BARRIERS FACED BY EFL STUDENTS FOR ACCESSING CYBER LEARNING IN RURAL SCHOOL

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to identify the obstacles faced by EFL students in accessing cyber-based learning in rural schools. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews with twelve students in grades VII to IX. The findings reveal several interconnected challenges, including low English proficiency, limited digital learning support, anxiety, and low self-confidence. Students also struggle with low motivation, minimal interest and aptitude in English, and the dominance of local languages. Difficulties in adapting to online learning are exacerbated by limited digital literacy and poor access to devices and internet services. Economic hardship further hinders access to necessary technology and connectivity. These challenges reflect a complex interplay of individual, environmental, and socio-economic factors. Therefore, it is essential for educators and policymakers to consider students' experiences in developing inclusive and context-sensitive strategies for EFL learning. This study also highlights the need for further research at the high school level to better understand the broader dynamics of cyber-based English education in rural settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Barrier or issue is the stage where a policy is designed and understood (Gilardi, 2020, p.5). Barriers are difficulties that come up naturally in human life, connecting different components and gaining prominence in the face of swift change and worldwide concerns (Horikoshi, 2023, p.1). A barrier is a difficulty encountered by humans that may be expressed and comprehended in basic terms using general human understanding of the circumstance.

EFL students are those who study English as a foreign language in a setting where it is not the primary language. Although this method is frequently criticized for producing confusion, in

countries like Pakistan and India, EFL has the potential to be a tool for learning English as a second language that promotes local culture while also contributing considerably to education and knowledge (Ud Din, 2023, p. 3). EFL students are people who study English in a setting where it is not the predominant language of communication, and their learning process is influenced by a variety of individual elements such as personality, motivation, and cultural background. These factors influence how well they understand and absorb English (Ulivia et al., 2023, pp. 123–127). EFL students are those who study and learn English as a second language in countries where English is not the native language, such as Indonesia, Thailand, and China.

Cyberlearning is the process of learning through the use of electronic devices and the internet (Dewantoro, 2022, p. 976). Cyberlearning is a modern learning approach that integrates digital technologies, such as virtual reality, to develop interactive, immersive and effective learning experiences (Levin et al., 2020, p.10). Cyberlearning is an educational technology that supports the teaching and learning process without taking the place of the teacher by offering digital materials, learning statistics, and an interactive learning environment.

The majority of rural schools teach students their local language as their mother tongue. However, local languages can be a barrier to EFL students learning English as a foreign language. Students in rural schools find it difficult to learn English because the local language is their mother tongue. The lack of exposure to English outside the classroom in rural areas also further reduces students' interest in learning it (Juárez et al., 2021, p. 136). This is one of the challenges faced by EFL students in rural school.

The low level of English proficiency among students is not only a challenge for them, but also for English teachers in rural schools. In the context of cyber learning, this issue is further complicated by limited digital infrastructure in rural areas, such as slow or unstable internet connections. In addition, many students have difficulty using electronic devices due to low digital literacy, which hinders them from effectively utilizing online learning platforms. Economic constraints are also an important factor, as many families in rural cannot afford adequate technological devices to support cyber learning.

Previous studies have addressed this issue, such as teachers' efforts in teaching English (Ergashevna, 2022; Khulel, 2021; Setiyadi, 2020), the importance of motivation in English language learning (Leona et al., 2021; Souriyavongsa et al., 2024), differences in learning quality and outcomes between rural and urban students (Boy Jon et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2024), the development of flexible curricula and training for English teachers (Yhomaly et al., 2020; Kilhoffer et al., 2023), and limitations in digital literacy (Bhatt & Upadhyay, 2021; Mudra, 2020).

Most previous studies have focused solely on the teachers' perspective. Understanding the students' perspective can help teachers identify the difficulties students face and adjust their

teaching methods, thereby improving their English language skills (Iryanti & Fitri Oviyanti, 2024, p. 2). It is important for research to include the students' perspective to ensure data accuracy. Additionally, this is useful for developing more effective teaching approaches in rural schools.

Previous studies have not discussed in depth the challenges of cyber-based English learning experienced by students and teachers. Teachers must constantly strive to develop students' talents by reviewing English learning methods (Singh et al., 2020, p. 45). This is because teachers play an important role as intermediaries in imparting knowledge to students. A deeper understanding of the challenges faced by teachers and students can help design more inclusive learning strategies. What are the barriers faced by EFL students for cyber learning in rural school? Raised as a question in this research.

2. METHODS

This researcher used qualitative methods. Qualitative research aims to understand and explain social processes by looking at the perspectives, experiences, and conditions of the parties involved (Ardiansyah et al., 2023, p. 3). Twelve students from grades VII to IX participated as respondents in this study through interviews. The interviews were conducted to explore the students' views on the obstacles faced by students in rural schools in learning English through cyber-based learning. Respondents were selected based on criteria determined by the researcher, including students with high, average, and low grades in English. The interview instrument included a collection of questions with 33 topics that were arranged into five primary categories: challenges, cyber learning, rural school, EFL students, and solutions. Data analysis used three elements: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researchers have identified several obstacles faced by students in rural schools. These findings were obtained through interviews with junior high school students in one of the villages. These obstacles will be described in more detail in this section.

3.1. Students' low level of English proficiency

Based on the interview results, students admitted that their English proficiency was low. Students had difficulty reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In addition, memorization and translation skills were also obstacles for students in learning English.

Student A: "I still have difficulty understanding English even though I use modern methods. My English skills are limited."

Student B: "The difficulties in learning English are speaking and writing."

Student C: "I have difficulty with speaking, listening, and writing in English."

Student D: "My obstacles in learning English are reading and writing, and I'm afraid of mispronouncing words."

Student E: "I find it difficult to understand, translate, and I forget easily."

The students said that their English skills were hampered because they had difficulty mastering writing, speaking, reading, and listening skills. Forgetfulness and translation skills also posed obstacles for rural students in learning English. In a study by Özmat & Senemoglu, (2021), one of the factors influencing the difficulties faced by students when learning English was the lack of effective language teaching approaches. EFL learners in rural schools indicate that writing, listening, and reading are difficult skills to master. This is in line with Khasawneh's (2022) research. In many studies, writing is considered the most challenging skill because it involves complex grammar, a wide vocabulary, and the ability to organize ideas in a structured manner. Additionally, students often struggle to develop coherent paragraphs, use proper grammar rules, and spell words correctly.

There are several reasons why many EFL students studying in rural schools face difficulties in learning English. The first is that students have difficulty understanding English because many of them are not familiar with foreign languages, making it difficult to master all skills, especially writing and speaking. In addition, students face difficulties in memorizing and translating English.

3.2. Lack of learning facilities at the rural school

Schools are faced with many barriers to cyber learning. One of the main obstacles in the education process is the lack of resources, as cyber learning requires adequate resources. Data from student interviews show that current facilities are not enough to support their learning.

Student A: "It is rare to use school facilities in learning English".

Student B: "Cyber learning is rarely implemented at school because there are no facilities".

As stated by Santoso (2025), school facilities and equipment play an important role in supporting effective learning. Thus, facilities in rural schools are inadequate as cyber learning has not been fully integrated. EFL students face problems such as internet network interruption, lack of technology tools such as infocus, computer lab, wifi, and absence of language lab. In addition, many students do not have mobile phones and do not understand how to use applications.

3.3. Students feel anxious for English learning

Many students are not confident and anxious when learning English. Students often experience anxiety and lack of confidence during learning. Student interview data shows that they feel anxious and have difficulty believing in themselves.

Student C: "I feel anxious because I can't speak English".

Student D: "I'm afraid my English score will be small and not up to standard".

Student A: "I feel scared that I won't understand English material and worried about the future". The study by Waluyo & Panmei (2021) did not determine whether anxiety in English assessment could have an impact on EFL students' English proficiency. However, the results showed that overall, improving students' English proficiency can contribute to improving their academic performance. Meanwhile, Ferdiant et al. (2023) argued that in the world of work, English is very important. This confirms the findings of previous research. The verdict is that many students still feel insecure and worried about what the future holds. Factors that cause this anxiety include fear of receiving poor or substandard grades, worry about the future, and lack of confidence to participate in English activities in class.

3.4. Students are not motivated

Motivation is very important for learning because it can increase students' enthusiasm, focus and perseverance in understanding the material. Without motivation, it is difficult for students to show a strong interest in learning. Data collected from students showed that there was no motivation.

Student B: "I'm not motivated to learn English because I don't really like it. English is difficult, it's hard to understand the explanation of English material".

Student C: "Every time the teacher explains the material, I lose focus".

According to Nadya & Pustika's study (2021), the role of family is very important in fostering students' desire to learn. They can experience decreased motivation, difficulty concentrating, and lack of commitment to completing their academic tasks if they do not have family support. This is supported by Anggraeni et al. (2024), who state that lack of focus is one of the factors that can affect learning motivation. When someone faces difficulties to concentrate, they tend to lose their interest and passion for learning, which in turn reduces their motivation to learn. So, the only thing that can affect motivation is concentration. Parental encouragement also has an effect.

3.5. The influence of mother tongue on English as a foreign language

In rural schools, English language learning faces some important issues. Students lack exposure and confidence when using English due to their habit of being more comfortable communicating in local languages, this is a major problem. The results of interviews conducted by the researcher with students prove this statement.

Student D: "I'm a rural person who usually speaks local language or Indonesian, so I find it difficult to learn English, especially when speaking".

Student A: "I find it difficult because the language used at home is Cirebon".

Student B: "I had difficulty adjusting when learning English, because English is a foreign language".

Kim & Kim (2021) shows that students' native language can affect their English comprehension and learning. This is in line with this research. It can be concluded that the fact of local language as a mother tongue affects students' difficulties in mastering English.

3.6. Students do not have talents and interests

Students who do not have interest and talent in the subject is one of the problems often faced by teachers. Students who do not have interest and talent in a subject tend to feel bored and unmotivated to learn. The interview results show that students do not have interest and talent in learning.

Student C: "I have no interest in English yet".

Student D: "My friends who are good at English are more diligent than me who doesn't understand, so I don't have a talent for foreign languages".

In short, many students still consider English unimportant, leading to a lack of interest and talent among students. The role of parents is also very important. Papadopoulos (2021) emphasizes that parents should help gifted and high-achieving children meet their social-emotional needs. As a result, strong parental guidance can serve as a solid foundation for developing students' interests and talents and helping them achieve their best academic and personal potential. This is also consistent with research conducted by Bai et al. (2022).

3.7. Students have difficulty adapting to cyber-based English learning

Students who have difficulty adjusting to modern learning are also one of the reasons why schools are not yet ready to implement cyber learning. Data collected from student interviews shows that students have difficulty adapting to cyber learning. This is a significant obstacle for rural students.

Student E: "I have difficulty adapting to cyber learning."

Student A:"There is no need for cyber learning because it is difficult to understand on a cell phone and I often forget. I prefer to use textbooks."

Student B:"*Students will continue* to not understand if they learn through cyber learning."

It is possible that students feel that cyber learning is less effective, which causes difficulties in adapting. However, these findings contradict Hadiati's (2024) research, which found that cyber learning encourages students to explore, discuss, and learn independently. Therefore, cyber learning is considered useful and in line with the independent curriculum.

3.8. The influence of family economics on cyber learning

Researchers have discovered new information showing how the financial circumstances of some students affect their education. Thus, the financial situation of students' families can influence cyber learning in rural areas. This phenomenon is based on data from interviews conducted by researchers with students as respondents.

Student C: "Yes, finances affect me. I use a lot of internet, so I need more money to buy data."

Student D: "Yes, family finances affect students' education."

The study conducted by Yan & Qi (2021) is in line with this research. Previous studies have shown that family financial conditions affect students' education. Families play an important role as the main source in building financial literacy and positive attitudes towards money from an early age, which has a direct impact on students' ability to manage their own finances during their studies.

4. CONCLUSION

To implement cyber-based learning in schools, EFL learners encounter difficulties. Data analysis shows that many students still struggle to master English. This is evident in their limited skills in reading, listening, speaking, writing, and translation, as well as their limited vocabulary and extensive vocabulary. Another factor contributing to students' difficulties in learning English as a foreign language is the use of the local language in daily life. Additionally, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, insufficient classroom space, and lack of motivation to learn are also issues. Furthermore, low interest and aptitude, difficulty adapting to internet-based learning, and the impact of family circumstances are other factors contributing to learning difficulties.

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