# Unpacking the opportunities and challenges in learning speaking online during Covid-19 outbreak: A case-study of Indonesian EFL college students

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## ABSTRACT

The challenges brought by Covid-19 have threatened not only the economy and health fields but also the educational sectors. In light of education, this issue has led to the swift migration of the learning process from conventional mode to online learning which has resulted in another bottleneck. The current study explores the perception of EFL Indonesian college students about the challenges and benefits of learning speaking through the online system during the Covid-19 outbreak. Forty-five college students participated in this study and were inquired through a semi-structured questionnaire in the weeks following the final term examinations for the academic year 2020-2021. The data was probed by using grounded theory proposed by Creswell. The findings exposed

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that effectiveness, online benefits, and improvement opportunities were the benefits obtained by students from the online learning. Meanwhile, distraction and information overload, a technical error in online learning technology and internet connectivity matters as well as limited interaction and inadequate support were hindrances that often hampered the students. Consequently, this scholarly paper also provides advice on the essence of the readiness of adequate facilities and the collaboration from stakeholders; government, teachers, students, and parents to successfully implement online learning.

**Keywords:** *Challenges; Opportunities; Online learning; Covid-19 pandemic*

## 1. Introduction

The effect brought by the current pandemic is considered the greatest challenge since World War II (Müller & Rau, 2021). It has disrupted the lives of people worldwide within a very short time (Barai & Dhar, 2021). The pandemic is caused by the spreading of a virus named Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) in late 2019. It is believed to be the cause of a large number of infection cases and deaths in people over the world (Daly & Robinson, 2021). In March 2020, the Director-General of WHO declared that the virus spread rapidly and severely after the assessment (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020) which brought about many people to live under lockdown to stop the spreading of the virus. The lockdown disrupts almost all sectors of life, particularly the educational system.

The warning to undo activity with physical contact requires a drastic change in the teaching and learning process (Bozkurt et al., 2020). The closure of educational institutions is done and forced to transfer the learning process into online learning system (Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh, & Althunibat, 2020). It provides opportunities such as the flexibility of time, place, access, and affordable cost (Khan & Abid, 2021). In this way, online learning becomes an alternative panacea for the education system in the midst of the current pandemic situation. However, it is not a simple thing to migrate conventional teaching directly into online mode. Many educators are still new to online learning and also face difficulties in developing technical skills (Shin, 2020). Even though online learning has been known in academic terms, it still needs to be adapted either for the educators or the students. In Indonesia, the challenge lies in the unavailability of access to online learning for many students because of the enormous diversity of geography and infrastructures (Lee, 2020). Hence, these challenges affect the teaching and learning process.

In the EFL context, the challenges of learning English as a foreign language have been existed prior to the implementation of online learning, such as lack of a supportive environment for learning English, lack of information on how to start learning English, problems related to textbook materials, assessments, and other related issues (Akbari, 2015). Other salient rumours are related to the financial condition and inadequate devices significant to support the online learning process (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). This inevitable predicament poses new challenges for learners to keep up with the

learning activities, in particular, those relate to the speaking skills. This is also due to the fact that speaking skill is the most challenging skill to learn among other language skills (Jamshidnejad, 2020).

Speaking skill in English becomes prime concern for many second and foreign learners. Due to this fact, their success in learning language is often measured by how well their spoken language proficiency improves (Richards, 2009). In Indonesia, the speaking problems found are related to the lack of vocabulary, grammar mastery, correct pronunciation, low self-confidence, unsupportive environment for speaking English, and lack of language development in the curriculum as well (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Many types of research have been carried out to investigate the challenges that exist in the context of EFL learning as well as the problems encountered during online learning (Akbari, 2015; Akhter, 2021; Istifci, 2016; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020), however, research in speaking instruction has appealed less attention (Borg, 2006 cited in Chen & Goh, 2011). This limited work in this field has resulted in a marked gap in our understanding of English language teaching (Chen & Goh, 2011).

The present study explores EFL Indonesian college students' perception of the challenges and benefits of learning speaking through the online system during the Covid-19 period. The investigation of how students perceive speaking learning through online learning platforms in terms of benefits and obstacles might be a useful reference for teachers, students, and parents to collaborate on more successful online learning processes, particularly in online speaking learning.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Digital transformation

Digital transformation has become the first concern in higher education, more precisely in the decade of the 21st century (Benavides et al., 2020). The term of digitalization is not new and has affected higher education institutions for some time (Kopp, Gröblinger, & Adams 2019). It has become a trend for higher education to use digital technology since it gives a positive impact on the higher education institutions themselves such as becoming more widespread, covering a large number of people, strengthening the authority, raising the level of culture, and creating opportunities for experimentation and innovation which lead to the improvement of people's quality of life (Neborsky et al., 2020). Moreover, the restriction of physical interaction which led to the mandatory lockdown has forced institutions to shift to online learning (Bdair, 2021). By this, digital technology is used to organize and design learning experiences along with the creation of a distinctive learning environment during the Covid-19 outbreak (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia, & Koole, 2020). Of all the impacts digital technology has on education, in particular, the efforts to improve and even transform the learning experience, including flexibility, openness, disaggregation, and distributed learning, and connection and communication as well are often praised (Xiao, 2019).

Exploratory empirical researches exploring digital transformation due to Covid-19 in the context of basic education have been carried out in Finland and India which have resulted that schools in both countries have transformed the learning process into digital seamlessly without being interrupted and have provided satisfaction for students and educators even for parents of students (Iivari, Sharma, & Ventä-Olkkonen, 2020). However, like two sides of a coin, it is the opposite in Indonesia. Previous researchers have found that many obstacles occur during online learning. These challenges, among others, are related to inadequate equipment which refers to digital devices that do not support learning activities (poor internet connection, inadequate devices) as well as challenges related to student psychology and health (feeling bored, dizzy from staring at the phone screen for too long) (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020). In addition, there are five assumptions about the hindrances of digital transformation in higher education such as change (related to the massive change of process), pace (related to the time required to implement digital transformation), technology (related to the management task with an interdisciplinary team of experts), competences (related to the ability of students and teachers), and financing (related to the budget needed in digital transformation) (Kopp, Gröblinger, & Adams 2019). Hence, the university system needs to be able to provide quality education in digital transformation with disruptive technological innovations and accelerated changes in the educational framework (García-Morales, Garrido-Moreno, & Martín-Rojas, 2021).

Digital Transformation is a phase of adoption of the digital technology use in university learning classrooms that requires a change in focus and involves innovation in technology and modification of institutional culture to ensure the evolution of digital transformation to take advantage of emerging technologies (Abad-Segura et al., 2020). Even though online learning system uses digital technology in its process, the term digitalization do not merely refer to the online learning as it is not the only one regarding digital transformation in higher education institutions (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Online learning has become a new process to substitute both distance learning and traditional face-to-face since it radically changes the nature of what is thought of as typical college courses and infiltrates regular face-to-face classes which is also viewed as a revolutionary change (Hiltz & Turoff, 2005). Despite all the challenges and problems that came along during the process, it can be stated that online learning is such a panacea to continue the academic process at the time when the world is struggling in the current pandemic situation.

## 2.2. Online learning in EFL context

The pandemic effect has also prompted language learning to switch to online mode particularly in the EFL context. To begin with, online learning can be defined as a learning process via internet/online computers in a synchronous or asynchronous classroom where the interaction exists without a physical location or physical space (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Based on the above view, online learning can be offered in

two types; synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning is a form of online learning in which interaction happens through conferences or online chats, meanwhile asynchronous means that the learning process occurs indirectly (no interaction at the same time) using an independent learning approach (Aliyyah et al., 2020).

## 2.3. Learning speaking through online
### 2.3.1. The opportunities

Online learning provides some advantages for both students and teachers. A study in Pakistan found results that online learning provides flexibility and an effective source of teaching and learning since it eases the administration and accessibility and resources and time (Mukhtar et al., 2020). Time flexibility is the foremost advantage of the synchronous mode where material can be accessed multiple times and assessment can be given in a flexible time frame. Moreover, the synchronous online learning mode is also beneficial for virtual classes using video conferencing which can be exciting and useful for students (Khan & Abid, 2021).

In respect of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), the use of online platforms is developed for the improvement of students' language skills. Video conferencing utilizing apps such as Zoom, Skype, Adobe Connect, Big Blue Button, etc. offer opportunities to improve students' speaking skills. It gives learners a small-group video conferencing which allows them to speak more intensively than in regular class (Blake, 2017). Another study also discovered that online learning can improve students' oral skills and their self-efficacy compared to conventional learning (Ghabeli et al., 2021). More precisely, online learning is perceived as the best option for teaching and learning, especially in the context of EFL in response to the current pandemic crisis.

### 2.3.2. The challenges

Despite all the opportunities online learning provides, it is undeniable that this system is still a challenge for both teachers and students. From students' perspectives, the challenges can be found in terms of the availability of internet access, financial issues and the implementation of online learning associated with the distribution of learning materials and instructions. (Allo, 2020; Yandell, 2020). Similarly, teachers discern online teaching as a hassle, where the lack of intensive interaction with students becomes one of the rumours. Furthermore, the fact that some teachers have no experience in accessing technology provokes defiance in the teaching process as well when carried out online (Evans et al., 2020). Cognate concerns were as well as encountered in EFL classes, in particular, in teaching speaking skills. The disquietudes include the technical problems and lack of knowledge related to the computer use, unmotivated students and having no independent work skills, unsuitable tools, and home responsibilities which reduce the time of the study (Salieva, 2020). Another fact reveals that the challenges in conducting online learning for speaking skills are because students are not comfortable having a silent mode when conducting video conferences,

lack of student participation, and lack of student involvement to speak through voice notes for fear of making mistakes (Puspitasari, Nofianto, & Huda, 2021).

In short, despite the benefits, online learning is still a challenge, therefore, teachers and students need to adapt to sudden transformations like this and get used to using online learning in their virtual classrooms, as well as take advantage of relevant strategies for the success of learning itself (Bhuana & Apriliyanti, 2021).

## 3. Method

A qualitative research practice through interview study was employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the topic under investigation. An interview is theorized as the best-suited method because it is commonly used as a resource for investigating truths, facts, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and/or feelings of respondents (Talmy, 2010). Pertaining to the present study, students' experience in learning speaking skills online including challenges and opportunities was probed. Since the pandemic prohibited the face-to-face meeting, the researcher chose to interview the participants by utilizing a synchronous communication such as google form, a free online software that allows us to create surveys, quizzes which has wide access to the participants without limitation of place (Opdenakker, 2006).

The respondents of this study comprised 45 EFL students of University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra in the province of North Sumatra. All of the respondents are now pursuing their bachelor degree in English education in a full-time basis where the researchers are currently learning and teaching. These participants were recruited through convenience sampling on the basis of the ease of contact via social media (Galloway, 2005). This sampling technique is considered as one of the best alternatives without any meetings with the individuals involved due to the restrictions on physical interaction that the government has implemented in preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The questionnaire administered in a synchronous setting (Google form) allowed the researchers to verify students' perceptions or ideas about the challenges and positive impacts on the learning of speaking skills online during the Covid-19. The questionnaire consisted of the participants' identity and open-ended questions about their perceptions of online speaking class. For confidentiality, the responses from each participant were only seen by the researcher. This is evidence that there is no interference from other participants.

The data gained were analysed by using grounded theory approach by Creswell (2014). This is considered as the appropriate approach since the results were generated through a general explanation (theory) without assuming the existing theoretical framework. There were four stages in analysing the data. Firstly, the open coding was committed by construing the essays to identify the codes of challenges and opportunities towards speaking online learning. The second stage was grouping the similar codes to form a concept. Later, the concepts were clustered into categories before the final stage as the theory formation based on the categories emerged. After the

third stage, the statements of the challenges and opportunities towards speaking online learning were created in accordance with the analysis of the data (Hinrichs et al., 2017).

## 4. Findings

Forty-five participants filled the questionnaire created through Google Forms. The participants were undergraduate students in the English Education Department who had taken and finished the speaking course through online. The questionnaire consisted of 2 sections including participants' identity, and nine open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were analysed by applying grounded theory to identify the opportunities and challenges of online speaking classes. The perceptions were coded according to stages proposed by Hinrichs et al. (2017) where responses denoting opportunities marked as positive code and challenges marked as negative codes. Table 1 and Table 2 present coding schemes for opportunities and challenges. These codes emerged from the analysis of sample answers and were then triangulated in previous studies unpacking students' attitudes towards the emergency of online learning (Hussein et al., 2020; Potra et al., 2021).

**Table 1**
Coding scheme for opportunities.

| Main Codes | Categories from the data | Positive aspects codes | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Getting a discount from university for tuition fee | Saving cost for tuition fee | Effectiveness (Time and cost) | 3 |
| Being able to save money for gasoline | Saving cost for transportation | | |
| No need a lot of preparation to start learning | Saving the time for getting ready | | |
| Being able to attend class from anywhere | Having easier access to class | Online benefit | 23 |
| Being able to attend class from home | | | |
| Being able to access the learning from anywhere | Having easier access to materials and recordings | | |
| Being able to access the materials anytime | | | |
| Being able to read the material anytime | | | |
| More practical and flexible in accessing learning | | | |
| Having easier to re-access the learning materials | | | |
| Being able to practice English via online | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clear explanation from lecturer | Adequate instruction to access the learning | | |
| Being more relax to do other activities | Being able to do other activities | | |
| Being able to work while studying | | | |
| Being able to access web of translation | Having access to many learning sources | | |
| Being able to access a lot of information and learning sources from social media platforms and articles | | | |
| Being able to access many references for learning materials and making argument | | | |
| Knowing how to make an argument, reject an argument, and speak completely | Improving motivation and speaking skills | Improvement opportunities | 19 |
| Improving motivation in learning speaking | | | |
| Being able to talk with foreigners via online | | | |
| Being able to practice and speak English | | | |
| Knowing how to speak correctly | | | |
| Getting the higher grade | | | |
| Improving communication technology skill | Improving technology skills | | |
| Being able to utilize social platforms in learning | | | |
| Reducing nervousness in speaking | Feeling less nervous to speak | | |
| Being more confident in speaking and expressing idea | | | |
| Increasing vocabulary in English | Improving vocabulary | | |
| Increasing the ability in time management and challenging self in speaking efficiently | Improving time management | | |

**Table 2**
Coding scheme for challenges.

| Main Codes | Categories from the Data | Negative Aspects Code | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Being unable to focus because of noise | Getting easily distracted | Distraction and Information Overload | 11 |
| Being unable to focus because of the distraction from phone notification | | | |
| Feeling bored and more burdened because more assignments were given | More assignments were given | | |
| Stress because of the difficulty in understanding the materials | Stress due to incomprehensible materials | | |
| Not excited because of inability to understand the materials | | | |
| Getting confused about the tasks because of the incomprehensible materials | | | |
| Having difficulty in understanding the material | | | |
| Being unable to answer the questions from lecturer because of poor signal | Poor connectivity | Technology and Internet Connectivity | 26 |
| Stress because of internet connection | | | |
| Having difficulty interacting with lecturers and peers due to internet connection problems | | | |
| Being passive because of bad signal | | | |
| Having trouble delivering speeches due to poor connections | | | |
| Having trouble listening and speaking due to bad connection | | | |
| Getting slower in answering questions due to bad signal | | | |
| Having difficulty joining the lessons due to poor signal | | | |
| Stress due to internet connection | | | |
| Having problems in internet network due to bad | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| weather | | | |
| Technical error on the social platforms used in the learning process | Lack of adequate social platforms | | |
| Consuming more battery and Internet data due to the application of online learning | | | |
| Having no access to practice speaking in public | Lack of practice | Limited Interaction and Inadequate Support | 8 |
| Waiting for responses from lecturers or peers about assignments | Lack of support from peers and lecturer | | |
| Having no one to have a conversation with | | | |
| Having limited access to interact with other students | | | |
| Limited time to submit assignments | Limited time in the learning process | | |
| Limited time to think about the answer | | | |
| Unable to understand the material due to insufficient time | | | |
| Limited time to ask about material and answer quizzes | | | |

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. The opportunities of online speaking class

One important fact about students' responses obtained from open-ended questions is that three categories of data emerged including effectiveness, online benefit, and improvement opportunities. Table 3 below presents the frequency and percentages of opportunities in online speaking class revealed from students' perspectives.

**Table 3**
Frequency and percentage of positive aspect in online speaking classes.

| No. | Positive Aspects of Code | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Effectiveness | 3 | 6.7% |
| 2. | Online benefit | 23 | 51.1% |
| 3. | Improvement opportunities | 19 | 42.2% |

*5.1.1. Effectiveness*

The effectiveness addressed by 3 students was served as one of the opportunities in learning speaking through online platform. This category was in connection with time and cost-effectiveness. One male student claimed that he could save time before classes began since it did not require much preparation to start learning. This finding indicates that online learning can help students manage their time effectively and efficiently (Hussein et al., 2020; Fidalgo et al., 2020). Another obvious benefit is dealing with cost-effectiveness. As another male student pointed out, the practice of online learning systems particularly speaking classes was worthwhile for putting aside more money inasmuch as university offered discounts on tuition fees. The fee deduction put forward by university is a form of empathy or moral responsibility towards students during the disruptive situations due to the emergence of covid-16.

In addition, the transportation expenses could also be saved since students did not necessitate to pay for commuting, as a female student remarked, "…I can save money on gasoline costs to go to campus." The administration of online classes handled from home paid out low-budget for students are not necessary to attend classes like regular classes requiring expenses for transportation. These favorable outcomes were amongst the positive outputs of online learning enforcement in which cost-effectiveness and efficiency are benefited (Fidalgo et al., 2020; Khan & Abid, 2021; Maqableh & Alia, 2021).

*5.2. Online benefit*

Since online learning is implemented during the recent outbreak, it offers benefits all along the learning process to achieve the multiple goals to sustain the education system (Castle & McGuire, 2010). Twenty-three students in the present study acquired the advantages regarding the online learning. It was found that 5 categories emerged in the code. Having easier access to class was the first category cited by 8 students. Among these, one male student clarified that he could listen to the explanation while being relax and lying on the bed. This implied that the students have flexibility in terms of place in joining a class (Potra et al., 2021; Mishra, Gupta, & Shree, 2020).

The easier access to materials and recordings constitutes the other online benefit declared by 7 participants. One out of 7 participants pointed out that she could access the learning materials anytime and anywhere. This concept is corresponding with several findings which unpacked easily accessible materials as an important advantage (Mukhtar et al., 2020; Hussein, et al., 2020). The adequate instruction to access the learning was also viewed as a benefit during online class. One student admitted that the lecturer explained the material clearly so as to facilitate understanding and access to the learning process. This satisfaction is a result that can be gained in an online learning environment (Fedynich, Bradley, & Bradley, 2015; Oraif & Elyas, 2021). Moreover, partaking an online class also allows students to do other activities such as working while attending class (Hussein et al., 2020). This was considered by 2 students

affirming that they could work while attending class which was impossible to do in traditional learning.

The last category included as the positive outcomes of online learning was having access to many learning sources.  It provides various effective sources of learning fruitful for students (Mukhtar et al., 2020; Potra et al., 2021). The participants acknowledged that the available learning resources helped them dig up more information related to current issues through social media, get the opportunity to access many supportive learning resources, and use web translators. These advantages can help them develop ideas and skills, particularly to boost their speaking skills.

### 5.2.1. Improvement opportunities

The improvement opportunity code is related to how the learning process improves through online learning (Potra et al., 2021). With respect to the current study, the finding disclosed that many students experience an increase in ability during the learning process. Nineteen out of 45 respondents obtained betterment on their skills. The categories in this section are divided into five terms.

To begin with, 8 participants could improve their motivation along with their speaking skills. Making effective use of social platforms in learning speaking can provide them with small groups of videoconferencing which allows them to speak more intensively than in regular class (Blake, 2017). Thereunto, the virtual environment in a videoconference can be exciting and useful for students (Khan & Abid, 2021). Along with this, students explained that they could increase their enthusiasm for learning as well as their ability to speak as a result of using the applications during online speaking lessons. As digital technology is utilized to organize and design learning experiences during the Covid-19 outbreak (Rapanta *et al*., 2020), upgrading students' technology skills is possible. Hermida (2020) briefly explains that the intensive use of social platforms and online educational tools after the transition to online learning can increase students' knowledge of technology. This is in line with the statement asserted by 2 participants that they felt happy finding a use for digital learning platforms for it could enhance their technology skills.

Furthermore, during the virtual process, students felt less nervous to speak. They felt a sense of confidence to express their ideas compared to conventional learning systems. This leads to the fact that students' self-efficacy increases when following online learning rather than studying with conventional modes. This view is consistent with several studies which have found that online learning can elevate students' self-efficacy (Ghabeli et al., 2021; Ningias & Indriani, 2021). Among the participants, 6 students pointed out that they felt more confident to speak virtually since there was no one around them. It is also undeniable that the speaking classes over virtual systems help them increase their vocabulary. This was benefited from the intensive utilization of web-based translation apps as a participant commented. Hence, utilizing online applications is fruitful for the enhancement of learners' language skills (Blake, 2017).

Additionally, students' capability of managing time effectively was a merit of the distance learning process. Two respondents convinced that they could organize and adjust their schedules properly and even be able to compete to the time running to deliver their ideas. By joining online classes, students can use their time efficiently (Fong Chang et al., 2021). This result is quantitatively proven by its significant higher average score than regular classes with P. values < 0.05.

### 5.3. The challenges of online speaking class

On the subject of the challenges, of the 45 data, the facets represented in the table below were the most recurrent stumbling blocks faced by the students. Table 4 presents the negative aspects along with the percentage and frequency of each category.

**Table 4**
Percentage of negative aspects in online speaking class.

| No | Negative Aspects | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Distraction and information overload | 11 | 24.4% |
| 2. | Technology and Internet connectivity | 26 | 57.8% |
| 3. | Limited interaction and inadequate support | 8 | 17.8% |

### 5.3.1. Distraction and information overload

The findings unpacked that distractions and information overload were experienced by participants resulting from varying aspects. Two students stated that they could not focus on studying because they were disturbed by noise from their home environment. They narrated that they found it difficult to seek cushioned place where they could activate the sound and camera during video conferencing. Yandell (2020) in his study also uncovered that it was arduous to find a comfortable place to study in online classes.

The other two students felt that the virtual class was unconducive and the nuance was uncomfortable. It was, likewise, found by Baticulon et al. (2021) that the limited space conducive for learning was encountered during the online learning and was involved in the category of domestic barriers. Moreover, the standout distraction was induced by the notifications from mobile phones as well (Yan et al., 2021) as remarked by a student as follows, "What makes me stress is that I cannot be focused because when I study, I use my phone and that makes us play phone while paying attention to the lesson."

In addition, a female student stated that large number of tasks seriously destructed them. She affirmed that she enjoyed online speaking classes, however after a long time, she felt bored and burdened on the recurrently given tasks. Worse still, she was of the view that the large amount of assignment assigned had haunted her and got her to be stressed and panicked. Lemay, Bazelais, and Doleck, (2021) contend that increased workload was the second-highest number of learning challenges after demotivation. Another negative aspect of the online session was the incomprehensive explanation of materials as asserted by 5 students. The strenuous subject matters discourage them to keep up with the learning and to accomplish the work assigned from college. According to Potra et al., (2021), the difficulty in understanding the material is linked into the category of information overload.

### 5.3.2. Technology and Internet connectivity

Technology and internet connectivity problems became the most cited among other challenges (26 students). These problems mainly comprise two categories; poor connectivity and lack of adequate social platforms. The category of poor connectivity was the most-faced problem. Twenty-four of the respondents complained that the unstable internet signal hampered them to go along with the learning process. The hindrances include the inability to answer the questions from lecturers. Moreover, they perceived that it was difficult to deliver speeches and listen to explanations as the voices were unclear or distracted. Studies reports that the lack of connectivity became a major abstraction in online learning along with data limit and data speed had troubled many students (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Allo, 2020; Salieva, 2020; Mahyoob, 2020).

The technical issues that arose amidst the learning were not only about the connectivity but also the social platforms used. Two students mentioned that the application often crashed, and consumed more battery and internet data. Hendrawaty, Angkarini, and Retnomurti (2021) on the study of EFL undergraduate students' perceptions of online learning application during the Covid-19 outbreak found that many students experienced difficulties in using the applications during the learning process. Excess consumption of quota internet and unstable connection became the issues of concern. Hence, educational instructors are recommended to apply two or three online learning applications which are favorable, economical, and being proficient by all students.

### 5.3.3. Limited interaction and inadequate support

Limited interaction and inadequate support referred to the fact that online learning cannot provide adequate time and space regarding communication and social interaction. These aspects of challenges include lack of practice, lack of support from peers and lecturers, and limited time for the learning process. Eleven respondents cited limited interaction and inadequate support as an issue of concern. Regarding the lack of practice, the unavailability of the real setting in speaking, specifically in public places,

hinders the students to challenge their own capability. A student remarked, "The thing that makes me stressed is when we can't explore more, and train ourselves to speak in public to know how far our capability and confidence in public speaking is." Lacking chance of speaking practices in a real environment has deterred them from enlightening their speaking skills and this unpleasant circumstance of learning has frustrated them. This response seems contradictory to the students' statements that they felt less nervous during speaking in a virtual class. This is because the online environment provides different nuance in terms of social communication from real-life situation. Khalil et al., (2020) uncovered a similar state of affairs about the ineffectiveness of online learning when carrying out the classroom practices via virtual platforms of learning. They claimed that learning experience in actual conditions such as human interactions is important for practice. This is related with the practice of speaking which requires direct interaction without an intermediary medium to measure a person's speaking ability.

The following category as revealed by 3 students was the lack of support from peers and lecturers. One of the learners clarified the matter by saying, "I find challenges when I have an assignment that I don't know. This is because I have to wait for responses from my friends or lecturers." The scarce opportunities to interact with classmates and lecturers prevent students from cross-checking to get a good understanding of the assignments they are working on. Less opportunity to receive feedback or answers for their questions in which they need to wait for a bit longer to get a response is a frequently appeared matter in e-learning (Kim, Liu, & Bonk, 2005; Mahyoob, 2020). Hereinafter, the limited time in the learning process also becomes the hindrance for students. Four of them testified that the duration in online learning was insufficient. Short supply of time results in incomplete descriptions of learning material affecting students' comprehension. The factor that has an effect on the lack of time was due to incompatible learning access devices. Saha, Dutta, and Sifat, (2021) argue that most undergraduate students rely on smartphones rather than other devices. The findings of this study also unveil the magnitude number of smartphone uses in accessing learning as shown in Figure 1 below.
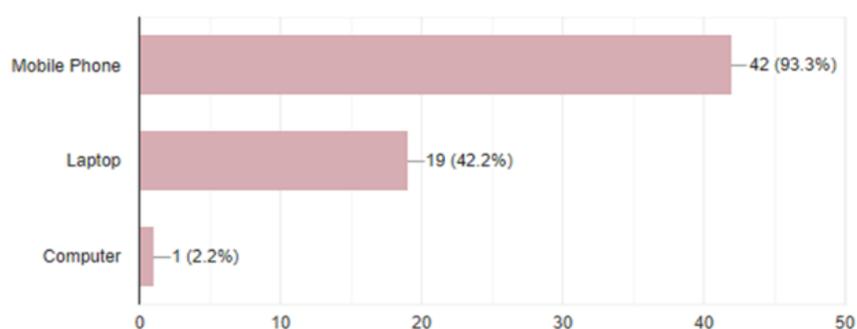


**Figure 1.** The devices used by students

Moreover, video conferencing consumes a lot of data quota which burdened students. From this burden, the length of time for learning needed to be reduced. If the conventional learning took about 50 minutes for one meeting, then it should be reduced to 30 minutes. Reducing the duration was considered as the best possible solution to overcome the issue regarding the large internet data consumption and incompatible devices during virtual meetings (Saha, Dutta, & Sifat, 2021). In consequence, the lecturers are enforced to sum up and shorten the teachings to cover up all the lessons. It was also hard for lecturers to spend certain moment for the question-and-answer session due to the insufficient term for explaining the material. These obstacles impede students to hold conversational practices.

## 6. Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has shocked and affected all aspects of human life. In only a couple of weeks, most educational institutions around the world had to emergently migrate to digital mode. These sudden shifts put pressure on all elements, but it also provides opportunities for lecturers and students in experiencing online learning (Hussein et al., 2020). The pandemic has given us an insight into proper preparedness to maintain the quality and continue the education process when unpredictable conditions hit. Hence, after investigating the opportunities and challenges of speaking classes via online platforms from students' perspectives, the present study showed the result of obstacle for learners such as information overload disorder, technical problems on the online social platforms used for learning, and internet connection issues as well as the lack of support of a learning environment and interaction between students and lecturers. Despite those cases, online learning still generates positive outcomes such as effectiveness in terms of cost and time, increased students' skills, and easier access to the learning activities. In light of students' responses, this study recommends that lecturers should provide online applications that are available for all students. In addition, it is also necessary that students pay attention on the devices used in accessing the learning and avoid using Smartphone for they cause many distractions from the app notification. It is better to use devices such as laptops or personal computers because they have fewer distractions.

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