

# ISRG Journal of Education, Humanities and Literature (ISRGJEHL)



## ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Edu Humanit Lit

ISSN: 2584-2544 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjehl/>

Volume – I Issue- VI (November-December) 2024

Frequency: Bimonthly



## THE PROBLEMS OF EFL STUDENTS IN ONLINE LEARNING

Urarat Parnrod

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Songkhla Rajabhat University, Thailand

| Received: 27.11.2024 | Accepted: 28.11.2024 | Published: 05.12.2024

\*Corresponding author: Urarat Parnrod

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Songkhla Rajabhat University, Thailand

### Abstract

*This research aimed to investigate the problems of online learning of 191 EFL students majoring in English in Thailand. The qualitative data was collected by using the open-ended questions to explore the students' problems relating to four primary skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, when learning online. Then the content analysis was employed for the data analysis. The findings revealed would be used as the guideline to help language teachers and others concerned such as educational technology professionals and school administrators to create a more impactful experience for students while studying online.*

**Keywords:** Problems, Online learning, EFL students

### 1. Introduction

Recently, several educational institutes in Thailand required the students to be back to the physical classroom. While the students are studying in their familiar way, traditional place-based classrooms, several teachers gradually pay attention to applying *blended learning*, also known hybrid learning which is a type of learning that combines online and face-to-face teaching, in their classes. Then, studying about problems of online learning by the students in the COVID-19 pandemic could be used as the basis to prepare their teaching in the digital age.

Online learning has been defined by several educators, for example, a system of learning where the students can learn via the Internet (Stewart et al., 2011), the learners' ability to use devices with a network to learn in anytime and from anywhere (Dhawan, 2020), and having learning experiences in either synchronous or asynchronous environments through using different devices (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

Also, the benefits and limitations of online learning have been proposed by several educators. They are summarized and presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: The Summary of Benefits and Limitations of Online Learning**

Benefit	Limitation
- Location flexibility	- Difficult to clarify or explain
- Can take up other jobs	- Lack of interaction
- Schedule flexibility	- Isolation
	- Technical issues
	- Dependency on the Internet

(Alshamrani, 2019; Shier, 2020; Concordia University, 2023)

Until now, although several studies have focused on the problems encountered by the students while studying online (Bibi, Alvi, Davis & Ishaque, 2020; Venkataraman, 2020; Yusuf & Jihan, 2020; Barrot, Llenares & Rosario, 2021; Yuzulia, 2021; Erlangga, 2022; Chan et al., 2024), it was found that mostly they used the quantitative method to gain numeric data and it is rare to find some gathering the rich data using qualitative approach. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the problems of online learning by EFL students majoring in English in Thailand.

## 2. Research Methodology

### Participants

This qualitative research was conducted at Songkhla Rajabhat University, Songkhla, Thailand. The participants of the study were 191 English major students in years 1 - 4 as shown in Table 2.

**Table 3: The students' problems about listening skill**

Problem	Year 1 (n = 53)		Year 2 (n = 48)		Year 3 (n = 45)		Year 4 (n = 45)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
● Unstable internet connection	<u>31</u>	<u>49.58</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>75.68</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>44.64</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>33.53</u>
● Having a lack of technical equipment, such as laptop, desktop computer, mics, speakers, headsets, etc.	6	32.11	2	17.4	6	33.13	10	22.22
● Having a lack of concentration	14	42.26	5	42.10	2	44.4	2	44.4
● The online environment	0	0	4	33.8	0	0	3	67.6
● Being confused while learning	0	0	0	0	7	56.25	5	11.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>23.96</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>67.91</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>78.97</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>78.97</b>

Table 3 presents the students' problems about listening skill when they learned online. It was found that *unstable internet connection* was reported by most of the students (Year 1 = 58.49%, Year 2 = 68.75%, Year 3 = 64.44%, Year 4 = 53.33%).

**Table 4: The students' problems about speaking skill**

Problem	Year 1 (n = 53)		Year 2 (n = 48)		Year 3 (n = 45)		Year 4 (n = 45)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
● Unstable internet connection	7	21.13	<u>14</u>	<u>17.29</u>	4	89.8	8	78.17

**Table 2: Summary of the Participants of the Study**

Year	Number	%
1	53	27.70
2	48	25.10
3	45	23.60
4	45	23.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.00</b>

### Instrument

The open-ended questions asking about the students' problems relating to four primary skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, when learning online were used for data collection of the study.

### Data Collection and Data Analysis

As for data collection, all the students were asked to complete the open-ended questions in the provided Google Form. Then the findings obtained were analysed and grouped by using keywords (Venkataraman, 2020; Barrot, Llenares, & Rosario, 2021; Yuzulia, 2021).

## 3. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study from 191 English major students about their problems based on the four primary skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing when learning online. are presented below:

• Having a lack of technical equipment, such as laptop, desktop computer, mics, speakers, headsets, etc.	10	87.18	7	58.14	<u>10</u>	<u>22.22</u>	8	78.17
• Competing with each other to answer the questions	2	77.3	1	08.2	6	33.13	<u>11</u>	<u>44.24</u>
• Speaking too fast by the teachers	4	55.7	2	17.4	1	22.2	2	44.4
• The online environment	-	-	1	08.2	2	44.4	-	-
• Having a lack of assertiveness for speaking and answering any questions	<u>12</u>	<u>64.22</u>	4	33.8	<u>10</u>	<u>22.22</u>	-	-
• Having a lack of interaction and engagement	9	98.16	7	58.14	7	56.15	6	33.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>02.83</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>00.75</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>89.88</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>78.77</b>

Table 4 presents the students' problems about speaking skill while learning online. As for the first-year students, *having a lack of assertiveness for speaking and answering any questions* got the highest percentage (22.64%), whereas the others report differently. Those are *unstable internet connection* is from the second-year students (29.17%), *having a lack of technical equipment and assertiveness for speaking and answering any questions* (22.22%) are of the third-year students, and *competing with each other to answer the questions* (24.44%) is shown by the fourth-year students.

**Table 5: The students' problems about reading skill**

Problem	Year 1 (n = 53)		Year 2 (n = 48)		Year 3 (n = 45)		Year 4 (n = 45)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
• Unstable internet connection	<u>2</u>	<u>16.98</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>29.17</u>	3	6.67	7	15.56
• Having a lack of technical equipment, such as laptop, desktop computer, mics, speakers, headsets, etc.	1	89.1	1	2.08	2	4.44	1	2.22
• Being unhealthy	7	21.13	2	3.77	<u>6</u>	<u>13.33</u>	3	6.67
• Inappropriate material for online teaching such as using too small font size	5	9.43	1	2.08	4	8.89	<u>8</u>	<u>17.78</u>
• Having a lack of concentration	6	11.32	2	3.77	4	8.89	3	6.67
• Having less practice	-	-	3	6.25	2	4.44	6	13.33
• Having less understanding about the lessons	8	15.09	4	8.33	5	11.11	7	15.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>81.69</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>56.25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>57.78</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>78.77</b>

Table 5 states the students' problems about reading skill while learning online. It was found that *unstable internet connection* is the main problem for the first year (16.98%) and second year (29.17%) students, whereas the third year and fourth-year students focused on *being unhealthy* (13.33%), and *inappropriate material for online teaching* (17.78%), respectively.

**Table 6: The students' problems about writing skill**

Problem	Year 1 (n = 53)		Year 2 (n = 48)		Year 3 (n = 45)		Year 4 (n = 45)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
● Unstable internet connection	4	7.55	3	6.25	-	-	2	4.44
● Having a lack of technical equipment, such as laptop, desktop computer, mics, speakers, headsets, etc.	8	5.66	4	8.33	7	15.56	9	20.00
● Having a lack of concentration	14	26.42	6	12.50	-	-	2	4.44
● Having less understanding about the lessons	6	11.32	4	8.33	5	11.11	6	13.33
● Having a lack of consultation in personal	-	-	2	4.17	2	4.44	-	-
● The students	1	1.89	-	-	6	13.33	6	13.33
<b>Total</b>	33	52.84	19	39.58	20	44.44	25	55.54

Table 6 presents the students' problems about writing skill when they learned online. It was found that the majority of the first (26.42%) and second year (12.50%) students revealed *having a lack of concentration as their main problem*, whereas the others (Year 3 = 15.56%, Year 4 = 20%) presented *having a lack of technical equipment as their main point*.

As presented above, it seems that the problems the students with different years encountered while learning online are in line with several studies in the past (Bibi, Alvi, Davis & Ishaque, 2020; Venkataraman, 2020; Barrot, Llenares, & Rosario. 2021). Besides, different main problems received from the students with different years of the study would be from the experience in online learning and the detailed information of the lessons they have to learn (Akram, Aslam, Saleem, & Parveen, 2021; Tulaskar & Turunen, 2022)

#### 4. Conclusion

This study attempts to investigate the English major students' problems based on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills while learning online. The findings revealed that the main problem of all students (Years 1 – 4) of listening is from 'unstable internet connection', whereas different problems were presented by the students from different years of the study. Based on the results, especially having the high percentage of problem about 'unstable internet connection' for all language skills excluding writing, it can be concluded that the internet connection is the main problem of the students' online learning. In response to this problem, *before teaching*, the teacher should ask the students to make sure whether they turn off social media while studying online to enhance them get back on the right track. *While teaching*, increasing the interaction by writing the message in the chat box and creating a thinking environment by letting the students the time think in the provided time would create more successful online learning and teaching. *At the end of the class*, the teacher can provide Q & A session for the students to ask orally or write their points in chat box to recheck their understanding about the lessons they learned. Teachers also need serious preparation to use several interactive learning strategies such as problem-based learning and

collaborative learning to boost their students' engagement in online class and increase the student-student interaction including the teacher-student interaction. Future research should explore the qualitative data from the students from different contexts such as different majors and different universities. Besides, using interviews to gain more in-depth information about problems and possible solutions is recommended.

#### References

1. Akram, H., Aslam, S., Saleem, A., & Parveen, K. (2021). The Challenges of Online Teaching in COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Public Universities in Karachi, Pakistan. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 20, 263-282.
2. Alshamrani, M. S. (2019). *An Investigation of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Education*. [Unpublished master's thesis]. Auckland University of Technology.
3. Barrot, J. S., Llenares, I. I., & Rosario, L. S. (2021). Students' Online Learning Challenges during the Pandemic and How They Cope with Them: The Case of the Philippines. *Education and Information Technologies*, 26, 7321-7338.
4. Bibi, N., Alvi, C. F., Davis, C., Ishaque, M. M. (2020). *Problems Faced by Students during the Online Classes due to Covid-19 lockdown; Comparison of Public and Private Sector College*. Doi:10.17051/likonline.2020.04.764683
5. Bibi, N., Alvi, G. F., Davis, C. J., Ishaque, M. M. (2020). Problems Faced by Students during Online Classes due to COVID-19 Lockdown: Comparison of Public and Private Sector Colleges. *Elementary Education Online*, 19 (4), 3095-3103.
6. Chan, S. M., et al. (2024). Online Learning Problems, Academic Worries, Social Interaction, and
7. Psychological Well-being Among Secondary School Students in Hong Kong During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Socioeconomic and Gender Differences. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 39(3), 1-

22. Concordia University. (2023). *Online, Academics, Career Services: The Pros and Cons of Online Learning and Online Classes*. Retrieved from <https://www.concordia.edu/blog/pros-and-cons-of-online-learning.html>
8. Dhawan, S. (2020). Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 49(1), 5-22.
9. Erlangga, D. T. (2022). Student Problems in Online Learning: Solutions to Keep Education Going on. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 3(1), 21-26.
10. Shier, M. (2020). *Student Success*. Victoria, B.C.: BC campus. Retrieved from <https://opentextbc.ca/studentsuccess/>
11. Tulaskar, R., & Turunen, M. (2022). What Students Want? Experiences, Challenges, and Engagement during Emergency Remote Learning amidst COVID-19 Crisis. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27(1), 551-587.
12. Venkataraman, S. (2020.) Problems of Online Classes. *International Journal of Academic Research Reflector*, 9(6), 1-3.
13. Yusuf, B. N., & Jihan, A. (2020). Are We Prepared Enough? A Case Study of Challenges in Online Learning in a Private Higher Learning Institution During the Covid-19 Outbreaks. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 7(5), 205-212.
14. Yuzulia, I. (2021). The Challenges of Online Learning during Pandemic: Students' Voice. *Wanastra: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 13(1), 8-12.