



Reflecting on the Implementation of Online English Learning in Islamic Higher Education: Lecturers and Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The penetration of technology into education has rebounded since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic era, especially in bridging the practice of online learning in schools and universities. Reflecting on the practice of online learning, teachers and students give various perceptions. Some benefits and obstacles are mentioned. This descriptive study focused on investigating the perception of lecturers and students toward online language learning in Islamic higher education. The data were collected from teachers and students in three Islamic Higher Education, namely the State Islamic Institute of Palopo, the State Islamic Institute of Bone, and the State Islamic University of Makassar. The questionnaire was used to collect data from 12 lecturers and 86 students participating. In contrast, the interview was used to gain more profound information about the lecturers' experience and opinions about implementing online learning. From both the questionnaire and the interview, the writers concluded that Lecturers and students in Islamic higher education in South Sulawesi have a positive view of online EFL learning. They value the flexibility, access to resources, and networking opportunities it provides. Students appreciate the ability to manage their learning independently, connect with diverse learners, and engage with various language aspects. However, there's a need for improvements in technology familiarity, stable internet access, access to online learning equipment, and pedagogical training for lecturers to enhance the online learning experience further.

INTRODUCTION

Following the development of the global era triggered by the Industrial Revolution, changes in the field of education are also happening very quickly. One of the unavoidable changes in the field of education is integrating the use of technology products, especially digital technology, into the learning process (Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2021). As a result, some terminology appears in language learning, especially in English, which integrates digital technology with English language learning, such as Computer Assisted Language Learning, Blended Language Learning, Hybrid Language Learning, and others (Larson & Fieler, 2019; Mumford & Dikilitaş, 2020; Park & Son, 2022).

In Indonesia, the issue of learning English online is not new. This issue has begun to be researched and applied in schools and universities. However, this issue later became famous and much discussed in connection with the emergence of the coronavirus in 2019. This issue becomes interesting because of the system's benefits in supporting English learning, including its flexibility in terms of space and time. Besides, it also has several challenges in its application, including the teachers' ability to adapt teaching materials and learning methods and the internet infrastructure that is not evenly distributed in all regions in Indonesia. In addition, the increased education costs and less feedback received by the learners in the learning process also significantly contribute to the learning process ([Abdurahman & Ahmad, 2022](#); [Maatuk et al., 2022](#)).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, almost no Islamic universities in South Sulawesi were well prepared to implement online English learning in infrastructure and superstructure ([Ramdhani & Kholidi, 2021](#); [Sudarti, 2022](#)). When the COVID-19 pandemic came and forced learning at all levels of the education unit to be conducted using a distance learning model by utilizing online learning media, all stakeholders were racing against time to prepare themselves to facilitate the learning process. This condition certainly impacts educators and students. Educators and students certainly have varying perceptions for approximately three years of experiencing this period, with all its advantages and disadvantages ([Pustaka, 2020](#); [Talal, 2021](#)). On the other hand, in connection with the challenges of the times, this learning model is also impossible to abandon. Therefore, it is imperative to look at this issue from various perspectives through research so that it can be combined into one ideal concept to be applied both during and after the pandemic, either entirely online, hybrid, or blended.

From the analysis of the problems above, this study intends to complement the findings of existing studies related to online English learning by taking the perspective of an Islamic university in South Sulawesi, which has different characteristics from other Islamic universities in Indonesia, especially regarding the availability of supporting infrastructure and superstructure of education, as well as the quality of human resources of educators and students. This study is intended to investigate the perceptions of lecturers and students in Islamic Universities about online English learning and the perceptions of students in Islamic Universities about the future of online learning implementation besides offline learning in the post-pandemic era.

Literature Review

Researchers have conducted some studies on the issue of online English learning. For example, [Hermansyah and Aridah \(2021\)](#) research showed that three English teachers initially had little experience with online learning, which caused them to face numerous challenges while attempting to use online tools or platforms for instruction. Various issues arise, including using apps or platforms as media, instructor expertise, time constraints, student and teacher motivation, and plagiarism ([Hermansyah & Aridah, 2021](#)). According to studies, some lecturers struggled with their reduced role and interaction with students, frequently resorting to pre-recorded lectures that limited real-time engagement ([Lo, 2023](#)).

Furthermore, the instability of network platforms and the absence of sufficient teacher-student interactions were notable issues. Another research by [Nursalina \(2023\)](#) uncovered specific technical and situational issues relating to the teachers' experience, condition, and circumstance, even though most teachers opposed implementing online learning. Additionally, this study revealed that parental assistance is essential for preserving students' motivation, zeal, and expression when engaging in online learning ([Nursalina & Fitrawati, 2021](#)).

Despite these challenges, lecturers have used a variety of innovative approaches to improve online learning. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has gained traction, allowing for more interactive and adaptable learning experiences. This method uses mobile devices to support language learning by recording and sharing videos, which increases student engagement and facilitates learning outside of traditional classroom settings ([Dzakiah et al., 2020](#); [Solihin, 2021](#)). Moreover, [Harahap & Ratmanida \(2021\)](#) studied found that most teachers gave a positive response toward online English learning. In detail, two teachers had negative perceptions, and six had positive perceptions. Learning English was easier online during this pandemic, but teachers still prefer conventional teaching in the future. Most students also positively perceive online English teaching and learning. In detail, seven students had very

negative perceptions, forty-seven students had negative perceptions, eighty students had positive perceptions, and six had very positive perceptions ([Harahap & Ratmanida, 2021](#)).

In addition, [Sufyan et al. \(2020\)](#) found that the e-learning model is beneficial due to its flexibility in accessing learning resources, promotes independent learning, and accommodates more students to participate in the discussion. However, some also reported problems during the implementation process, such as limited internet connection, increasing expenses, and little feedback received. This study suggested that relevant stakeholders must also address the challenges, such as technological infrastructure, to help Indonesian students learn virtually ([Sufyan et al., 2020](#)). Furthermore, [Sunardi \(2021\)](#) studied the students' motivation to learn English online during the pandemic. This study found that students' learning motivation in Yogyakarta in the even semester is in the odd category. This result can be seen from the moderate category, with as many as 72 out of 128 students, while from the motivational presentation score with the highest ARSC aspect, the satisfaction aspect is 28%. This research is expected to evaluate various parties involved in organizing online university learning to make the implementation more optimal ([Sunardi, 2021](#)).

Several types of distance learning are mentioned by [Kessler \(2018\)](#), such as correspondence courses, telecourses, CD-ROM courses, and mobile learning. Today's newest and most well-liked method of distance learning is online learning. During the past ten years, online learning has significantly impacted postsecondary education, and the trend is only accelerating. Moreover, these last three years, discussions of online learning have been more actively conducted among scholars and practitioners regarding the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced the teaching and learning process to be completed online ([Kessler, 2018](#)).

The implementation of online learning changes the paradigm of teaching and learning. Online learning demands that teachers and students be more interactive and collaborative in creating the learning process. Therefore, as instructors, teachers play an important role in determining the success of online learning. [Roddy \(2017\)](#) mentioned some competencies that online teachers should have, including communication skills, technological competence, providing informative feedback, administrative skills, responsiveness, monitoring learning, and providing student support. Besides pedagogical competencies, technological skills also become critical to an online teacher. Furthermore, to support the success of an online learning class, an online teacher should be able to help the students solve their technical problems during the class ([Roddy et al., 2017](#)).

As online learning demands collaboration between teachers and students, the student's readiness also becomes vital to support the success of online learning. To be successful in online learning, learners have to be self-regulated. [Martin et al. \(2020\)](#) suggested that self-regulated learners can decide about some aspects of their learning. For example, they can choose the phases of the learning process known as goal setting, planning, monitoring, and assessing their learning. In addition, to support the student's success in online learning, students at least need to have a computer, the Internet, and motivation ([Martin et al., 2020](#)).

According to research, student motivation and engagement are critical components of successful online learning. A study conducted in West Papua found that internal motivation and the quality of the online learning environment significantly impact learning outcomes. However, the quality of institutional support and services demonstrated minimal impact ([Yudiawan et al., 2021](#)). Effective online learning environments encouraging interactive and engaging activities can help students stay interested and involved.

Among the three main aspects of successful online learning for students, computers, the Internet, and technology products play a major role ([Haleem et al., 2022](#)), especially in running online learning during the pandemic. First, computers, mobile phones, and internet connections are needed to access information and connect teachers and students during online classes ([Iqbal & Bhatti, 2020](#)). Since implementing online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, online media such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom Meetings, WhatsApp Group, and others have become popular.

The integration of technology into online education has been critical. Learning Management Systems (LMS) and other e-learning tools have improved access to educational resources and allowed lecturers and students to communicate more effectively. However, the success of these technologies depends on their proper implementation and the users' expertise with them ([Lo, 2023](#)).

Mobile learning has become a significant trend, especially where traditional computer-based online education may be impractical. According to research, mobile learning can help students learn languages by providing flexible and accessible learning opportunities. This method has proven effective in Indonesian Islamic higher education contexts, where mobile devices are widely used ([Al-rahmi et al., 2021](#); [Mutiaraningrum & Nugroho, 2021](#)).

Implementing online English learning in Islamic higher education poses challenges and opportunities. Lecturers and students have had to adjust to new modes of instruction and learning with varying degrees of success. Overcoming these challenges requires effective use of technology, particularly mobile-assisted learning, and creating engaging online environments. Continued research and investment in technological infrastructure and training are essential to support these institutions' ongoing transition to online education.

METHODS

This research used a quantitative descriptive approach involving 98 lecturers and students from Islamic universities in South Sulawesi, namely IAIN Bone and IAIN Palopo ([Sidel et al., 2017](#)). The lecturers involved in this study are permanent lecturers of the English Language Education study program at an established higher education who actively teach English during the Covid-19 pandemic and actively use online learning media. Meanwhile, the students involved are third and fifth-semester students at each university who actively take online lectures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research data will be collected using questionnaires and interviews. First, the questionnaire technique will be used to collect data on the perceptions of lecturers and students about learning English online. This study will also use qualitative data obtained through interview techniques. In collecting data, researchers will send a questionnaire to the respondents using Google Forms media by first explaining the contents of the questionnaire through the Google Meet application. Then, the interview process will be carried out in two ways, namely face-to-face direct interviews and online interviews with the help of Google Meet media. The data obtained will then be analyzed in two ways based on the type of data received. The first is descriptive statistical analysis, where the data obtained through the questionnaire is first categorized and then analyzed to determine the percentage of the participant's responses to each question or statement. Then, the data obtained from the interview results will be analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques, data reduction procedures, data presentation, and conclusions.

FINDINGS

Questionnaire Result

Lecturers' Perception of EFL Online Teaching During and Post Covid-19 Pandemic

1. Lecturers' perception of EFL online teaching during and post Covid-19 Pandemic

Table 1. Application of Online Teaching Among EFL Lecturers During and Post Covid-19 Pandemic

Questions	Response			
	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Have you been teaching EFL offline classes since September 2022?	11	91.7%	1	8.3%
Do you still need to teach online when you can teach offline in classes?	11	91.7%	1	8.3%
Do you find that online education benefits your teaching?	10	83.3%	2	16.7%

According to the chart above, 11 lecturers, or 91.7 percent of the 12 lecturers, begin to teach offline in EFL sessions. 11 academics, or 91.7 percent of lecturers, still require internet instruction while

teaching offline in classrooms. Furthermore, ten academics, or 83.3 percent of 12 lecturers, continue to see the benefits of online education in the aftermath of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

2. EFL online teaching platforms

Table 2. Platforms/Applications that are Considered More Helpful and Effective in EFL Online Learning

Platforms/Applications	Frequency	Percentage
Zoom	5	41.7%
Google Applications	6	50%
Microsoft Team	0	0%
Moodle	1	8.3%
Edmodo	0	0%

This table shows that 50% of 12 lecturers who used online teaching during the post-COVID-19 Pandemic used Google applications, such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Google Form, and others in online learning. There are five lecturers, or 41.7 % lecturers, who used Zoom, 0 lecturers used Microsoft Team, one lecturer or 8.3% used Moodle, and 0 lecturers who used Edmodo.

3. The challenges faced by lecturers in EFL online learning during the post-COVID-19 pandemic

Table 3. The Lecturers' Challenges During Online English Teaching

The Challenges	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Neutral	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of computer and digital technology skills impedes online English learning.	10	83.3%	2	16.7%	0	0%
Lack of time for online course design and test preparation affects the EFL online learning process.	11	91.7%	1	8.3%	0	0%
I had trouble following up on the students' progress in EFL online instruction.	5	41.7%	2	16.7%	5	41.7%
Students' online learning facilities (internet connection, gadget specification) impact EFL online learning.	12	100%	0	0%	0	0%
The motivation of students influences the process of EFL online learning.	12	100%	0	0%	0	0%

The Challenges	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Neutral	Frequency	Percentage
The interactions of students have an impact on the EFL online learning process.	9	75%	2	16.7%	1	8.3%

As shown in the table above, 10 participants (83.3 percent) believe that a lack of computer and digital technology impacts the EFL online learning process, while just 2 participants are indifferent. Then, 11 participants (91.7 percent) believe that a lack of time for online course design and online test preparation impacts the EFL online learning process, while 1 participant is indifferent.

Furthermore, 5 participants (41.7%) say they have trouble following up on students' successes in EFL online learning, even though 2 participants (16.7%) are indifferent on the subject, and 5 participants (41.7%) disagree. Furthermore, 12 participants (100%) agree that students' online learning facilities influence EFL online learning, and 12 participants (100%) believe that students' motivation impacts the extra EFL online learning process in offline learning sessions, with no individuals disagreeing. Nine people (75%) believe that students' interactions influence the EFL online learning process, whereas 2 participants (16.7%) are indifferent, and one person (8.3%) disagrees.

Students' Perceptions Towards Online English Learning

1. Lecturers' perception of EFL online teaching during and post-Covid-19 pandemic

Table 4. Online English Learning Experiences Among Students During and Post Covid-19 Pandemic

Questions	Response			
	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Have you been learning EFL offline since September 2022?	86	100%	0	0%
Do you still need to learn English online when you can learn offline in classes?	81	94.1%	5	5.8%
Do you find that online learning benefits your English learning?	91	94.1%	5	5.8%

According to the chart above, 81 students, or 95.1% of the 12, begin learning offline in EFL sessions in September 2022. Eighty-one students, or 94.1%, still require internet instruction, although they can learn English offline in the classrooms. Accordingly, 81 students, or 94.1% out of 86 students, continue to see the benefits of online education in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. EFL online teaching platforms

Table 5. Platforms/Applications that are Considered More Helpful and Effective in EFL Online Learning

Platforms/Applications	Frequency	Percentage
Zoom	34	39.6%
Google Applications	44	51.1%
Microsoft Team	0	0%
Moodle	8	9.3%

Platforms/Applications	Frequency	Percentage
Edmodo	0	0%

This table shows that 44 students, or 51.1% out of 86 who learned English online during the post-COVID-19 Pandemic, used Google applications, such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Google Form, and others, in online learning. While 34 students, or 39.6 %, used Zoom, no students used Microsoft Team, eight students or 9.3%, used Moodle, and no students used Edmodo.

3. The challenges faced by students in EFL online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

Table 6. The Students' Challenges During Online English Learning

The Challenges	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Neutral	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of computer and digital technology skills impedes online English learning.	82	95.3%	4	4.7%	0	0%
The lack of time for lecturers to design and prepare the online course and test affects the online learning process for EFL.	75	87.2%	9	10.5%	2	2.3%
Lecturers have difficulty monitoring the student's progress in EFL online instruction.	30	34.9%	23	26.7%	33	38.3%
Students' online learning facilities (internet connection, gadget specification) impact EFL online learning.	86	100%	0	0%	0	0%
The motivation of students influences the process of EFL online learning.	83	96.5%	3	3.5%	0	0%
The interactions of students have an impact on the EFL online learning process.	74	86.1%	7	8.1%	5	5.8%

As shown in the table above, 82 participants (95.3%) believe that a lack of computer and digital technology impacts the EFL online learning process, while 2 participants are indifferent. Then, 75 participants (87.2%) believe that a lack of time for lecturers to design and prepare online courses and

online tests impacts the EFL online learning process, while 9 participants are indifferent on the subject, and 2 participants disagree.

Furthermore, 30 participants (34.9%) say they have trouble following up on students' successes in EFL online learning, even though 23 participants (26.7%) are indifferent on the subject, and 33 participants (38.1%) disagree. Furthermore, 86 participants (100%) agree that students' online learning facilities influence EFL online learning, 83 participants (96.5%) believe that students' motivation impacts the extra EFL online learning process in offline learning sessions, with three individuals disagreeing. At last, 74 participants (86.1%) believe that students' interactions influence the EFL online learning process, whereas 7 participants (8.1%) are indifferent, and five people (5.8%) disagree.

The questionnaire results show that offline learning, replacing the online one, has been started since September 2022 in all Islamic Higher Education in South Sulawesi. Although offline learning has been running, teachers and students still consider that online learning is needed to assist offline learning. It aligns with the responses from lecturers and students, who consider online learning to benefit their English teaching and learning. Further investigation about the reason will be conducted by interviewing the lecturer and students. The lecturers and students also report mostly using Google applications during online English teaching and learning. Besides that, some also used the Zoom application, and only a few used Moodle.

Regarding the lecturers' and students' perception of the challenges of online English learning, they agree that the computer literacy of the lecturers and students and the online learning facilities have become the dominant obstacles to online English teaching and learning. They also reported that the limited time for the lecturer to prepare and design the learning material negatively impacts the online English teaching and learning process. It has also been reported that some lecturers cannot monitor students' progress during online English teaching and learning. Furthermore, the lecturers and students agree that students' motivation plays an important role in supporting the process of EFL online learning. They also reported that the interaction among the students can foster the achievement of EFL online learning.

Interview Results

To support the data from the questionnaire, the researchers then interviewed some lecturers and students about their perception of online English learning. Three questions were given to the chosen participants: four lecturers and six students. The results are as follows:

Lecturers' Perception Towards Online English Learning

Question 1: How effective is online learning to improve students' English skills in Islamic higher education in South Sulawesi?

Lecturer 1:

"Online learning has improved students' English abilities in Islamic higher education in South Sulawesi. It provides students with a flexible setting to engage with various materials, practice language skills, and connect with global information relevant to their study."

Lecturer 2:

"Online learning is an effective method for improving English skills among Islamic higher education students. It gives students access to real English resources, encourages individual study, and connects them with a larger network of English speakers, enhancing their language ability."

Lecturer 3:

"Online learning has improved English language ability among Islamic higher education students. It provides a platform for continual practice, tailored learning, and exposure to worldwide language trends, all of which complement their academic endeavours."

Lecturer 4:

"Online learning, in my opinion, has effectively enhanced English abilities among Islamic higher education students in South Sulawesi. Technology integration, interactive courses, and real-world language application have improved language competency and a larger global perspective."

Based on the lecturers' responses to question 1, it can be seen that lecturers agree that online learning is effective in improving the students' English skills, considering some positive aspects of online learning, such as the flexibility of the learning setting, also the students' opportunity to access

online resources, and connects with the larger network of English speakers that are provided by the technology integration into the EFL online learning process.

Question 2: What do you consider to be the most challenging aspects of the implementation of online learning in Islamic Higher Education in South Sulawesi? What is needed to improve?

Lecturer 1:

"Providing fair access to technology and consistent internet connectivity, particularly in communities with low resources, is one of the most difficult elements. Infrastructure investments and delivering gadgets to underprivileged children would be critical to improving."

Lecturer 2:

"Maintaining the same level of human interaction that traditional classes give is a huge problem. To improve, lecturers must receive more training in online pedagogy and ways for developing a sense of community via virtual platforms."

Lecturer 3:

"The lack of face-to-face interaction and possible distractions during online learning are obstacles. Improving engagement through interactive activities, peer partnerships, and clear norms for online conduct may all help."

Lecturer 4:

"Creating an inclusive learning environment that accommodates varied learning styles and technology skills might be difficult. To meet the various requirements of students, improvement necessitates providing technological assistance, creating accessible material, and adopting blended learning techniques."

Based on the lecturers' responses to question 2, it can be found that some aspects that the lecturers consider to be obstacles to EFL online learning, such as the infrastructure, including technology equipment and internet connectivity. Some social issues are also reported by the lecturers, including the ability of the teachers and students to maintain the same level of interaction, among others, that is closer or similar to the level that offline classes can give. The lack of face-to-face interaction and the possibility of distractions during online learning might become obstacles to the EFL online learning process, including lecturers' difficulties in accommodating varied students' learning styles. The lecturers suggest some options to overcome the obstacles: infrastructure investments and delivering gadgets to underprivileged children, teacher training in online pedagogy and classroom management, providing technological assistance for students, creating accessible material, and adopting blended learning techniques.

Question 3: Do you think online English learning is still needed besides offline learning? How much can it be implemented to assist offline learning?

Lecturer 1:

"Online English learning, in addition to offline education, is necessary. It allows for self-paced practice as well as exposure to actual language use. It may be used as a complement to regular classrooms, offering extra practice and tools to reinforce what is learnt."

Lecturer 2:

"Yes, online English classes support traditional ways. It includes extra information, interactive activities, and self-directed practice possibilities. It may supplement classroom teachings by allowing pupils to go further into themes and develop language skills on their own."

Lecturer 3:

"Online English learning is unquestionably beneficial when combined with traditional methods. It includes various interesting content, self-assessment tools, and language practice. It may extend learning outside the classroom by allowing students to review and reinforce topics learned in face-to-face courses."

Lecturer 4:

"Along with offline learning, online English learning remains relevant. It provides adaptability, genuine language exposure, and interactive tasks. When intelligently incorporated, technology may enhance traditional classrooms by providing extra activities, allowing students to study quickly, and providing a platform for continual language practice."

Based on the lecturers' responses to question 3, it can be revealed that they perceive online learning as vital and still need to support offline learning. In their perceptions, online learning allows

students to practice and study at their own speed. It also allows the students to explore themes and develop language skills independently. Moreover, it mentioned extending learning outside the classroom by allowing students to review and reinforce topics learned in face-to-face courses.

Students' Perception Towards Online English Learning

Question 1: How effective is online learning to improve students' English skills in Islamic higher education in South Sulawesi?

Student 1:

"Online learning has been quite effective in improving our English skills. It allows us to access various materials and practice at our own pace, which is important in improving language learning."

Student 2:

"I think online learning has positively impacted our English skills. We can engage with different English accents through online resources and interact with peers from various backgrounds, enhancing our language proficiency."

Student 3:

"Online learning has proven helpful for improving our English skills. The convenience of accessing lessons and practice materials anytime, combined with online language exchange opportunities, has enhanced our language skills."

Student 4:

"From my perspective, online learning effectively boosts our English skills. Through virtual discussions and collaborative projects, we engage more actively with the language and gain exposure to diverse language styles."

Student 5:

"Online learning has been beneficial for improving our English. It offers interactive exercises and language apps that make practicing enjoyable, and the online format allows us to balance our religious studies while improving our language skills."

Student 6:

"I believe online learning has positively impacted our English skills. Engaging with multimedia content and participating in online language forums has allowed us to learn beyond textbooks and develop practical language abilities."

Based on the responses to question 1, it can be observed that students agree that online learning is beneficial in boosting students' English skills when certain positive elements are considered. According to the students, online learning allows them to access various resources and practice at their own speed. In other words, they can manage their learning independently. Students also indicated that through online learning, they may communicate with learners from varied backgrounds and engage with different English dialects. Furthermore, they noted that online learning provides interactive exercises and language applications that make practice with multimedia content fun and opportunities to study beyond textbooks and expand their language talents through participation in online language forums.

Question 2: What do you consider to be the most challenging aspects of the implementation of online learning in Islamic Higher Education in South Sulawesi? What is needed to improve?

Student 1:

"The lack of face-to-face interaction among lecturers and students makes discussing more important and complicated issues difficult. Initially, the class felt more awkward, and I found it difficult to make the situation offline. Virtual meetings and discussion forums might help to solve the problem."

Student 2:

"It is difficult to maintain discipline and concentrate while learning online. Some students might turn their online applications on while doing another activity. Improvements might include giving clear time management rules and providing more engaging online activities to keep us engaged."

Student 3:

"Poor internet access is a big problem, particularly in rural areas. When ordered to learn online, most students return to their hometowns, where internet connections are unstable. Investing in stronger infrastructure and giving offline access to resources would be good to overcome this. Clear

instructions also needed to be given to students that they may not go to their hometown if the internet connection is not good there."

Student 4:

"Because we lose out on the classroom experience, online learning can sometimes feel isolated. Increasing chances for joint projects and interactive group conversations might improve the whole experience and make it more engaging and communal."

Student 5:

"Some of us may have technical problems and challenges using internet platforms. Not all students are familiar with the online learning equipment and applications. Students would benefit from intensive training and technological assistance to help them solve these issues and feel more competent in online learning."

Student 6:

"The shift to online learning first shocked everybody, particularly people unfamiliar with technology. Training and tutorials on how to use internet tools efficiently would be beneficial to overcome this problem."

Based on the responses to question 2, some issues were reported to be experienced as obstacles by the students. Students reported that lack of face-to-face interaction among lecturers makes it difficult for the students to discuss some important and complicated issues. They sometimes feel uncomfortable and more awkward in the learning atmosphere. The students also mentioned issues of discipline and concentration while learning online. Some students were inactive in joining the online session, although their online learning equipment is connected. Like the lecturer, the students also reported that poor internet access is a big problem in online learning. Moreover, students reported that online learning can make them feel isolated, which might disturb their motivation to actively join the online session during class. Lastly, students also revealed that some may have technical problems and challenges using internet platforms, so they need training and technological assistance to solve the problem.

Question 3: Do you think online English learning is still needed besides offline learning? How much can it be implemented to assist offline learning?

Student 1:

"Yes, online English learning is beneficial since it provides additional practice and exposure to various materials. It may augment offline learning by supplying more resources and allowing us to learn quickly."

Student 2:

"Yes, online English learners are needed to complement the offline meetings. It allows learners to practice further, do interactive tasks, and be exposed to worldwide English usage. When properly integrated, it can improve classroom learning by increasing chances for language practice."

Student 3:

"Online English learning is needed because it enables personal practice and learning outside of classroom hours. It may supplement offline learning with assignments, quizzes, and interactive activities that strengthen what is taught in regular classrooms."

Student 4:

"Yes, online English classes are still useful. It provides various tools and practice opportunities to help us improve our language abilities. It may integrate offline lessons by providing self-paced modules, language exercises, and interactive multimedia content relevant to our curriculum."

Student 5:

"Online English study is beneficial because it offers flexibility and a wide range of learning resources."

Student 6:

"Online English study is needed to supplement offline learning. The technology can expand our learning beyond the classroom and allow us to practice in real-world circumstances."

Based on the responses to question 3, it is found that the students perceive online learning to be beneficial in enriching and improving their English learning. They revealed some benefits they can get from online learning, such as the fact that online learning provides additional practice and exposure to various materials. Online learning may support offline learning by supplying more resources and allowing the students to learn at their own pace. In addition, online learning can potentially improve classroom learning by increasing chances for language practice. It also enables personal practice and

learning outside of classroom hours. Furthermore, online learning offers flexibility and a wide range of learning resources. Then, integrating technology into the learning process can expand the students learning beyond the classroom and allow them to practice in real-world circumstances.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that both lecturers and students agree that online learning is beneficial in supporting EFL online learning. Most teachers positively respond to online English learning, and most students also positively perceive online English teaching and learning. It is strengthened by the findings from the interview, which revealed that participants voice that online learning is needed to complement offline learning. It is due to several benefits that both parties, the lecturers and students, can get from the online system ([Harahap & Ratmanida, 2021](#)). Online learning allows you additional practice and exposure to various subjects. Online learning may supplement offline learning by providing more materials and allowing students to learn quickly ([Muthuprasad et al., 2021](#)).

Furthermore, online learning can potentially increase classroom learning by expanding opportunities for language practice. It also allows extra practice and learning outside the classroom ([Paudel, 2021](#)). Furthermore, online learning provides flexibility and access to diverse learning materials. Then, incorporating technology into the learning process can extend students' learning outside the classroom and allow them to practice in real-world situations ([Ossiannilsson, 2020](#)).

From the questionnaire, participants reported that Google application, Zoom application, and Moodle are the platforms that are mostly used to facilitate online learning during and post-pandemic. These platforms are the most popular applications among lecturers and students during the pandemic ([Iqbal & Bhatti, 2020](#)). Google applications become popular because of their easiness and familiarity to lecturers and students. It also requires less space in storage for its application, and another important reason is that it does not require some payment to be able to use it ([Kumar & Bervell, 2019](#)). At the same time, Zoom has become the second most popular application because of its more complex features and capacity to accommodate more participants in each online meeting. However, the user will be required to provide some payments to enjoy those more complex features and bigger capacity ([Silalahi et al., 2022](#)). Some participants also use Moodle because it is integrated with some e-learning applications independently developed by some universities to facilitate their teaching and learning ([Sinaga & Pustika, 2021](#)). However, based on the findings of the questionnaire, Google applications and Zoom applications are more favourable among lecturers and students in Islamic higher education in South Sulawesi.

Regarding the challenges of EFL online teaching learning experienced by the lecturers and students, some aspects are mentioned, i.e. internet connection, online learning equipment such as computers and smartphones, and the learners' motivation and discipline in joining the online session during the class. Restricted internet access, rising costs, and a lack of feedback become issues during online learning ([Sufyan et al., 2020](#)). Also, student motivation in Yogyakarta during the even semester was in the low group. Another challenge was also mentioned by the participants, i.e., a lack of mastery of computer and digital technology skills. It is also reported to be an obstacle to online English learning ([Sunardi, 2021](#)). However, teachers with no prior expertise in online learning face various problems when using online educational tools or platforms. They also mentioned certain difficulties, such as using applications or platforms as media, instructor expertise, time limits, student and teacher motivation, and plagiarism ([Hermansyah & Aridah, 2021](#)).

From the analysis of both the benefits and challenges of EFL online learning experienced by the research participants and the previous research findings, it can be concluded that EFL online learning is still needed to complement offline learning. However, improvement in several aspects is still needed, including the technology familiarization to the lecturers and students, the availability of stable internet connection and the online learning equipment, including computers and smartphones, and the pedagogical training for online learning for the lecturers. Online instructors should have communication and technological competence, deliver useful feedback, have administrative skills and responsiveness, monitor learning, and offer student assistance ([Roddy et al., 2017](#)). Aside from pedagogical abilities, an online instructor must also have technology expertise. Furthermore, to promote the success of an online learning class, an online teacher should be able to assist students in resolving technological issues during class.

Some aspects of students also need to be improved, including learning motivation and discipline to actively join the online session of the class and independently expand practice their learning out of the online class activity. These are common problems teachers face during the EFL online teaching process. It has been proven by university students in Yogyakarta, who are motivated to participate in online activities during the pandemic ([Sunardi, 2021](#)).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the lecturers in Islamic higher education in South Sulawesi perceive online learning positively. They consider it beneficial to support their EFL teaching due to various positive aspects of online learning, such as the flexibility of the learning setting. Additionally, students can access online resources and connect with a larger network of English speakers, facilitated by integrating technology into the EFL online learning process.

Similarly, students in Islamic higher education in South Sulawesi also perceive online learning positively. They acknowledge that online learning allows them to access various resources and practice at their own pace, effectively managing their learning independently. Students indicated that online learning enables them to communicate with learners from diverse backgrounds and engage with different English dialects. Furthermore, they noted that online learning offers interactive exercises and language applications that make practising with multimedia content enjoyable and opportunities to study beyond textbooks and enhance their language skills through participation in online language forums.

However, lecturers and students in Islamic higher education in South Sulawesi believe that EFL online learning should complement offline learning despite the need for improvements in several areas. These include familiarizing lecturers and students with the technology, ensuring the availability of a stable internet connection, providing necessary online learning equipment such as computers and smartphones, and offering lecturers pedagogical training for online learning.

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