



## BARRIERS OF ONLINE READING LEARNING FACED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS

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### Abstract.

In the online reading classroom, the learning activity is different from offline reading learning. It engages the internet and technology to read, comprehend, and learn new information. However, those skills perceive some barriers in the process of learning in students during online reading learning. This qualitative study examined the descriptions of the barriers in reading online learning in a college from students' perspectives. This study was conducted in one of the private universities in West Java, Indonesia. The participants of this study were 7 college students and one reading lecturer. This study applied the interview and observation as the data collection. The finding of this study has resulted 5 barriers of online reading learning with some description for each barrier. Those barriers are; epistemological barriers, infrastructure barriers, attitudinal barriers, technical barriers, and financial barriers.

**Keywords:** Reading, Barriers, Online Learning

## INTRODUCTION

The popularity of the internet grows the online learning to be used in education field. As mentioned by Jones (2016), online courses are considerable used by the education field and becoming a common thing in modern's day. The availability of the internet and technologies have enabled it as a vital part of conducting online classroom (Luyt, 2013). It engages the internet and technology to read, comprehend, and learn new information (Leu, Zawilinski, et al., 2005). The new online reading required the internet have been referred to as "new literacies" (Leu, Castek, et al., 2005).

However, these new skills (doing some multitasking while learning, comprehending the text without live discussion, utilize technologies) and strategies show some obstacles in the process of learning in students during online reading learning. Online reading is the most perceived many barriers faced by the learners than the other skills (Uri & Coiro, 2014; Leu, Zawilinski, et al., 2005). There are new complexities to online reading comprehension that required the students to comprehend the text in an online way (Coiro & Schmar-Dobler, 2005). Then, many students continue to struggle with their reading in this online classroom (Castek et al., 2011).

The preliminary research conducted in one of the high schools in Indonesia obtains the problem. From the observation for 40 minutes in an English reading classroom through Zoom platform and Google Classroom, it was found that the students struggle to adjust themselves in reading online. They did multi-tasking activities during the online classroom. For example, students required a long time just to determine the topic sentence of the text, because they need to translate it while reading it on the online screen. So, they needed to close one window to open another.

Consequently, students are not well-engaged in their learning process. It is also supported by Doyumğaç et al.( 2021), that online reading does not provide equal opportunities because students are exposed to the lack of technology and access limitations in online educations. The barrier of online reading learning should be discovered besides its easiness. We cannot overlook that there will be some barriers to online reading learning. Because it will hamper the effectiveness of online reading learning when we don't aware of the barriers themselves. As supported by Abramenska (2015), it is a need to define the real difficulties that exist in students when taking online courses to provide successful online reading learning.

Due to those reasons, this study emerges to investigate the possibilities of other descriptions that contribute to the barrier of this matter. It can support different kinds of learning settings and activities, and how to be accepted in different cultures and traditions of reading (Alhunaiyyan et al., 2016). Discovering the barrier in online reading learning will prevent some obstacles in the learning process by the students. As stated by Muilenburg & Berge (2014) understanding students' barriers when attempting online reading learning can help individuals in their learning by understanding and improving their particular obstacles'. This assumption provides another motive to conduct this study in attempt to figure out the other descriptions of online reading learning barriers to establish an effective online reading learning.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Online Learning**

Online learning is a kind of educational instruction in which the technologies and the internet as the medium for their learning process. Online education is a systematic process in which computer and internet technologies are created and proliferated to overcome the physical barriers in learning process (Anwar et al., 2020). It helps the education system to improve the accessibility in learning through the availability of the technology and the internet. As mentioned by Luyt (2013), the availability of the internet and technology have enabled the education circumstances as a vital part of imparting preferable education.

The availability of internet and technology establish the learning process efficient. It produces a new way of learning process that recognizes as online learning. In online learning we can assist learning providers to manage, plan, deliver, and track the learning and teaching process (Almaiah et al., 2020). As an example of the efficiently in online learning is it enables the student to reach the learning resources at any time and any place (Khoury et al., 2011). Students can easily access the required learning materials from anywhere, whenever they are free. Additionally, learners can also get reduction in fee structures for online learning classes.

### **The Barriers in Reading Online Classroom**

The growing of e-learning is not surprising that some research has turned to specifically in addressing potential barriers in online learning. Although there are a lot of study that investigated in the successful of online learning, still the online learning may produce some barriers. Barriers that were reported both in internal and external barriers include a lack of time available, a lack of appropriate funding and a culture that resists adoption of online learning (Becker et al., 2013).

Barriers in online learning are problems or situations that prevent learners from accessing programs related to the learning process. It makes difficult for learners to engage in study or make it hard for learners to concentrate and learn online. As stated by Qifu (2013), barriers in online learning is a condition that cause the student in difficulty to well-engage in learning process. The barriers faced by learners are diverse and complex. It can be different from student to student and even from day to day, which may be emotional, mental and physical health concerns; may be attitudinal, organizational or practical; may be financial issues, and etc.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative study was mainly employed since it seeks to obtain a rich and holistic description of the descriptions of online reading learning barriers (Ary et al., 2010). It was needed to examine this phenomenon from the perspectives education environment for the qualitative study (Creswell, 2012). A case study is carried out in this study as the design of this research. The case study is appropriate in this study to arrive at a detailed explanation and understanding of the matter of the barriers in online reading learning (Ary et al., 2010). In order of that, the case study is adopted in this study. Therefore, students' online reading barriers are figured out in the study, wherein it is a particularistic situation. In the case study, it represents some other issue under investigation and the researcher believes that this particular case can provide insights to understand the issue (Ary et al., 2010).

This study was conducted in one of the private universities in West Java, Indonesia. The participants of this study were the students and the one lecturer, who has their reading course as their subject in college. The participants were also considered at the college level because of their material complexity perceives in this study, particularly in the online reading subject. The other, the maturity of the college students is also considered in this research. Concerning the participants of the study, the researcher selected 7 students of 1<sup>st</sup> year in university. Those participants selected in purposive sampling – researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The lecturer also considered being interviewed in this study, to confirm the interview's results from the students.

The data in this study were collected with interviews and supported with observation in the online meeting about the barriers in conducting online reading learning to college students. The interviews were held in two ways, in-person and telephone, due to government rules about Covid-19 prevention by 7 interviewers. The first interview way, directly in person, was conducted by following health protocols the government's recommendation such as wearing masks, hand sanitizer, and keeping physical distancing. About 25 interview questions were asked to the students. This research directly interviewed those seven students. The researcher attempts to establish the data from the interview through this observation. The researcher observes the classroom activities and notes them. The observations rely on narrative or words to describe the setting, behaviors, and interaction (Hasan, 2002). The data of this study will be analyzed by transcribing the recording of the interviews' and the observations' results. The transcribed data will be coded in the next data analysis. The coded of the data will researcher used as the description of the result.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this part, the researcher presents the result of this study to answer the research question. The data of this study was gained from the interview and observation. It was done to 7 college students who study online reading and its lecturer. A semi-structured interview is adopted in collecting the data from the interview. After the data from the interview were gained, the researcher did the observation to convince the data of the

interview in an online reading classroom. From the observation checklist and field notes the researcher found some barriers and descriptions in barriers in online reading learning. There are found 5 barriers and the descriptions for each barrier are related to the barriers of online reading learning in students. It is epistemological barriers, infrastructure barriers, attitudinal barriers, technical barriers, and financial barriers. This table shows these all barriers and their descriptions;

No	Barriers	Descriptions
1.	<b>Epistemological</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to determine between the Topic Sentence/ Main Idea and supporting sentence</li> <li>• Difficult in analyzing the reference and inference</li> <li>• Difficult to determine the similarity and the differences between the 2 texts</li> <li>• The text is too long</li> <li>• The text is monotone</li> <li>• Difficult in recognizing certain vocabularies</li> <li>• Struggling in comprehending the text/catching up the meaning</li> <li>• Lack of feedback</li> <li>• Lack of reviewing the text/material</li> <li>• Unrealizing their own progress</li> <li>• Uninteresting discussion</li> <li>• The same pattern of the learning process (boring learning activity)</li> <li>• Students become the listener/passive</li> <li>• Teacher centered learning</li> </ul>
2.	<b>Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The same text formats</li> <li>• No interesting visual/illustrative in the text</li> <li>• Poor quality of on screen</li> <li>• Poor quality of the text</li> <li>• The lecturer did not provide PPT</li> </ul>
3.	<b>Attitudinal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of motivation</li> <li>• Lack of students' cooperation</li> <li>• Submitting assignments is just a formality</li> <li>• Afraid in participating in learning activities</li> <li>• Prefer to ask a friend than a lecturer</li> <li>• Undiscipline/ not responsible</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Technical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of preparation (pre-reading)</li> <li>• disorganize Virtual Meeting</li> <li>• disorganize texting/chatting in What's App</li> <li>• lack of lecturer's technology skill</li> <li>• Bad internet connection</li> <li>• Unexpectedly blackout electricity</li> <li>• Multitasking in reading online</li> <li>• Misunderstanding communication</li> <li>• Limited virtual meeting</li> <li>• Double group platform</li> </ul>
5.	<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consuming data internet</li> <li>• Limited certain supported technology</li> <li>• Limited disk/memory</li> </ul>

From the result of the interview and observation, it found that the students have their barriers in online reading learning. The researcher investigated it and categorized it into 5 barriers with its descriptions. Each barrier was adopted from the previous study and it found there are new barriers in online reading learning.

In epistemological barrier, students showed that they have a problem in determining between the main idea and the supporting sentence in a text. The main idea is the main of what is the entire paragraph about (Ad et al., 2014). The writer put their main point in the main idea. Then, the supporting sentence is where the additional information from the main idea is. In this part, students have a difficulty in determining it. Moreover, analyzing the reference and inference as well became the barriers in online reading learning for students. Analyzing the reference, the students are required to represent the pronoun that intent by the writer. For the inference, they should extend limited information given by the author to a logical conclusion (Ad et al., 2014).

Furthermore, in this epistemological barrier, students are struggling to determine the similarities and the differences between the two texts given by the lecturer. When they are faced with two different texts and they are asked orally or written they showed difficulties. They said that it is because they are struggling in understanding the text. It can be because of the vocabulary that is hard to understand or the quality of the text itself.

Some of them delivered that, the text was sometimes too long and it was monotone. Students very often find it very boring when dealing with reading a text (Berardo, 2006). Further, they are not given feedback or reviewing the material that has been taught before. Hence, they are not realizing their learning progress in this online reading learning. The lack of feedback from time to time will make learning goals are not achieved properly (Khoury et al., 2011) Whereas, they sometimes attended a virtual meeting, they think that the meeting was not going interesting. They did the same pattern of online reading learning.

Overall, the epistemological barrier considers as the most barrier faced by college students in online reading learning. The excuse of this is still related with the descriptions in this epistemological barrier. This research found the reason for this barrier is because the lack of feedback and lack of reviewing the reading material in online learning. This situation generalized the students to unrealizing their own progress in online reading learning. They felt that, with this reason, it made the learning activity in online form felt bored.

The second barrier is the infrastructure barrier. It deals with the facilities between students and lecturers in attending online reading learning. The barrier comes from tools that are required for the learning activity. The problem is more on the tools and technology which are related to the infrastructure (Sari & Muljo, 2012). Tools that are required in learning ensure the successful implementation of online reading learning (Almaiah et al., 2020). In order of that, all technological things or tools for online learning activity should be taken into consideration during the implementation process.

However, in this barrier students possess the barrier. They have trouble with the formats of the text. They are in objection to the format of the text given by the teacher. According to the observation, the researcher found that the lecturer scanned the text into a JPG from a book. Then, the lecturer will share it with the students. According to

the students, this way is not appropriate to share the text as the learning material in the same format in every meeting.

Perceive to the next barrier is from the attitudinal barrier. Attitudes come from society, environment, students, and teachers themselves and can be made visible in the political agenda or in how people perceive e-learning as not being 'as good as face to face teaching. In regards to the students' and lecturer's attitude while learning online reading. Influence the process of online reading learning in this case. It can become a major challenge for e-learning if not addressed openly (Arkorful, 2014). It is exactly what this research also found. The attitudinal barrier is the major barrier that persists as the barriers in online reading learning.

In the learning process, students have lack motivation to do their obligation to learn in the online form. Students lacking awareness of internet skills and the reluctance of students in taking responsibility for their e-learning (Almaiah et al., 2020). Students think that a positive attitude toward e-learning is not a big deal. Students feel that their success in real life could be affected by less opportunity for direct interactions (Nugroho, 2020).

This barrier relates to the ability to perform everything needed in online reading learning. In this part, the researcher found the barriers related to the skill or how it is going when learning reading online. It deals with how the student performs their online reading activity. As discovered in the interview and observation, students are lack preparation in conducting the online reading learning. As an example, students do not focus when the lecturer gave an explanation or asks a question to the students, they could not answer it correctly. They can manage themselves to prepare every preparation needed for the classroom. Lack of student preparation can cause not ineffective learning (Abuhammad, 2020).

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The last barrier is the financial barrier. This barrier deals with the requirement for attending online reading learning. According to Abuhammad (2020), posts (49, 17%) raised the issue of financial barriers, which were subdivided into two subthemes: (1) inability to buy technology (31, 63%) and (2) inability to pay for internet services (18, 27%). Same as this study, most of the students delivered that they require supported technology and internet services for their online reading learning. This also became a barrier for students. Once they do not have internet services or a tool such as a laptop or a smartphone, they cannot attend their online reading learning in the appointed. Slow-speed internet is a problem usually encountered in doing the tasks (Mulyadi, 2018). Besides, a high-speed internet connection is necessary to join an online reading classroom (Cakrawati, 2017). Students who did the assignments require a good-quality internet connection or a large amount of data usage, which both add to the cost of distance learning online.

## CONCLUSION

This study concluded that from 5 barriers found 3 most barriers faced by college students in online reading learning. The first one is the epistemological barrier. This part indicate that the quality of material and the quality of the lecturer affect the online reading learning process. It is seen that students stated some the descriptions of the epistemological barriers related to the material and lecturer. The second is from technical barrier. This study concluded that the technology mastery affects in online reading learning. In this study found that when both teacher and student cannot master the technology it will make as a barrier in their online reading learning. The last one, the financial barriers is the last most barriers that relate with some cost for the study. The cost in this study evidently affect the learning process. Hence, it becomes the barriers for the students in the process of online reading learning.

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