Obstacles and Efforts of Online English Learning in Elementary Schools

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Abstrak

Penerapan pembelajaran online di Indonesia akibat pandemi Covid-19 menimbulkan permasalahan bagi pihak sekolah, siswa, dan orang tua. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengungkap hambatan nyata yang dihadapi sekolah, siswa, dan orangtua serta upaya yang telah mereka lakukansebagi jalan keluar mengatasi hambatan tersebut. Penelitian deskriptif kualitatif ini melibatkan 7 kepala sekolah, 7 guru bahasa Inggris, dan 43 siswa kelas 5 beserta orangtua menjadi subjek penelitian . Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa semua kepala sekolah dan guru (100%) menyebutkan mereka merasa sulit untuk mengontrol siswa. Guru kesulitan menjelaskan materi adalah kendala yang disebutkan oleh 80% guru. Sulitnya siswa memahami pelajaran disebutkan oleh 64% siswa. Meghadapi kendala tersebut, kepala sekolah, guru, siswa, dan orangtua sudah melakukan berbagai upaya untuk mengatasi. Namun upaya mereka belum dapat mengatasi semua kendala yang dihadapi. Jika semua kendala sudah dapat diatasi, penulis yakin pembelajaran online dapat menjadi alternatif pasca pandemic Covid-19.

Kata Kunci: Kendala, upaya, pembelajaran online, sekolah dasar.

Abstract

The implementation of online learning in Indonesia due to Covid-19 pandemic raises problems for the schools, students, and parents. This research was done to reveal the real obstacles the schools, students, and parents face and the efforts they have done as the ways out of the obstacles. It is descriptive qualitative research with 7 school principals, 7 English teachers, and 43 fifth graders with their parents as the subjects of the research. The result shows that all school principals and teachers (100%) mention that they find it difficult to control the students. Eighty percent of teachers mentioned that they find it difficult to explain the material. It is difficult for students to understand the lesson was mentioned by 64% of students. Facing those obstacles, school principals, teachers, students, and parents have done some efforts as the ways out. Their efforts, however still do not solve all the obstacles yet. Thus, if all the obstacles of online learning can be solved, the writers believe that online learning can be used as an alternative learning technique after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: obstacle, effort, online learning, elementary school.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, online learning has been introduced several years before 1990. In a Video Conference held on 17 April 2020, Nizam, Plt Dirjen Dikti Kemdikbud (The General Director of Higher Education of Education and Culture Ministry) said that in Indonesia, online learning has been started since the end of 1080s and undergoes rapid development in the 2000s (Nizam, n.d.). Even though online learning has been introduced and launched several years before 2020, most of the related parties are not ready yet to implement it. At the beginning of 2020, in March, the Covid-19 pandemic started to spread out in Indonesia. To prevent the massive spread-out of Covid-19, the national and local government did not allow schools to run the conventional learning, direct face-to-face learning. The government urges schools and universities to change conventional learning into online learning.

Covid-19 pandemic "has forced" all parties involved in education to run the learning process by the network, online. The implementation of online learning raises some problems for schools, teachers, parents, and students. In general, not all teachers have adequate literation of IT, not all schools and students have the equipment and internet network to facilitate online learning. Similarly, not all parents have adequate IT literacy and are capable to provide facilities to their children for online learning.

This research tries to reveal complete and thorough information about the obstacles faced by the teachers, the schools, the students, and the parents. Besides it also tries to reveal the solutions they have tried as the ways out of their obstacles in online learning. Hopefully, this research can identify the detailed obstacles faced by all the concerned parties and the solutions they have made to solve the obstacles. After that, we can formulate proper alternative solutions. Thus finally, we can improve the education quality even though the learning process is done online.

This research is important because it is very probable that we will continue applying online learning in post-Covid-19 since there are a lot of advantages of online learning if we can find out the best solutions for the current obstacles.

As a foreign language in Indonesia, English is one of the compulsory subjects in junior high school until universities. One of the objectives of this subject is to help students to be able to communicate in English spoken and written. Various efforts are done to improve the quality of English teaching in Indonesia so that the objective can be reached. Among those efforts are the teachers' competence improvement program which is well known as PKG program, rewards for students with good achievement, and Curriculum changes.

In 1993, the national government officially declared that English might be taught in Elementary school as a local content by issuing Decree of Education and Culture Ministry of Republic Indonesia No. 060/U/1993 (*Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nomor 060/U/1993*, 1993). Though there were some pro and contra opinions about the decree, most schools and parents were happy with this policy. Since then, most elementary schools in Indonesia taught English as one of the local content. Even there are some kindergartens, especially in the cities, which teach English to their students. English teaching in Elementary schools in Indonesia continues to grow with all the limitations and conditions. Various studies on learning English in elementary schools are also busy, and the majority find that learning English in Indonesia is still not effective (Musiman et al., 2020).

In the 2013 curriculum, there was a shift in the status of English subjects in elementary schools. In this curriculum, it is stated that English may be taught in elementary school as an extra-curricular activity, not as a local mutant as stated in the previous curriculum. At first, this change in status had caused a little anxiety among English teachers in elementary schools, because some teachers thought that English subjects in elementary schools had been abolished in the 2013 curriculum.

Despite the shift in status to extra-curricular activities, the fact is that there are still many elementary schools that still teach English to their students (Habibi & Sofwan, 2015). Even according to (Diem, 2014)

learning English in elementary schools has become a trend in big cities throughout Indonesia, including in Palembang. This may not be separated from the wishes of parents who want their children to learn English from an early age. They believe that if children learn English from an early age, their future will be better (Pransiska, 2016). Mappiase et al (2014) said that English has now been used as a language in following the development of science and technology, as well as for better job opportunities (Mappiasse et al., 2014). This encourages the government and education policymakers in various countries to decide to teach English to students from an early age (Gradol in Iuliana (LUNGU, 2015).

Learning English in elementary school is certainly different from learning English in junior high or high school. In terms of age, elementary school students are still classified as children, in the context of learning English they are commonly referred to as Young Learners. The world of children is the world of play and imitation (Hashemi, Masoud & Azizinezhad, 2011). Furthermore, they said that children tend to only be able to concentrate in a relatively short period of time and have a lot of physical energy. They are therefore very attached to their surroundings and are more interested in visible physical phenomena. According to Lewis in Pransiska (2016) through games, children experiment, discover and interact with their social environment, and this is a fun activity that provides opportunities for children to practice their English in a relaxed and fun way. Therefore, English teachers in elementary schools are required to be able to facilitate learning English through various games and other activities that are fun for children.

During the Covid 19 pandemic as mentioned above, the learning process can only be carried out online (on the network). Online learning is certainly very different from the direct learning process outside the network (offline), so there is at least one additional competency that teachers must possess, namely Information Technology competence. This competency becomes very important because, during the learning process, teachers and students must be both able to use information technology equipment. In addition to information technology equipment, it is also necessary to have an internet network connection. Therefore, it is not uncommon for the learning process to be hampered by various obstacles.

Togatoro (2020) mentions four obstacles that are often encountered in online learning: 1) internet connection problems, 2) learning is not followed by all students, 3) assignments or projects are submitted late or even not done 4) students do not care (Togatoro, n.d.). On the other hand, we often hear complaints from parents who feel overwhelmed by having to accompany/guide their children to learn. Even a survey claims that 23 percent of teenagers experience stress due to online learning (Halidi, Risna & Fikri, 2020). There are so many obstacles/problems that arise from this online learning, so Anshori (2020) claims that online learning cannot run optimally because neither teachers nor parents are ready for it (Anshori, 2020). The same thing was also stated by Harmani, 2020 who said that online learning during the Covid 19 pandemic was not effective (Harmani, n.d.).

Some studies about online learning have been previously done. First, a study about the obstacles and solutions of online learning involving elementary school teachers in Bantul done in 2020 found out that most students do not have gadgets. They used their parents' gadgets when their parents were at home. As a result, the teachers used the Whatsapp group to send the materials and exercises to their students, after that the students send their works to the group (Anugrahana, 2020). In the second study, Putria analyzed the online learning process involving elementary schools in Sukabumi revealed similar things, most students do not have gadgets, they used their parents' gadgets when they were at home (Putria et al., 2020). Next, an analysis of online learning obstacles done by Abroto involving teachers and the fifth grade fifth-graders Jambi, concluded that internet connection become the becomest problem for the teachers in addition to the students do not have gadgets (Abroto et al., 2021). Still another, a case study by Rasidi involving 2 teachers and 5 students in Mataram, found out that the most dominant obstacles of online learning are; lack of teachers, competence in operating e-learning, limited internet access, and limited infrastructures (Rasidi et al., 2021). Still, about online learning, Rasyidiana also made case study a in MI Ma'arif Ponorogo (elementary school) about online learning problems, especially

in Science class. Her study which involved teachers, students, and parents concluded that the problems range from limited internet access, learning application, unfixed schedule, and parents' double roles (Rasyidiana, 2021).

This study is different from the previous studies in three things; it involves the school principal as one of the respondents, it studies the obstacles of online learning in English class, and it tries to find the students' efforts to solve the obstacles in online learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is descriptive qualitative in which the writer does not give any treatment to the subjects of the research. The main purpose of this research is to describe the state of affairs or the present condition as it exists (Kothari, 2004). In addition, this is qualitative, meaning that it concerns qualitative phenomenon, i.e. phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind.

The work procedure of this research; first, the researchers identified all the elementary schools in the sub-district of Labuhan Ratu which teaches English online and found out there were 7 elementary schools. All the school principals and English teachers of the fifth graders from these 7 elementary schools were involved as the subject of the research besides the fifth-grader students and their parents. Second, the researchers took random samples from each school proportionally with the number of students in each school because each school has a different number of students. The student's parents follow the random selection of their children. Thus, the researchers get 7 school principals, 7 English teachers, 43 fifth grader students (out of 250 fifth grade students), and 43 parents.

A questionnaire and interview were applied to collect the data. Construct and Face Validity of the instruments were analyzed by the experts (expert judgment) before they were used. The Questionnaire was sent by Google Form to the respondents who are familiar with it, and it was given manually to the schools for the respondents who are not familiar with Google Form. The researchers start to distribute the questionnaire on May 20, 2021. It took 2 weeks to distribute and to collect back from all the respondents.

 The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman techniques that consists of three stages; data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the data were classified and sorted into two classifications for each group of respondents – obstacles and efforts. Then, the data were displayed and analyzed. To ensure the validity and completeness of the data, the researchers interviewed the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the school Principals, the first major obstacle of online English learning is that it is difficult for the teachers to control the students. Even though the percentage is different, this finding All school principals of the elementary schools in Labuhan Ratu listed this problem. Only 50% of these school principals listed that their teachers do not know much about the learning resources that they can access to help their students. More complete information about the obstacles of Online English learning in elementary schools can be seen in the following chart.
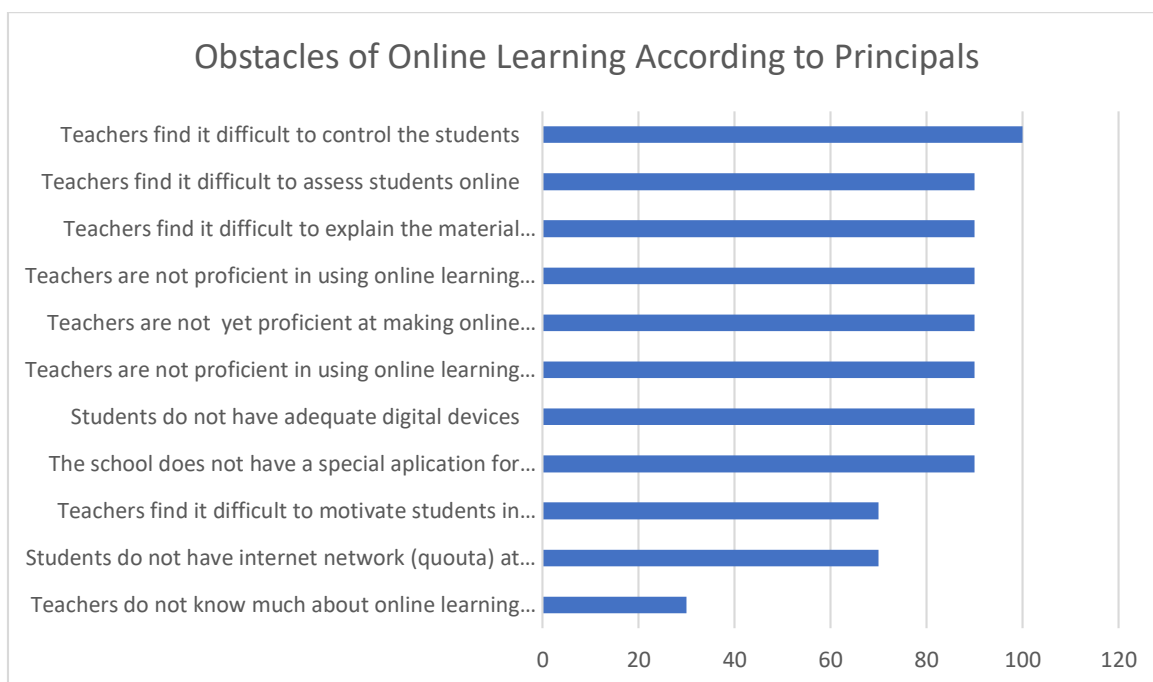
Chart 1. The Obstacles of Online English Learning According to School Principals

All respondents who are school principals mentioned that teachers find it difficult to control the students during online learning. In the traditional class, students might behave well because they are directly supervised by the teacher. They know the rule, that they have to behave well in the class, otherwise the teacher may get angry with them. In online learning, however, teachers can not supervise the students (Rodifah et al., 2021).

The obstacles faced by the schools and the students mentioned by 90 percent of the school principals are: the schools do not have a special application for online learning, the students do not have adequate digital devices for online learning. Only 1 out of 7 elementary schools in Labuhan Ratu, Bandar Lampung has developed its own online learning application which is named Rumah Belajar Muhammadiyah-Rumbelmu (Muhammadiyah Learning House). The students' obstacles in this research are similar to Anugrahana's who found that one of the main problems is the students do not have devices for online learning (Anugrahana, 2020).

There are five teachers' obstacles mentioned by 90 percent of school principals, they are: teachers are not proficient in using online learning devices, teachers are not proficient in using online learning applications, teachers are not yet proficient in making online learning materials, teachers find it difficult to explain the materials, and teachers find it difficult to assess students online. These problems are also revealed by Zain et al 2021 who found out that many teachers just used the WhatsApp group to send the materials and assignments to students, and they used very limited e-learning resources (Zain et al., 2021).

Two other obstacles mentioned by 70 percent of the school principals are; students do not have the internet network (quota) at home, and teachers find it difficult to motivate the students. Related to students' motivation, Zain et al 2021 find out that online learning where students can not interact with each other with their friends becomes the reason for their low motivation (Zain et al., 2021). In addition, even though some students have devices for online learning, they do not have any internet network or access (Anugrahana, 2020).

Only 30 percent of the school principals mentioned that the teachers do not know much about online learning resources. Teachers' limited knowledge bout online learning resources or e-learning makes their learning materials are monotonous and difficult for the students to understand (Zain et al., 2021).

English teachers have the same opinion as the school principals about the first major problem of online English learning, that is; it is difficult to control the students. However, they do not think that they do not know much about the learning resources to help their students, and neither do they think that they are fully capable of operating online learning programs. Here is the complete table about their responses.
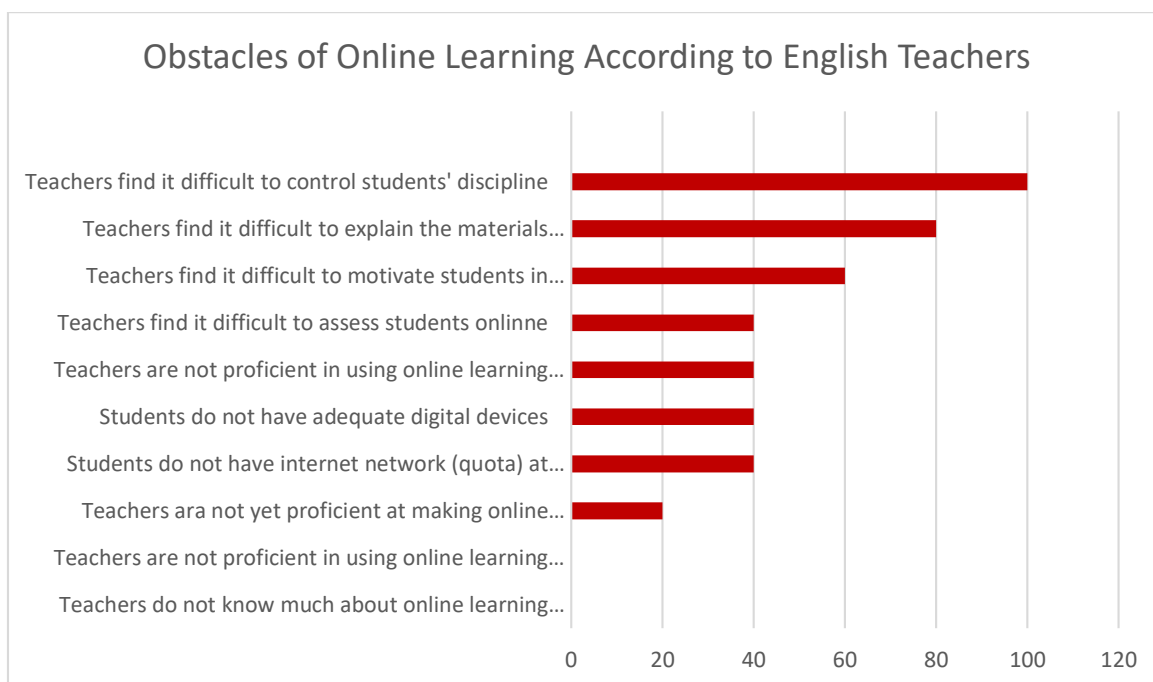
Chart 2. The Obstacles of Online English Learning According to English Teachers

The second obstacle mentioned by most (80 percent) English teachers is they find it difficult to explain the materials in online learning. Many pieces of research done previously (before the Covid-19 pandemic) about Teaching English in elementary schools in Indonesia found out that many English teachers in elementary schools are not qualified yet (Diem, 2014). Being unqualified teachers, it is very probable that they find it difficult to explain the materials in online learning. In online learning, teaching techniques, teachers are required to be proficient in using various technologies and applications (Zain et al., 2021).

Students have problems with online English learning. The four problems mentioned by most of the students are 1). It is difficult to understand the learning materials, 2). They can not ask directly to their teachers, 3). It is difficult for them to concentrate on online learning, and 4). They get bored. The complete problems chosen by the students are presented in the following chart.
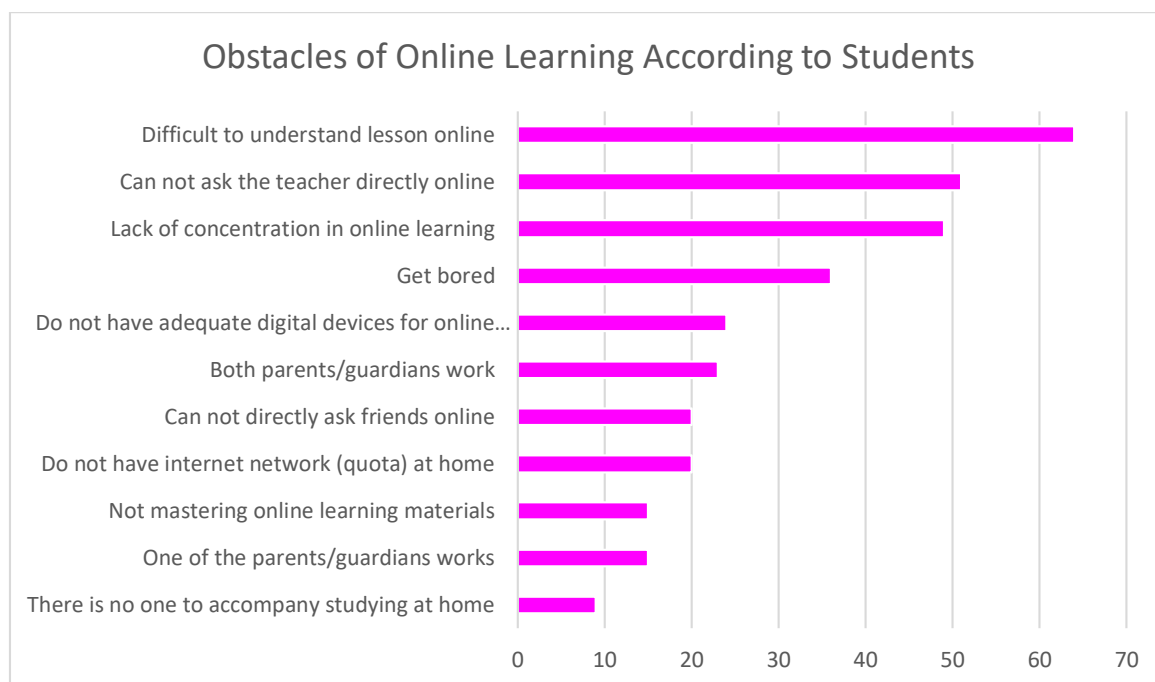
Obstacles of Online Learning According to Students

Chart 3. The Obstacles of Online English Learning According to Students

The main obstacle mentioned by 64% of students (the biggest percentage) is that the students find it difficult to understand the lesson in online learning. A similar study done in Surabaya found out that one of the obstacles in online learning is the students get difficulties in understanding the materials in addition to infrastructure problems (Puthree et al., 2021). Another study done in junior high school in Padang revealed that there are three main obstacles faced by the students in online learning, they are: the students find it difficult to understand the materials, poor internet connection, too many assignments from teachers (Sholichin et al., 2021).

Even though100% of both, school principals and English teachers mentioned exactly the same problems about online English learning, they have a very different opinion when they were asked about other things, especially something related to the teachers' competence. No teacher (0%) chose that they are not really capable of operating the online learning program, on the other hand, this problem was chosen by 90% of school principals. Complete information is presented in chart 4 below.
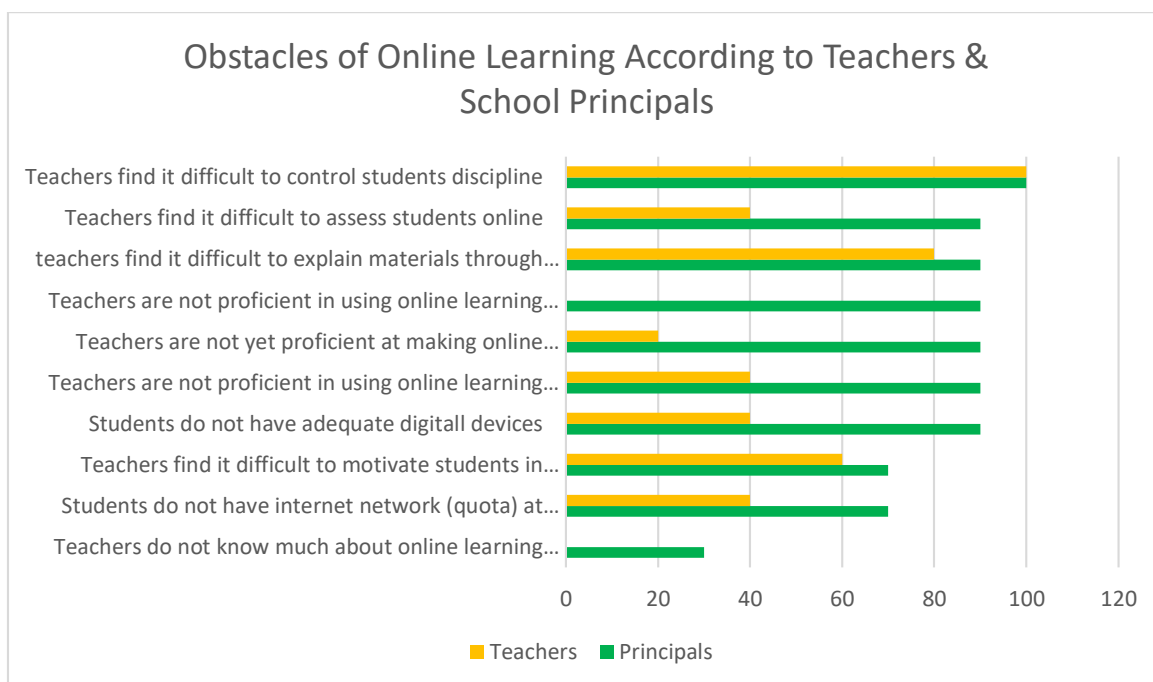
Chart 4. Different Perception about the Obstacles of Online English Learning According to Principals and Teachers

The two obstacles mentioned by most school principals and teachers are; teachers find it difficult to explain material through online learning, and teachers find it difficult to motivate students in online learning. If we pay closer attention to this point, 90 % of school principals and 80% of English teachers mentioned that teachers find it difficult to explain the material, it goes in a line with students' responses in which is 65 % of students (the biggest percentage) mentioned that they get difficulties in understanding the lesson.

Facing these problems/obstacles, each concerned party has tried to do some efforts based on their capacity. Three efforts have been done by all the school principals, they are: giving the internet credit (quota) to the students, lending books to the students, and letting the teachers use school computers to support online learning. This finding goes in a line with Rodifah's finding which concludes that one of the school principal's efforts is giving the internet credit quota (Rodifah et al., 2021). Some other efforts have also been done by the school principals, unfortunately, only 1 out of the 7 elementary schools facilitates free online LMS (Learning Management System). Detailed efforts done by the school principals are presented in the following chart.
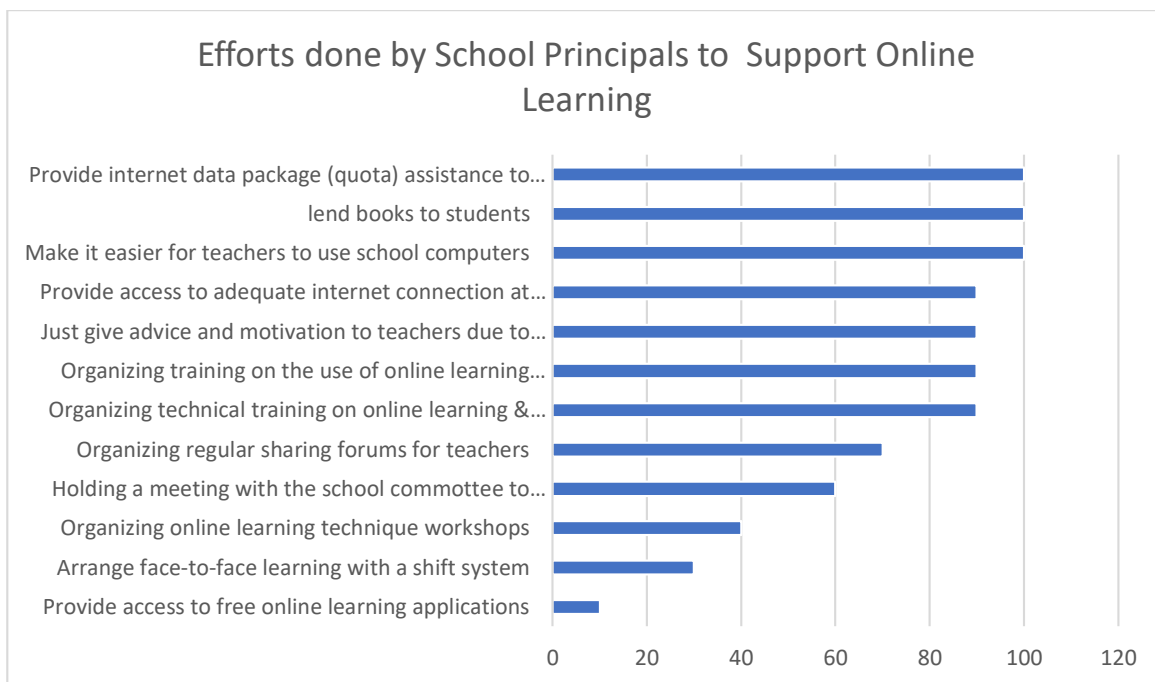
Efforts done by School Principals to Support Online Learning

Effort	Value
Provide internet data package (quota) assistance to…	~100
lend books to students	~100
Make it easier for teachers to use school computers	~100
Provide access to adequate internet connection at…	~90
Just give advice and motivation to teachers due to…	~90
Organizing training on the use of online learning…	~90
Organizing technical training on online learning &…	~90
Organizing regular sharing forums for teachers	~70
Holding a meeting with the school commottee to…	~58
Organizing online learning technique workshops	~38
Arrange face-to-face learning with a shift system	~28
Provide access to free online learning applications	~10

Chart 5. Efforts done by the school principals

Besides the school principals, teachers have also done some efforts as the ways out of the obstacles. All (100%) English teachers have facilitated online learning for their students by giving their students some exercises to do at home and by teaching their students through video conferences like zoom meetings. Yet, only 20 percent of English teachers in that schools mentioned that they learned how to make digital learning below.
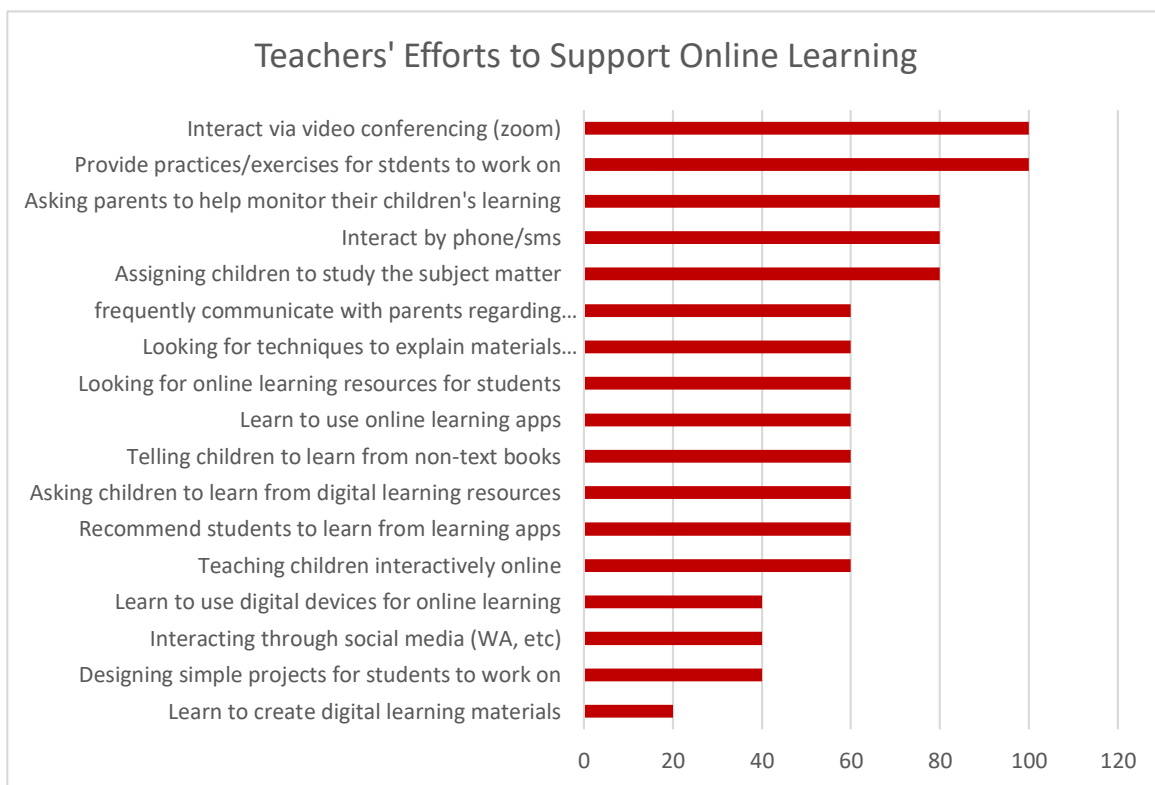
Teachers' Efforts to Support Online Learning

Effort	Value
Interact via video conferencing (zoom)	~100
Provide practices/exercises for stdents to work on	~100
Asking parents to help monitor their children's learning	~80
Interact by phone/sms	~80
Assigning children to study the subject matter	~80
frequently communicate with parents regarding…	~60
Looking for techniques to explain materials…	~60
Looking for online learning resources for students	~60
Learn to use online learning apps	~60
Telling children to learn from non-text books	~60
Asking children to learn from digital learning resources	~60
Recommend students to learn from learning apps	~60
Teaching children interactively online	~60
Learn to use digital devices for online learning	~40
Interacting through social media (WA, etc)	~40
Designing simple projects for students to work on	~40
Learn to create digital learning materials	~20

Chart 6. Efforts Done by the English Teachers

Even though the students said that they get bored of online learning, they also did some efforts to solve the obstacles. Asking parents to help them understand the learning materials and always doing the assignment

from teachers are the efforts mentioned by most students. Only 2 percent of the students mentioned that they tried to learn together with friends. The following chart presents the students' efforts.
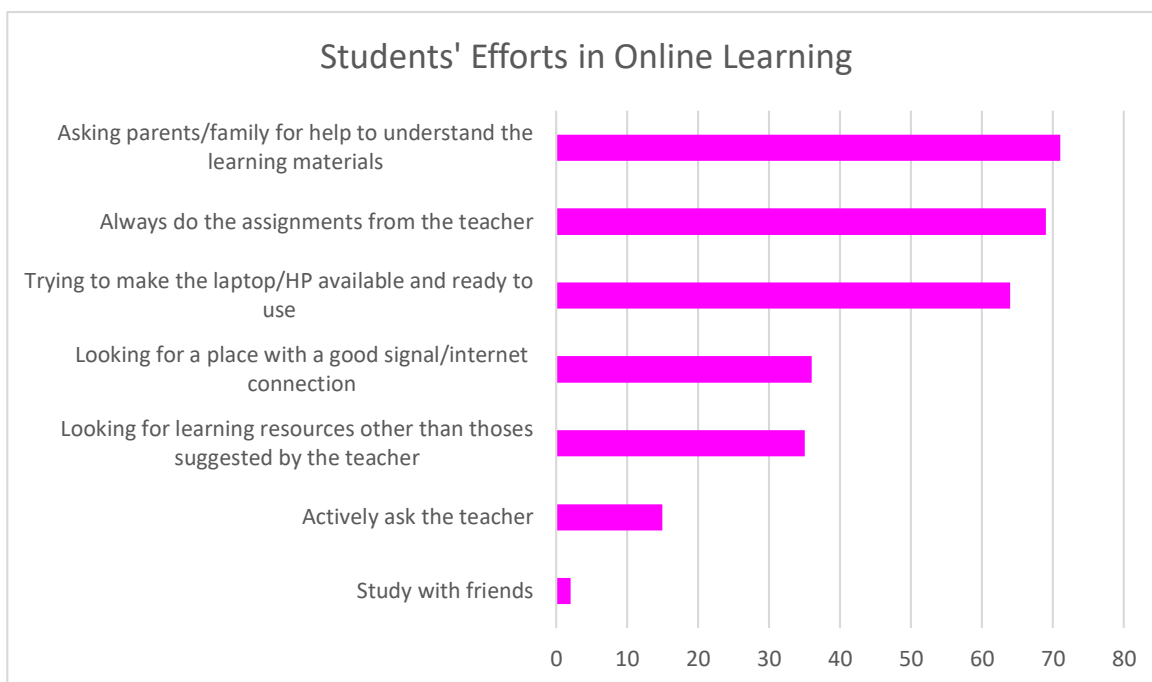

Chart 7. Efforts Done by the Students

Parents' efforts to find some solutions for online learning problems are presented in the following chart.
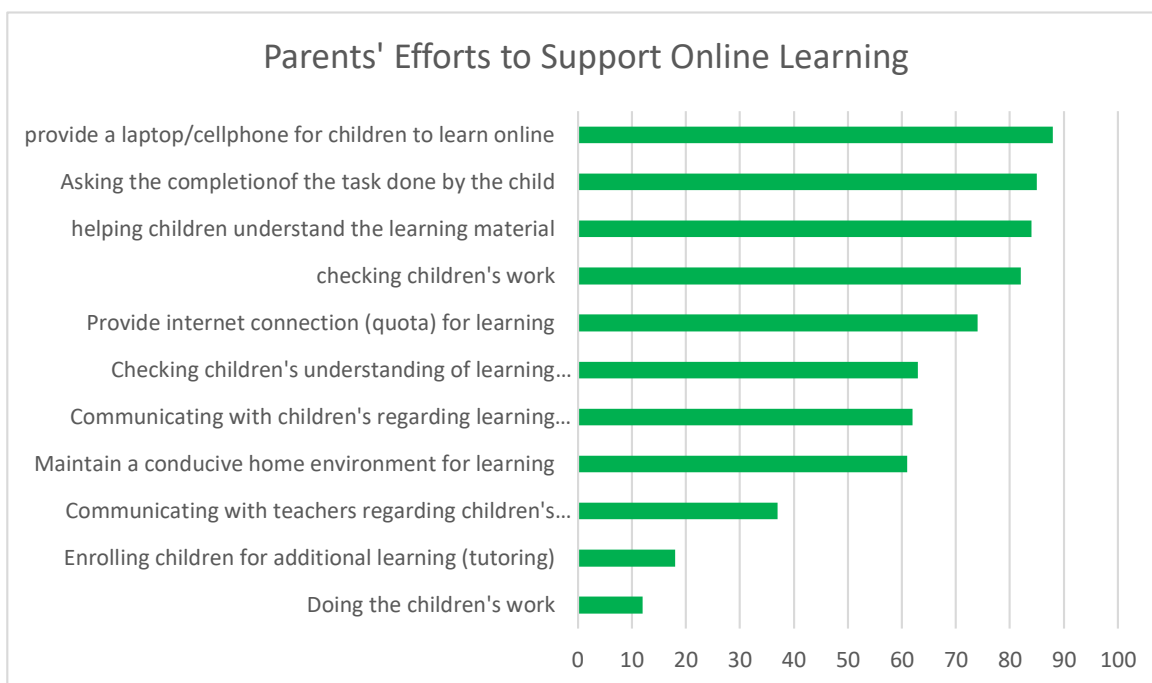

Chart 8. Efforts Done by the Parents

Facilitating gadgets for their children, monitoring their children in doing the school assignments, and helping their children understand the learning materials are the efforts mentioned by most parents, 88%, 85%, and 84% respectively. This result agrees with Nugroho's research finding which concludes that 100% of parents become the motivator and directors for their children in online learning (Nugroho et al., 2021). Unfortunately, there is 12 percent of parents stated that they did the school assignments for their children. They said that they

did it because they do not have much time to help their children understand the lesson and do the assignment. This finding also agrees with one of Putria's findings of online obstacles, that is parents are busy with their jobs (Putria et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Based on this research findings, the writers conclude that there are many obstacles to English online learning in elementary schools in Labuhan Ratu, Bandar Lampung. Not only students and parents, but also school principals and teachers face obstacles. The obstacles range from the lack of competencies of the people involved to inadequate infrastructure in schools and students' homes. Facing these obstacles, all people involved in online English learning have done some efforts mainly by providing the necessary infrastructure. However, there are still very limited efforts done to improve the competence of the people involved in online learning. If all the obstacles of online learning can be solved, the writers believe that online learning can be used as an alternative learning technique after the Covid-19 pandemic since there are several advantages of online learning compared to traditional learning.

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