenges because

of the sudden shift from conventional meetings to online classes and vice versa. As a result, teachers need to redesign their teaching strategies, including the scaffolding activities, to adjust themselves to the technology at hand.

Online teaching can be one of the typical examples of distance education, as discussed by a broad range of scholars. The discussions started when the idea of independent learning initially emerged. Regarding independent learning, Wedemeyer (1977, 1981) believes that an individual has a driving force to manage his/her own learning and to choose whatever ways of learning are appropriate for him/her when being separated from a teacher. He also identifies the elements of independent learning, such as the learner's high responsibility, the availability of various instructions and resources, different types of media and methods, individual differences, and times when to begin and stop learning (ibid, 1977, 1981). This notion is in line with another similar type of learning concept called learner autonomy, which focuses on the individual's self-awareness and responsibility for his/her own learning in terms of actions, strategies, and techniques for learning development (Holec, 1979/1981). However, independent and autonomous learning is not the only factor contributing to the learner's development, but as emphasized by Vygotsky (1978), interactions among students managed by a teacher in class also play a very significant role in that development.

In terms of online language learning and teaching, the theory of transactional distance introduced by Moore (in Moore & Diehl, 2018) might be relevant to the present discussions. Inspired by the ZPD theory by Vygotsky (1978), Moore develops an important framework of learning that is very useful for the implementation of online learning carried out today and probably in the future. In his previous study, he identifies three different types of interactions that make distance learning effective: (1) learner-to-learner interaction, (2) learner-to-instructor interaction, and (3) learner-to-content interaction. (Moore, 1993). The concept of these three types of interactions can be helpful for teachers when designing effective online lessons with appropriate scaffoldings that stimulate students' engagement in an online classroom. It can, therefore, be inferred that effective lessons and scaffoldings can be designed in an online learning environment, and this type of teaching mode can, in fact, promote a student's independence in learning as long as it is well-planned and seriously prepared.

General Types of Online Learning

Fully online learning

As discussed earlier, many scholars have been researching distance teaching and learning for several decades or even since the internet was not greatly developed. Today, online learning, as a new type of distance education, has always been an interesting topic to talk about as technology keeps improving. In response to the improvement and innovations of the internet, some scholars in the field of education have done explorations and research on various types of online teaching and learning as well as technological tools that can be integrated with them. Hrastinski (2008), for instance, identifies two general types of online learning (Synchronous and Asynchronous learning) according to how the lesson is delivered, and this categorization can be useful for other researchers in studying online learning. While synchronous learning refers to online learning in which students participate at the same time by using a video conferencing device, asynchronous learning is the opposite, which means that the learning activity does not take place at the same time as the lessons can be accessed via a Learning Management System (LMS) at any time. With today's internet technology, a teacher can easily run a fully online class through these two modes of delivery.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the LFH policy, many teachers and students around the world must have experienced fully online learning, either with the synchronous mode or the asynchronous one. In relation to this experience, scholars and researchers have addressed several benefits and issues caused by fully online learning. Particularly in Indonesia, some current research has been conducted to show students' perceptions of online learning experienced during the LFH policy. Nur Agung et al. (2020), for example, discovered that although online learning offers advantages for learners in terms of the richness of teaching materials and flexibility, students face a range of problems that include difficulties in understanding the given lessons, heavy workloads in assignments, unstable internet connection, and other unexpected distractions. Further studies by Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2020) and Pasaribu and Dewi (2021) also address very similar points and issues. Yet, more specifically, they also reveal that a virtual class, in fact, gives less effective class interactions as an important element of learning a foreign language, as discussed earlier in this study.

Blended learning

Bonk and Graham (2006) identify various definitions around the Blended Learning (BL) approach, but most of them basically represent common points and meanings. Graham, et.al. (2003) categorize those common meanings into three similar areas: 1) the combination of instructional multimodalities, 2) the combination of instructional methods, and 3) the combination of online and face-to-face interaction. Referring to these references, BL can therefore be defined as teaching and learning activities that "combine face-to-face instructions and the internet and computer-mediated instructions" (Graham, 2006, p. 5). This teaching approach is also perceived to be different from "hybrid or mixed learning," as described by Stracke (2007, p. 57) and Tomlinson & Whittaker (2013), despite the similarities that they have in terms of the combination of teaching modes. Regarding composition, Smith and Kurthen (2007) argue that the use of online technology in BL is more significant than in any other similar approach. Some scholars suggest that the proportion of online lessons should be from 30% to 79% in BL (Allen & Seaman, 2010, Graham, 2006).

In Indonesia, some recent studies have attempted to measure the efficacy of the BL approach in a class, particularly in higher education institutions. For instance, Rianto (2020) finds out how EFL students at an Indonesian university were satisfied with the lessons supported by ICT despite several problems that might hinder their learning processes, such as their unfamiliarity with some new tools and unstable internet connection. However, in terms of engagement and effective assessments for improvement, these students preferred face-to-face teaching to BL, even though it also depends on their competency level. Another study by Setyaningsih (2020) also dismantles the same results, emphasizing the problems with the use of technological tools in class and the importance of adequate training for both lecturers and students to overcome the problems. Drawing on these two empirical studies, it can be concluded that, in general, face-to-face instructions and the teacher's presence and direct guidance are very necessary for the context of Indonesia's English education. Therefore, teachers or lecturers need to be careful in managing the proportion of both different teaching modes (online and face-to-face) when applying BL in a class so that the students' learning goals can finally be achieved.

Nevertheless, in terms of the effectiveness of teaching and learning in class, the use of various teaching approaches and tools in any kind of proportional modes of learning are not the only factors determining the students' success in learning, since other aspects related to learners' psychological condition such as beliefs, self-efficacy, and motivation also play a crucial role in that process (see Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Particularly in recent ELT research, those mentioned psychological aspects have also been evidenced to be the core factors that significantly impact

on learners' engagement in both offline and online language classes (Imamyartha, et al., 2021; Kantisa & Sitthitikul, 2020; Phipps, 2022, Xiao & Hurd, 2010). From all this literature, it can be implied that learners' psychological aspects should always be a concern when carrying out research on measuring the effectiveness of language teaching methods and strategies in class. And studies on learners' stories and reflections on students' learning experiences can be a way of doing it.

Methodology

Research Design

Referring to the research questions, this study focuses on revealing the stories and reflections of EFL students and understanding their perceptions about their learning shifts experience. The Narrative Inquiry approach was then chosen for the study. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), a narrative inquiry can generally be used to understand how people make sense of their experiences as “stories to live by” (p. 4). Therefore, some of the appropriate instruments used to collect data were an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as they allow the participants to elaborate on their answers, and the researchers can also gain in-depth and rich information for pursuing developing themes (Barkhuizen et al., 2013; Cohen et al., 2011). In this regard, the interviews were carried out to obtain more clarifications for the missing points of the given answers from the questionnaire. To gain more authentic data, the interviews were conveyed in English and were conducted and recorded online using the Zoom application due to the participants' different locations. The Zoom application also enables the researchers to record the visual interactions between the researchers themselves and the participants so that their body language and facial expressions during the interviews can be captured.

Participants

Nine undergraduate EFL students from three different universities in Indonesia participated in this study. Three participants are from a state university in the capital city of Jakarta, and six of them are from private universities located in two different areas that are far from Jakarta. With a relatively small number of participants, it is expected that the data collected for this qualitative research can be detailed and rich (Cohen et al., 2011; Dörnyei, 2007).

TABLE 1
Participants

Name (pseudonym)	Home Address	Study Length at University	English Proficiency	
			Instrument and Score	CEFR
Risma	Kediri, East Java	Year 2	British Council EnglishScore: 416	B2
Jamal	Kediri, East Java	Year 2	British Council EnglishScore: 399	B1
Aman	Kediri, East Java	Year 2	TOEFL ITP: 513	B1
Siti	Kediri, East Java	Year 2	TOEFL ITP: 540	B1
Puput	Jakarta	Year 4	TOEFL ITP: 603	B2
Shafira	Jakarta	Year 4	TOEFL ITP: 563	B1
Eni	Jakarta	Year 4	TOEFL ITP: 554	B1
Mita	Semarang, Central Java	Year 2	TOEFL ITP: 450	B1
Yani	Semarang, Central Java	Year 2	British Council EnglishScore: 424	B2

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researchers followed the protocols of the Narrative analysis method developed by Riessman (2008) and the steps of analyzing narrative data in language teaching and learning research introduced by Barkhuizen et al. (2013). First of all, as all the stories had been transcribed, the major emerging themes were identified and classified. In a narrative analysis, the categorized themes do not stick to the researcher's questions and hypothesis but are instead taken from the stories the respondents tell. As Benson (as cited in Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015) states, the stories or narratives themselves are the sources of research findings, and they are used to address the research questions. Next, the researchers analyzed the categorized themes by considering the story contents and other related aspects, including how and why the stories were shared in context. This is what Barkhuizen (in Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015) calls “a more detailed thematic by coding for themes and triangulating across data sources” (p. 176). As Riessman (2008) posits, a narrative analysis should not only focus on what is said (thematic/content analysis), but it also has to consider other narrative aspects, such as how a story is said (structural analysis), the context that surrounds a story (dialogic/performative analysis) and the physical images shown when a story is being told (visual analysis).

Findings

Relating to the research questions, the findings are presented in relation to two different topics: 1) The problems and challenges faced by EFL students in their learning shifts before and during COVID-19 and 2) The stories and perceptions of EFL students about their learning shifts and their predictions about the learning trends after the pandemic. In this sense, the findings, therefore, cover three different life spans: before, during, and after COVID-19.

Before COVID-19

Online learning was helpful

Although online classes with the assistance of ICT were massively run during the pandemic, the participants seemed to have already experienced them before and even perceived them as necessary for their learning processes. This can be seen, for instance, from their responses when they were asked about their learning experience before the pandemic, as identified in Aman's story.

We used several applications to support our offline learning activities. I enjoyed using them because before a teacher explained, I can read the materials first because the teacher already posted all the materials before teaching us in the class. (Aman; Interview)

Aman expressed his positive attitude toward the online applications and materials that his lecturer and classmates already used in classes. He supposed that when all the materials have been shared on an application or a website, students can prepare for the class very well in advance. A similar response is also given by the other participants.

Before the pandemic, I used some applications and materials from the internet to strengthen my understanding some subjects. With them, I can explore more. I like it, and it is helpful. (Eni; Questionnaire)

For example, Eni, in her experience, shared that the use of online applications and materials helped her understand the learning subjects much better since she could take advantage of doing some more explorations on the subject being discussed in class through those kinds. This response is similar to what other participants shared about their experiences with the use of an online application. Overall, they perceived that the online tools could make lessons easier to understand. These findings clearly show how the participants had a strong interest in the use of technology to assist their learning, even before the pandemic happened. In addition, in an interview, the other participant, Risma, said that reading electronic books (e-books) on the internet was even more efficient as they could be brought anytime and anywhere she wanted. From these findings, it can be concluded that, according to the participants, online learning, along with all its embedded materials and tools, still needs to be carried out, although classes do not go online, since it is very necessary to help both lecturers and students reach the students' learning needs and goals more effectively and efficiently.

During COVID-19

We enjoyed flexibility but fought against distractions

During the time of COVID-19, all schools and campuses were entirely closed, and the learning processes were consequently run online 100%. From the participants' perspectives as students, this situation seemed to eventually lead to both positive and negative effects on their learning processes. One of the benefits of online learning for them was the flexibility of learning, providing that they could learn anywhere and anytime they wanted. Risma, for instance, apparently enjoyed her online classes because she did not have to go to her campus, which is quite far from her house.

So far, the advantage that I get from virtual classes is that it makes me study anywhere and anytime... So flexible. Also, I don't think I'm too tired because I don't have to visit the campus. My house and campus are quite far away. (Risma; Interview)

A very similar point can also be seen in Shafira's narrative regarding the positive sides of online learning. She said that she could take advantage of the online learning she experienced for its efficiencies, such as flexibility in doing activities and having few expenses, particularly on transportation and any other needs, since she was not required to visit her campus. Nevertheless, despite the various benefits gained, some challenges and issues hindering their online learning activities are identified in their stories.

Pandemic mostly disturbs my focus on learning. During the pandemic, I do all of it at home for long hours, so it feels there is no rest at all. On top of that, there is too much disturbance when I learn at home. Of course, there are a lot of people here that do different things. So If I am in campus, everyone is doing the same things as me, and I can focus on what I am doing. But when I am at home, there is my mom cooking, and my father and my sister doing work.. (Puput; Interview)

Puput believed that the first issue found in online learning is the inevitable distractions around the participants that could draw their attention away from learning as they could possibly learn anywhere.

Another problem that Puput mentioned was feeling exhausted given that students had to stay with their laptops or gadgets for hours to join classes and do all the assigned tasks along with the distractions to face. In the interview, Puput also seemed to show a feeling of frustration in response to the LFH policy and online learning that she experienced. It can also be seen from the way she expressed her thoughts and feelings: with a high intonation and stress, she exclaimed how the LFH policy did not really work for her since, during the learning processes, she had to face lots of things distracting her attention and do lots of assignments.

We missed meaningful interactions

Having been through the period of fully online learning, the participants apparently had just realized the need for face-to-face interactions that they believed were more meaningful than those in virtual classes they experienced. During the pandemic, they might have been undergoing an unexpected experience relating to how all types of interactions happened in online classes. For example, in the interview, Puput, a student from a reputable university, expressed her complaints about the learning situation she went through during the pandemic. She realized that direct feedback and guidance from other people through face-to-face meetings were very important and contributed a lot to her progress in learning English.

I think in learning, we have to have interactions with someone so that we know how to construct our words. If I do it only by watching movies, if that's it, I can only learn what they said, but I don't know how to construct my words by myself. But before the pandemic, I could learn with my friends. So I had confidence in using English because there are lecturers and other friends. When I make mistakes, they told me that's wrong, so that we can learn together. (Puput; Interview)

A similar finding can also be found in Jamal's narrative. It shows how Jamal found that face-to-face instructions were more helpful because they allowed him to interact directly with their lecturers and peers. In this way, he could get his learning problem easily solved, and his stress and burden in learning were relieved.

I think when we're learning offline, if we don't understand, we can ask directly to our lecturers or our friends. When we get stressed in learning, we can talk to friends and see their smiles. It makes me smile too. But if online, when I feel stressed in learning, I can't see my friends' faces at all. I am happy to see and interact with my friends. (Jamal; Interview)

Jamal's story above represents what others shared in the interview regarding the need for social interactions in learning. From these findings, it is evident that for the participants, the physical presence and interactions of lecturers and students in classes are considered to be very impactful in supporting students' learning because they enable them to socialize and get direct feedback from others.

We were not ready for fully online classes

All the participants shared the same thoughts when asked about the problems faced in online learning, although not all of them underwent the same issues discussed in the interviews. Siti is one of the participants who talked about her struggles in finding out stable connection to join online classes. Siti is a student from a private university in the city of Kediri. Considering the flexibility of online learning during

the LFH policy, she decided to live with her family in a rural area outside Java island. For the weak signal in her place, she then shared her unfortunate experience regarding the unavailability of an internet connection when joining online classes.

The pandemic has affected my study. It's all about online. I couldn't manage my assignment well because I live in a remote area that has limited signal. So, I was lazy to do my work, and attend the online meeting because the biggest problem is the unavailable signal internet. (Siti; Questionnaire)

A similar experience was also shared by the other participants. For instance, Jamal had to go somewhere outside his house to get a stable internet connection because he found it slow in his place sometimes. For doing this, he must have spent some amount of money. Although he lives near the city of Kediri, it seems that not all areas of the city have equal connection stability.

I think every location has a different connection and the quota, and for me, for a stable connection, sometimes my internet is slow, so I went to wifi corner to help me in online learning. So it takes money too. (Jamal; Interview)

This situation also happened to Yani, a student from Semarang city, where internet access still became an issue for online learning. As shown in her statements below, even though going to campus could be a solution for her, it would be inefficient since the campus is quite far from her house.

My issue was mostly on the internet connection. Actually, I could go to campus to get a strong connection. But because my home is quite far, not too far, I have to spend money around 40,000 for transportation. It's just for efficiency. (Yani; Interview)

While some participants told their stories about the connection problem they experienced, others said they were fortunate not to have the same issue instead. However, they also admitted that many students like them on their campus are actually struggling to get internet access. Interestingly, those who complained about the internet connection are mostly from places outside Jakarta. Those who live in Jakarta did not say anything about it and even seemed to see that internet access is no longer an issue.

Another prominent issue of online learning addressed by the participants was the lecturers' lack of knowledge and understanding in optimizing the tools they used in class. The sudden shifts in their learning mode during the pandemic might be one of the reasons why they were not prepared for it. Aman is one of the participants who expressed this issue very strongly in both the questionnaire and interview. He shared what he, his classmates, and lecturers had done in virtual classes and found out how the lessons were apparently not prepared very well. In his experience, he and his classmates were mostly instructed to do assignments but were never shown how to do them. In addition, the activities and lessons done online seemed to be applied exactly the same way as those conducted offline.

We tried to learn online classes, but no guidance. We do assignments without guidance on the class activities. They only share the materials and instruct us to do the assignment. Me myself can feel how the students cannot enjoy the class. (Aman; Interview)

From Aman's story, it can be said that due to the lecturers' unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge about the online tools being used, most lessons conveyed became full of talks and assignments as they were likely realized in a conventional way. It seems that lecturers had no idea about finding out effective ways

in dealing with online learning. As a consequence, students felt overwhelmed and bored, and this situation finally led to discomfort and inefficiency in learning.

Future Expectations:

We want “blended learning”

Through the interviews, all the participants shared some common thoughts and expectations when asked about their perceptions regarding the mode of learning if the pandemic was about to come to an end. Of all the stories told, it can be implied that in the future, English classes will be a combination of online and offline teaching and learning for both benefits and challenges offered by online teaching. Puput, for example, said that despite the benefits of online learning, some specific lessons delivered online are still difficult to follow.

I think virtual learning is a good way to learn a foreign language, but not effective in learning particular subjects in detail. I can still speak, listen, write and read in a virtual class, and I can still socialize and exchange thoughts in it, but understanding the actual subjects discussed is hard. For example, I learned a lot of vocabulary and improved my speaking skill the last time I had a meeting with my lecturer, but I don't actually understand what he taught us in that subject. (Puput; Interview)

Interestingly, of all the participants, only one preferred online learning for its efficiency and effectiveness in learning English, as seen in Eni's story. Eni seemed to be accustomed to online learning already and probably felt that there was no difference between both offline and online learning modes. For her, with today's technological tools, learners can have virtual classes as if they participate in face-to-face lessons in a physical classroom. Likely, Eni does not have any internet connection issues as experienced by some other participants, probably because she lives in the capital city (Jakarta) with some adequate infrastructure.

For me, it's effective. I will definitely choose 100% virtual learning. Fully face-to-face classes are physically and mentally draining. Virtual classrooms are also mentally draining sometimes, but at least I'm not physically exhausted. (Eni; Questionnaire)

Having experienced fully online learning for over two years, most participants expressed their thoughts about what type of learning mode they believed was most relevant for learning English in the future. In the stories they shared, they all surprisingly agreed that Blended Learning (BL) is what they actually need, although they seemed unfamiliar with the term itself.

In my opinion, the interactions between teachers and students are important. But I think in this new era, we must know how to use online platforms well. We need them. I think both virtual and offline teaching should be equal 50-50. I think we must balance them. When we faced the pandemic, we had full online learning. But right now, I think we will have an offline class as soon as possible. So, when we go to offline learning, I hope we do not forget the learning online, like learning via zoom. (Jamal; Interview)

From the narrative above, Jamal emphasized the need for both online and physical interactions and offered a composition of BL in classes. For him, both online and offline learning should be run equally

(50-50). He realized that online learning is inevitable for the future challenges to face and the technological era to live in. This story is supported by Puput's statement in the interview.

"Blended learning" will be more flexible. I need to work and earn money besides going to class. Offline learning is hard because it consumes a lot of time, not just in learning but in transportation (including canceled classes). So, an online class that is more flexible gives me more time to do both school and working. But 100% online is hard because I can't socialize properly with my peers. (Puput; Interview)

Puput believed that BL is what she actually needs for some reason. In her context, online learning can be relevant to her as a student who has side jobs, while offline learning is becoming inefficient as she has to follow schedules and attend classes on campus. However, she also explained that taking classes online all the time would not be enough since she also needs to learn from socializing and interacting with her classmates. All the narratives above represent the other participants' views and stories on applying BL in class and how the approach is perceived to be the most relevant for their effective learning.

We need netter lecturers

In response to the issues in fully online learning classes, the participants shared types of lecturers they thought are ideal for today and in the future, and their responses were quite identical. In their view, an ideal lecturer needs to have some fundamental qualities in order that he/she can work professionally and helps his/her students grow as expected. Most participants agreed that the first quality is open-mindedness, and a university has to consider this aspect when recruiting prospective lecturers. They believed that an open-minded lecturer would have strong motivation and willingness to learn new different things, including the technological tools used for ensuring meaningful interactions and students' engagement in both offline and online classes.

The first quality that a lecturer needs to have is adaptability to any changes, particularly in the use of technology for teaching. Although in the future, the situation will be back to normal, they still need to be able to deliver the materials online. Those who are not adaptable to technological changes can find it hard to ensure engaging online teaching and learning for their students. (Siti; Interview)

Siti addressed "adaptability to any changes," which can relate to open-mindedness. Her story above is in line with what other participants told in the interviews although they used different terms such as flexibility and creativity. The participants also mentioned "sensitivity and passion" as the other qualities of a good lecturer. Puput's story below can be used to represent the other participants' views about this quality.

For me, lecturers need to be passionate about their profession and have a strong motivation in teaching their students. This motivation can be seen in how they treat their students and the feedback they give to their students relating to their assignments. (Puput; Interview)

Puput's narrative supports the other participants' statements although the words to describe this characteristic were different. Mita mentioned that a lecturer needs to be sensitive and understand students' conditions, while Yani prefers to use friendly to describe a lecturer who has to be close to his/her students. Siti and Puput also believed that a passionate lecturer always manages to give constructive and meaningful feedback as one of the effective ways to make his/her students engaged. They said that for a

lecturer, giving such feedback is much more important than merely assigning lots of tasks to students without any feedback. These stories imply that the mindset and personality of a lecturer should be the essential elements considered in the lecturer recruitment process and become the aspects emphasized in teacher training programs. For the participants, all teaching methods and techniques used would not work well if a lecturer is not creative and passionate about using them in teaching.

Discussions

The above findings are summarized and discussed in relation to the research questions based on the themes that emerged with reference to other related literature and relevant studies.

Main Problems and Challenges during the Learning Shifts

Disruptions and little engagement

As revealed by the participants' stories, the major challenges faced in fully online classes had to do with disruptions and students' little engagement. This finding reflects what Shlowiy (2021) finds in his study, showing that Arabic EFL students also had to encounter a range of challenges that included disturbance from their families and surroundings when taking online classes during the pandemic. Such distractions were also identified in Caldwell's study of Japanese EFL online classes (2018). Regarding students' lack of engagement, many previous studies have shown the same result with various factors identified in online language classes (Dhawan, 2020; El-Sayad et al., 2021; Flammia et al., 2016; Green, 2016; Han & Yi, 2021; Murphy, 2020; Nartiningrum and Nugroho, 2020; Pasaribu and Dewi, 2021; Plaisance, 2018; Sun, 2014). The issue of students' engagement in online classes is real, given that all students are different, and the participants also admitted it. Their attitudes towards online learning can be positive, but when it comes to participating in fully online classes, those attitudes can vary depending on the students' degree level of competencies and confidence (Dhawan, 2020). Those who are ready for the change can get the most out of online learning, while others can find it difficult to cope with it and get prompt to frustration. Reflecting on the findings, only a few of the participants are categorized into the former, and some others seem to represent the latter. Therefore, it is evident that online learning can be so demanding, particularly for teachers, as it requires more creative activities and sufficient knowledge of the use of ICT in order that students can actively participate in the lesson given. This challenge has also been addressed by a number of researchers. (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, Oraif & Elyas, 2021; Pradana et al., 2021; Prasetyanto et al., 2022).

Lack of preparation

According to the participants, the other issues relating to online learning were the students' and lecturers' lack of knowledge in utilizing online tools when conducting distance learning. The reason behind the issue might be the immediate shifting modes of instruction in response to the LFH policy. Lecturers as educators also needed to be able to select relevant teaching techniques that could work effectively for the virtual classes they handled. This finding echoes some other studies that reveal several major problems in online learning faced by Indonesian EFL students, one of which is the teachers' and students' inadequate understanding of the use of online materials and applications (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). This issue is also identified by other researchers in different EFL contexts in other countries

(Aljuaid, 2021; Rahim and Chandran, 2021; Sarwari et al., 2021). Another problem of fully online learning shared by the participants was the enormous amount of work to bear and lots of assignments to accomplish, and this is usually affected by the lecturer's lack of understanding in selecting appropriate tasks and activities for online learning as discovered by Derakhshan et al. (2021) and Nakamura et al. (2021). Therefore, sufficient training on online instructions and digital skills needs to be given to teachers and lecturers (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Pasaribu & Dewi, 2021).

Inadequate infrastructures

Many recent studies show that one of the most significant problems of online learning in Indonesia is the lack of infrastructure that provides strong and stable internet connection for all students living across the country (Prasetio, et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2020; UNICEF, 2021). In line with these studies, World Economic Forum also reports that only 30% of the total population in Indonesia gets equal access to the internet with some stability and speed, and the remaining percentage represents those who have less stable connections, including the people living in remote areas without any internet access at all (World Economic Forum, 2021). In fact, it is also reported that approximately 61 million Indonesians do not have access to the internet (GSM Association, 2020). This kind of problem has also become a major challenge in the context of English language teaching and learning in Indonesia, as revealed by many researchers (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Famularsih, 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Nug Agung et al., 2020; Pasaribu & Dewi, 2021;). This issue then indicates an irony: while many Indonesian students enjoy using the internet, as previously discussed, the infrastructure for this activity is still not distributed equally across the country.

Blended learning with some conditions

Drawing on the findings, it is obvious that for the participants, online learning is not a new thing and it is in fact necessary for education before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Relating to the use of ICT in learning, the participants told stories that seem to show how they are already familiar with technology, enjoy its use in their learning activities and take advantage of it. These stories make sense as they are likely to represent their status as so-called "the generation Z," who are typically categorized as the digital natives and have grown with lots of exposure to technology (Demir & Sönmez, 2021). Moreover, they also said that they liked to explore various technological tools and applications by themselves to help them learn subject materials more easily. Their initiative in using online materials and ICT in learning is positive, and it echoes the significance of learning autonomy in education as discussed earlier in this article. In other words, the participants' views and attitudes toward the use of ICT and the internet were positive, and these findings reflect the other studies in different countries such as Japan and China (Caldwell, 2018; Han & Yi, 2021).

Nevertheless, in spite of the participants' experience, knowledge, and positive attitudes about the use of ICT in language learning, many of them complained of the drawbacks experienced during the fully online classes they had taken. It seems that their experience and knowledge in such areas were not enough to help them cope with the issues and challenges faced in the new learning environment. Considering all the issues discovered in fully online learning, it appears that from the participants' view, BL, or a teaching approach combining offline and online learning, is considered to be the most appropriate and relevant approach for English language teaching (ELT), especially in Indonesia either during the pandemic time or in the normal situation. The participants also believed that BL is actually what they need for learning English in class and expected that the approach would be one of the future trends in ELT providing its

efficacy and the inevitable advancements in ICT and internet technology, as also researched in many other studies (Istifci, 2017; Rianto, 2020; Setyaningsih, 2020; Wang, et al., 2021; Wright, 2017; Wu & Liu, 2013). In addition, the participants proposed an average composition from 30% to 50% for online learning and between 50% and 70% for both face-to-face and physical interactions. This finding aligns with the proportion suggested by Allen & Seaman (2010) and Graham (2006) mentioned earlier in the article.

According to the participants, BL will not be running very well in class if lecturers do not have adequate knowledge about how to implement the approach effectively. Therefore, the participants also shared some qualities of a good lecturer who can successfully apply BL in the present time and in the future. Overall, they believed that lecturers have to be open-minded to deal with any changes or to be able to adjust to new unpredictable conditions and learn new things. Besides, a good lecturer has to be sensitive to his/her students' conditions and needs and passionate about his/her profession so that they are willing to improve his/her both subject and pedagogical knowledge and skills. For the participants, lecturers, with such qualities, are then able to provide well-prepared lessons relevant to their students' needs, create meaningful interactions, ensure their students' engagement, and finally help them grow based on their learning goals. These findings resonate with the literature review of Renandya & Jacobs (2021) who present nine characteristics of a good language teacher in the present time according to some well-established literature in which the qualities mentioned by the participants are included.

Citing the work of Merce & Dörnyei (2020), Renandya & Jacobs (2021) posit that in today's language teaching, the most important thing is how teachers can make sure that their students are actively and holistically engaged in both online and offline classes amid the disruptive information and distractions faced in the internet era. And this notion strongly supports the implementation of three types of interactions for engaging classes introduced by Moore (1993). Meaningful and purposeful tasks are also the core instruments determining this kind of engagement (Merce & Dörnyei, 2020). This resonates with the participants' view that a meaningful and purposeful task should be followed by constructive and meaningful feedback. In this sense, only teachers and lecturers, who have qualities of open-mindedness, adaptability, flexibility, sensitivity, and passion, can successfully design and enforce such tasks and feedback.

Conclusion and Implications

Through the discussions of the participants' narratives, the researchers conclude that although the participants had already been familiar with the use of ICT in learning long before the time of COVID-19, most of them were definitely not satisfied with the activities of fully online learning they had been through during the LFH policy for a range of issues faced. Their prior knowledge of ICT might not be sufficient to help them deal with all kinds of stuff in fully online classes. For the participants, fully online learning can be "a double-edged sword." This type of learning mode offers flexibility in learning and the opportunity to develop knowledge about the use of ICT tools in education, but it also brings about several problems, such as learning disruptions, students' little engagement, and heavy workloads, which could lead to frustration. These problems were probably caused by the lack of preparation and unequal internet connection among lecturers and students when implementing online teaching and learning due to the sudden shifts in the learning mode.

Interestingly, only one participant preferred online classes, maybe because she lives in the capital city and does not have any problems related to internet access as well as the demand for flexibility in doing a job. Having faced the issues during the pandemic time, the participants were hoping to have lessons that comprise online learning and physical interactions called "Blended Learning" with a certain amount of

compositions and some conditions for maximizing their learning processes to achieve their learning goals. In order to successfully apply effective Blended Learning in class, the participants also suggested some principal characteristics of a good lecturer that include adaptability, flexibility, sensitiveness, and passion. The study finally gives clues and directions for educators, teacher educators, lecturers, and researchers in ELT to find out appropriate teaching methods and approaches needed in the future. However, this study has limitations. First, considering the small number of participants in this study, the findings cannot be generalized and entirely applied to all EFL learning contexts in Indonesia and other countries. In fact, the nature of narrative inquiry study as a science of human subjectivity can lead to different interpretations when it comes to understanding the collected data.

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