English Language Learners' Challenges and Feasible Solutions Amidst Covid-19: A Narrative Review

Rofiza Aboo Bakar, Nur Ilianis Adnan
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Farina Nozakiah Tazijan
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

Ikhsanudin
Universitas Tanjungpura, Indonesia

Sudarsono
Universitas Tanjungpura, Indonesia
Corresponding Author Email: rofiza@uitm.edu.my

Abstract
The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the educational landscape across the world, and it has caused significant disruptions in the teaching and learning process. English Language Learners (ELLs) are a vulnerable population that has been heavily impacted by this pandemic. The pandemic has presented a unique set of challenges for ELLs, such as limited access to technology, social isolation, and other difficulties. Despite the significant impact of COVID-19 on ELLs, there is a lack of research on the challenges they faced and the coping strategies they used to navigate the pandemic, which indicates a need to explore ELLs' unique experiences. The objective of this study, thus, is to examine the challenges faced by ELLs during the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping strategies they utilized to overcome these challenges. This study adopts a narrative review to synthesize and analyze existing literature on ELLs' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The review identified several challenges faced by ELLs, including limited access to technology and reliable internet, and social isolation leading to lack of motivation and engagement. Feasible solutions to their challenges included having resources and support for technology and internet access, as well as having regular feedback and encouragement from their lecturers. The review accentuates the need for university personnel and educators to develop innovative and responsive strategies to support ELLs during the pandemic and beyond.
Keywords: English Language Learners, Covid-19, Challenges, Solutions, Narrative Review.

Introduction

Since the COVID-19 pandemic first appeared in March 2020, it has significantly harmed the world. Worldwide, the virus has had a direct and indirect influence on people's life, prompting the temporary ban on routine activities like travelling and outdoor gatherings to reduce the spread of the virus. To stop the virus from spreading, lockdowns and the complete closure of educational facilities had been implemented (Bana & Sarfraz, 2020; Flores et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2021). The global education system had witnessed a profound impact and was under much stress as a result of this closure, compelling educators to swiftly change to online teaching and learning (Azhari & Fajri, 2022; Gumede & Badriparsad, 2022). Learning management systems and video conferencing platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet (Bakar & Halim, 2022; Siddiqui & Ahmad, 2022) have been frequently used in online teaching and learning. Also, several institutions have enhanced their capacity to provide course materials online, included students in the learning process, and carried out assessments to make sure that the learning process would not be impeded (Nayman & Bavlı, 2022; Utaminingsih & Pratama, 2022). Despite the virtuous move, this change has brought attention to the challenges and disparities that still exist in education, as certain learners have found it difficult to get access to the tools and materials they need to fully engage in online learning.

The digital gap has been one of the greatest challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about. Many low-income learners have experienced the struggle of not having or lacking the access to dependable internet connections and the requisite technology to take part in online learning (Bakar & Tazijan, 2022; Saha et al., 2022). For many of them, this has led to an uneven educational experience, escalating the already-existing educational gaps.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a profound effect on students' motivation and mental health, since they are more stressed, anxious, and socially isolated (Bakar & Tazijan, 2022; Theberath et al., 2022; Volpe et al., 2022). Due to this, there have been calls for more assistance for students' mental health and welfare, and some colleges and institutions have started to offer counselling and other mental health services online (McGorry et al., 2022).

While there is a growing body of research on the impact of Covid-19 on learners worldwide, there is limited research on the unique challenges faced by English Language Learners (ELLs) amidst Covid-19 (Shaw, Kuwahara & Gao, 2023). For example, because of the abrupt shutdown of schools and institutions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, ELLs have faced major difficulties in developing their English language skills, notably in speaking (Yen & Mohamad, 2021). Online learning environments have posed a great challenge for learners to participate in online classes and interact with their classmates and teachers due to communication and language issues (Müller & Goldenberg, 2021). Before the pandemic, learners received in-person language training but during the pandemic, they had to shift to an online learning environment, which could be more challenging for those who had trouble speaking English. The transition to online learning had made this issue worse because ELLs may feel nervous, unconfident, or inhibited when communicating in the target language (Yen & Mohamad, 2021). There were also limited possibilities for language development; the epidemic had resulted in school closures and less chances for social interaction, which is essential for any language acquisition. It has been challenging for ELLs to practise their English language skills and learn new vocabulary because they could not connect with classmates or teachers (Müller & Goldenberg, 2021). This are only some of the examples of many other challenges that have befallen them.

As suggested by Lazarin (2022), further study is required to fully understand ELLs' challenges during the pandemic and feasible solutions implemented to allow them to continue with their learning since these learners are a diverse community with unique requirements. Learning about their challenges will make educators be more prepared to come up with solutions that can benefit the learners should any tragedy like Covid-19 happens again. Thus, this narrative review examines the challenges faced by ELLs amidst Covid-19 and the solutions they used to cope with their crises.

Methodology

A search was conducted on the Scopus and Google Scholar databases from March 9, 2023, to April 8, 2023, using a combination of free text and controlled vocabulary, with keywords such as "English language learners," "challenges," "coping strategies," and "COVID-19". In addition, a manual search was performed by examining the references of the most relevant papers. The search was conducted based on the PICO scheme:
• Population: English language learners from any universities in all parts of the world.
• Intervention: The challenges faced by ELLS during the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Comparison: Not considered.
• Outcome: Feasible solutions.
The search strategy was used to identify the titles and abstracts of papers, which were then screened for suitability. The full texts of selected articles were further analysed. Each document was evaluated separately by all authors, and disagreements were resolved through discussion. A table was developed jointly by the authors to manually extract data, including authors, year of publication, title, sample, country, the analysis of challenges and coping strategies, and a brief summary of findings. The category "reference" was created by combining titles, authors, and years of publication into one category. After relevant data were collected, a qualitative and narrative approach was used to synthesize all evidences. Findings for each topic (challenges and coping strategies) were collected, determining similarities and differences between selected studies, as well as identifying relationships and outcomes.

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria followed the PICO scheme stated above. Specifically, articles that discussed the challenges faced by ELLs during Covid-19, such as limited access to technology and reliable internet, were taken in. Incorporated as well were articles that examined how the pandemic prompted students to adopt coping mechanisms.

Exclusion Criteria

Articles that were not written in English, such as Bosnian, French, Korean and Spanish, were excluded. Additionally, this review did not include reports with limited academic relevance, letters to editors, articles that were not peer-reviewed, individual contributions, book chapters, conference papers and conference reviews.

Results

A total of 699 papers were obtained through an online search of two databases: Scopus (79) and Google Scholar (620). Out of these, 640 papers were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria, and only 58 full texts were considered for eligibility. After eliminating duplicates, 9 articles were finally included in the literature review. The process of literature

search and paper selection is illustrated in Figure 1, while Table 1 summarizes the main findings of the studies included.

Table 1

Summary of Articles Included in the Narrative Review

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Hopkyns (2020)	Qualitative phenomenological case study / 69 female Emirati university / Emirates	• Discomfort using video cameras and microphones due to a range of cultural and linguistic factors • Struggles with language in English-medium instruction • Fear of judgement from peers • Anxiety and fear of failure	• Seeking clarification from instructors, building relationships with peers from different backgrounds, seeking support from family and community • Seeking help from instructors and peers, using translation tools, practising language skills outside of class • Reporting incidents to instructors and school administrators, engaging in advocacy and awareness-raising activities • Practicing stress-reducing activities, seeking help from instructors and peers, seeking counseling or mental health support	• The participants expressed a desire for a culturally sensitive approach in teaching and learning. • It is suggested that learners find ways to adapt to online learning, and equip themselves with cultural and sociolinguistic realities • The study also highlights the importance of educators recognizing the diversity of the student population and the need to create a culturally inclusive learning environment

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Aroonsrimarakot et al. (2022)	Mixed-methods approach / 465 university students/ Thailand	• Difficulty in understanding the lesson context • Poor internet connectivity • Difficulty in time management	• Seeking guidance from instructors, practicing active listening and	• The study concluded that all these challenges and strategies should be considered for the effective implementation of the

		• Difficulty in attending the online examinations • Poor quality of learning experience • Low interest/motivation, difficulty in selecting the area at home • Difficulty in doing work assignment/task • Distraction at home learning environment	participation, seeking support from family and peers • Checking equipment and internet connection before class, seeking help from instructors or IT support, using alternative platforms or devices • Creating a study schedule, prioritizing tasks, reducing distractions, seeking support from family and peers • Seeking clarification on assessment criteria, practicing exam skills, seeking support from instructors and peers • Seeking clarification from instructors, participating in online discussions, seeking peer feedback	online education system in Thailand.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Li (2022)	Self-rated questionnaires analysed through	• Isolation and loneliness • Limited opportunities	• Utilizing online communication tools to connect with peers and	• The findings reveal that the pandemic has led to students' isolation,

| | structural equation modelling/237 EFL university students/ China | for social interaction
• Lack of sense of community | instructors, participating in online discussion forums and group activities, attending virtual social events
• Seeking support from instructors and peers, joining study groups, seeking counseling or mental health support | affecting their motivation and learning outcomes
• The study suggests that social presence and interaction can help develop a sense of community among students, which can positively affect their learning experiences
• The present findings could help teachers better facilitate the virtuous interaction circle in online or blended EFL learning and promote effective learning of learners |

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Menyani, Boumehdi & Jaadi (2022)	Self-designed questionnaires / 93 EFL university students/ Morocco	• Experienced technical issues while submitting their exams • Expressed disappointment with the lack of feedback provided by their professors • Having constant worry about academic honesty • Losing interest in studies • Having doubts about future educational experiences	• Ensuring stable internet connection and updated software, seeking IT support • Seeking clarification from instructors, reviewing sample assessments and instructions, practicing with mock tests • Familiarizing with academic integrity policies, citing sources appropriately, seeking clarification from instructors, practicing with mock tests • Seeking support from instructors and peers, joining study groups, seeking counseling or	• The challenges identified include technical issues, lack of clarity and feedback from instructors, and concerns over the reliability and validity of online assessments. Participants perceived online assessment as insignificant • To overcome these challenges, students suggest the need for clear instructions and guidelines, regular feedback from instructors, more opportunities for interaction and collaboration with peers, and the use of reliable and secure online platforms for assessment • The authors recommend that instructors be trained to effectively use online assessment tools, provide clear instructions and feedback, and communicate regularly with students to address their concerns and needs • It is recommended that the notion of online assessment should be given much attention in

			mental health support	higher education in the Moroccan context
			• Setting goals and rewards, creating a study schedule	

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Metruk & Rafajlovičová (2022)	Survey / 188 EFL university students/ Slovakia	• Technical difficulties • Lack of motivation • Lack in concentration, and visiting social networking sites or chatting with peers for non-academic purposes • Difficulty in adapting to new online learning methods	• Seeking IT support, practicing with online platforms, ensuring stable internet connection, using updated software and equipment • Setting goals and rewards, creating a study schedule, seeking support from instructors and peers • Joining online study groups, utilizing gamification and interactive tools • Seeking guidance from instructors, attending virtual orientation sessions, practicing with online platforms and tools	• The challenges identified by the students include technical issues, lack of motivation, difficulty in concentrating, and difficulty in adapting to new online learning methods • The authors recommend that teachers should provide more guidance and support to students in online learning, including clear instructions, regular feedback, and opportunities for interaction and collaboration

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Al-Ahdal , Alqasham & Qarabesh (2023)	Questionnaire / 99 EFL university students/ Saudi Arabia	• Lack of digital ready skills among students which is exacerbated by a lack of technological assistance • So much disturbance at home, especially when	• Students spent considerable effort resolving technological challenges and navigating online territory • There is a need to incorporate interactive and multimodal resources in the classroom, creating a	• The study suggests that further training and support are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of lateral multimodal learning in EFL contexts.

		additional family members worked and studied from home • Limited motivation and engagement	positive learning environment, providing opportunities for student-centered learning, connecting learning to students' interests and goals	

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Peñalver & Laborda (2021)	Exploratory survey research design using a questionnaire / 19 EFL university students/ Spain	• Facing technical problems • Lack of real communication resulting in feeling not comfortable in the online learning environment and impact on student progress	• Providing access to technology and internet connectivity, providing resources that can be accessed offline, using low-tech alternatives when technology is not available • Incorporating virtual communication tools in the curriculum, encouraging learners to engage in virtual conversations with peers and instructors, providing opportunities for virtual presentations and speeches, engaging in language exchange programmes; students felt group video or audio calls to be the most useful tool for communication purposes	• The results of this preliminary study are relevant to educational developers and policymakers. • They give an understanding of aspects to be considered to improve the efficacy of learners' when it comes to enhancing their English communication skills, such as difficulties regarding interaction or level of satisfaction in an online learning environment.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Ennis et al. (2021)	Multiple data sources including correspondence, observations, class discussions, surveys, reflective writing, and information stored in virtual learning environments / 110 students from 4 universities: 2 in Europe and 2 in USA / Italy, Poland, USA	• Time differences and scheduling conflicts • Cultural differences and misunderstandings • Language barriers and communication difficulties • Difficulty in providing constructive feedback to peers online	• Providing flexible meeting times and scheduling options, utilizing asynchronous communication methods • Encouraging an open-minded and respectful attitude towards different cultures, providing opportunities for intercultural exchange and learning • Providing language support through translation tools and peer assistance, providing clear instructions and guidelines for communication • Encouragement and support by the instructor to provide positive feedback that highlights strengths and areas of improvement, providing clear instructions on how to provide feedback	• Online peer feedback can be an effective way to engage students in the language learning process and promote intercultural communication • Telecollaboration projects provide opportunities for students to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds and improve their language proficiency • The authors highlight the importance of providing clear guidelines and expectations for the online peer feedback process, as well as training for both students and teachers • The study found that students appreciated the opportunity to receive feedback from peers and to engage in intercultural communication, but also faced challenges such as technological difficulties and differences in language proficiency levels

Table 1. *Cont.*

Reference	Research Design / Sample / Nation	Challenges	Feasible Solutions	Summary of findings
Akhter (2020)	Qualitative approach: semi-structured	• Having limited access to technology	• There is a need to provide resources and support for technology and internet access,	• The sudden shift to online learning led to technical issues and a lack of motivation and engagement

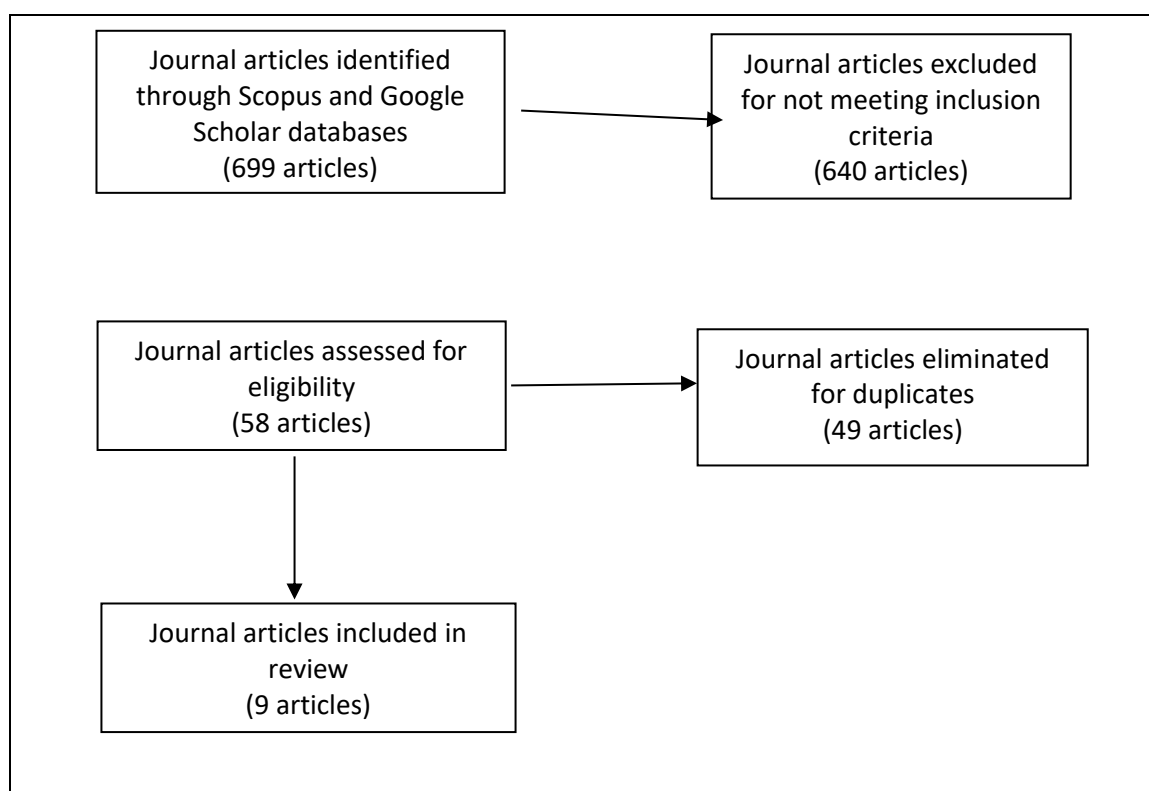|			
interviews via WhatsApp and online Google forms / 100 EFL university students / Saudi Arabia	and internet connectivity • Having difficulty adjusting to online learning platforms • Facing challenges with time management and scheduling • Having difficulty maintaining motivation, engagement	offering alternative methods of communication and coursework submission • There is a need to provide clear instructions and tutorials for online learning platforms, offering technical support, and allowing time for students to acclimate to the new format • There is a need to provide clear deadlines and expectations, offering flexible scheduling options, providing guidance and resources for time management skills	• Some students faced difficulty in accessing online resources due to internet speed and limited computer literacy • To overcome these challenges, the author suggests implementing innovative teaching strategies, offering technical support to students, and using a variety of online resources

Figure 1. Flow diagram of the literature search and articles selection

The chosen articles were published in various countries, providing a diverse representation from different regions of the world. The countries represented in the articles were Saudi

Arabia (2), Thailand (1), United Arab Emirates (1), China (1), Morocco (1), Slovakia (1), Spain (1), and the United States and Europe (1).

Two major topics were identified and analysed: challenges of the English language learners and the coping strategies they had adopted or strategies that should be provided by lecturers and their universities during Covid-19. The findings for each topic are synthesized thematically and described in the following section and further summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Main Findings in Challenges and Feasible Solutions

Main Findings in Challenges	Descriptions	Feasible Solutions
Poor internet connectivity	Online learning is hampered by technical issues such inadequate internet access, website flaws, and computer issues	There is a need to provide resources and support for technology and internet access, as well as providing alternative methods of communication and coursework submission
Motivation and engagement	Lack of motivation and engagement, which can lead to students feeling disinterested or demotivated in participating in online classes	More guidance and assistance should be given to students when they are studying online, including clear instructions, frequent feedback, and chances for interaction and collaboration
Time management	Time management and commitment issues that result in poor attendance and missed deadlines	There is a need to provide clear deadlines and expectations, offering flexible scheduling options, providing guidance and resources for time management skills
Digital readiness and self-regulated learning	Students find it challenging to keep up with the pace of online learning, be digitally efficient, build effective learning strategies, practice self-regulation, and exercise self-motivation	There is a need to provide further training and support to enhance the effectiveness of lateral multimodal learning in EFL contexts
Social isolation	Lack of social interaction and feeling isolated due to restricted communication and interaction with peers and lecturers	Getting involved in interaction circle in online or blended EFL learning
Distractions	Distractions that interfere with online learning activities include social media, housework, and family obligations.	Making a study routine, setting priorities, eliminating distractions, and enlisting the help of family, friends, and other students
Learning environment	Difficulty in finding a home study space that is both distraction-free and conducive to learning	Seeking support from family members and their understanding

Assessment and feedback	Having trouble getting timely and constructive feedback on their academic work, and having doubts about the accuracy and dependability of online tests	It is recommended that instructors be trained to effectively use online assessment tools, provide clear instructions and feedback, and communicate regularly with students to address their concerns and needs
Time differences and scheduling conflicts	Time zone differences make it harder for team members to coordinate and synchronize their work and cause communication problems. This may cause project completion delays and lower-than-expected results. In addition, team members may become exhausted and stressed from working past their regular hours.	Organizing meetings at convenient times and using asynchronous communication techniques

Discussion

The Problem of Poor Internet Connectivity and the Offer of Internet Access

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many educational institutions have moved to online learning, which has highlighted the issue of internet connectivity for ELLs. Five out of nine reviewed articles stressed the issue comprehensively [Akhter (2020); Al-Ahdal , Alqasham & Qarabesh (2023); Boumehdi & Jaadi (2022); Menyani, Boumehdi & Jaadi (2022); Metruk & Rafajlovičová (2022); Peñalver & Laborda, (2021)].   Not having steady and high-speed internet connection can be particularly challenging for ELLs who have already faced language barriers and other obstacles to learning. Having reliable internet connectivity is essential for ELLs to access online resources, participate in virtual classes, and communicate with lecturers and peers. Not having a steady, reliable and high-speed internet connection can create the issue of digital divide which can result in unequal access to digital resources, creating a wide gap between students with reliable internet connectivity and those without. To tackle this issue, it is vital for educational institutions to prioritize equal access to technology and internet connectivity for all students, particularly those from low-income families or rural areas. A possible solution or coping strategy for this pressing issue is to offer students mobile hotspots or devices with built-in internet connectivity to guarantee access to online resources and virtual classes. Additionally, educational institutions can partner with internet service providers to expand broadband access in underserved areas. This review also highlights the significance of lecturers receiving professional development and training to effectively support ELLs in online learning environments.

The Problem of Social Isolation, Lack of Motivation and Engagement, and the Provision of Regular Feedback

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed significant difficulties for ELLs, one of which is the challenge of staying motivated and engaged in virtual classrooms because of the social isolation they underwent and disconnection from peers and lecturers. Li (2022) and Menyani, Boumehdi and Jaadi (2022) brought up the issue of isolation, loneliness and losing interest among ELLs, and implicated the idea of learners utilizing online communication tools to connect with peers and their lecturers, participating in online discussion forums and group activities, and

attending virtual social events besides reaching out for counselling and mental health support. Aroonsrimarakot et al. (2022) and Metruk and Rafajlovičová (2022) pointed out the issue of ELLs experiencing low motivation because of the difficulty in selecting conducive area at home; thus suggesting them seek support from family and peers besides creating a specific study schedule and prioritize tasks to reduce distractions coming from family members. Aforementioned strategies are the internal motivation that ELLs may practise. For external motivation, Akhter (2020) and Al-Ahdal , Alqasham and Qarabesh (2023) recommended that lecturers create a positive learning environment in which they can incorporate interactive and multimodal resources in the classroom, provide opportunities for student-centered learning, connect learning to learners' interests and goals, and provide regular feedback and encouragement. This review calls the attention of lecturers facilitate the interaction circle in online learning and promote collaboration and communication among learners to sustain learners' motivation and active learning.

Time Management Challenge and the Adherence to Reasonable Deadlines

Another obstacle ELLs faced during the Covid-19 pandemic was to manage time effectively. ELLs may have other duties to attend to, such as work, family obligations, or caring for ill family members during the pandemic, which can make prioritizing language learning challenging. ELLs may have also had diverse schedules and time limitations due to poor internet connection. Thus, there is a need for universities and lecturers to provide clear deadlines and expectations, offer flexible scheduling options, and provide guidance and resources for time management skills to help them manage their time efficiently (Akhter, 2020; Aroonsrimarakot et al., 2022).

Not Having Digital Readiness and Self-regulated Learning, and the Importance of Setting Attainable Goals

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant changes in the learning process of ELLs as virtual classrooms have become the norm. As a result, ELLs are facing difficulties in adapting to new technologies and taking responsibility for their own learning. To stay updated, ELLs can actively search for opportunities to acquire digital literacy skills through attending online workshops or tutorials and benefit from self-regulated learning strategies such as setting goals, tracking progress, and reflecting on their own learning experiences, to effectively manage their learning and develop the necessary skills for online learning environments (Al-Ahdal, Alqasham & Qarabesh, 2023). Furthermore, universities and lecturers can play a role in supporting ELLs' digital literacy and self-regulated learning by providing them clear instructions and tutorials for online learning platforms, offering technical support, and allowing time for students to acclimate to the new format (Akhter, 2020), providing them with resources and support such as online workshops on digital literacy or access to digital resources, resources that can be accessed offline, using low-tech alternatives when technology is not available (Metruk & Rafajlovičová, 2022; Peñalver & Laborda, 2021).

Distractions and Minimizing Disturbance by Staying Focussed

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented a significant challenge for ELLs in terms of distractions during online learning. The shift to virtual classes has exposed ELLs to various distractions, such as disturbance at home and having the obligations to do household chores (Al-Ahdal , Alqasham & Qarabesh; 2023; Aroonsrimarakot et al., 2022), visiting online shopping and social networking sites, and chatting with peers for non-academic purposes (Metruk &

Rafajlovičová, 2022), which can all hamper their focus and academic performance. To tackle this challenge, ELLs must set a study schedule, goals and rewards to stay focussed and engaged during online classes. Universities can provide ELLs with clear guidelines and expectations for online learning, including specific schedules and deadlines for assignments (Al-Ahdal , Alqasham & Qarabesh, 2023; Aroonsrimarakot et al., 2022; Metruk & Rafajlovičová, 2022) . Moreover, parents and educators can collaborate to create a conducive learning environment at home, free from distractions.

Fear of Failure and Seeking Support
The Covid-19 pandemic has brought difficulties for ELLs when they are in constant worry (Menyani, Boumehdi & Jaadi, 2022) and having fear of failure (Hopkyns, 2020). With online learning, conventional learning methods like in-person consultations might not be feasible, resulting in a potential drop in the quality of learning. Thus, ELLs are recommended to practise stress-reducing activities, seek help from lecturers and peers, and seek counselling or mental health support (Hopkyns, 2020), and seek clarification from lecturers, review sample assessments and instructions, and practise with mock tests (Menyani, Boumehdi & Jaadi, 2022).

Time Difference Conflicts and Providing Schedule Flexibility
During the Covid-19 pandemic, ELLs may encounter significant difficulties due to time differences and scheduling conflicts. For instance, ELLs studying at universities in different time zones might find it challenging to attend live online classes due to the time difference, which can impede their full participation in the class and restrict their access to lecturer support (Ennis et al., 2021). To address this challenge, lecturers can provide more flexibility in course scheduling and use asynchronous teaching approaches, such as pre-recorded lectures and online discussion forums (Ennis et al., 2021).

Conclusion
The COVID-19 outbreak can be viewed as a distressing incident that may result in harmful effects for individuals who are learning English language particularly, and others who are involved in the teaching and learning circles. Nonetheless, there is a chance for favourable outcomes, as demonstrated by the feasible solutions employed either by the learners themselves or lecturers and universities.
In light of the potential long-term impact of COVID-19, universities should focus on ensuring stable internet connection and IT support, having updated software, and enhancing the ability of learners to adapt to stressful situations so that they can learn to overcome internal and external conflicts. Along with the learners, lecturers have to also adjust to new teaching methods due to the pandemic. The abrupt transition to online learning has forced educators to acquire new technology skills and teaching strategies. Much emphasis has been given on the importance, training and professional development to support lecturers in adapting to new online teaching techniques so that they can provide timely feedback, technical assistance, understanding and moral sustenance to their learners.
Despite all the challenges, the pandemic has inadvertently brought about some positive and feasible solutions in education. The use of technology and online learning has allowed for more flexibility and accessibility in teaching and learning. Both learners and lecturers can benefit from online tools enabling them to access education from anywhere in the world. This has the potential to expand educational opportunities for students who may not have had

access to in-person classes. In summary, although the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted learning, it has also provided a chance for all to re-envision and transform education for the future.

Corresponding Author
The corresponding author is Rofiza Aboo Bakar, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, Email: rofiza@uitm.edu.my.

References
Akhter, T. (2020). Problems and challenges faced by EFL students of Saudi Arabia during COVID-19 pandemic. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 12(5), 1-7.

Al-Ahdal, A. A. M. H., Alqasham, F. H., & Qarabesh, M. A. M. (2022). Lateral multimodal learning in a Saudi EFL context: Investigating the perceptions of teachers and M2E female learners. *F1000Research*, 11.

Alcalde, P. E., & García, L. J. (2021). Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: How has this new situation affected students' oral communication skills?. *Journal of Language and Education*, 7(4 (28)), 30-41.

Aroonsrimarakot, S., Laiphrakpam, M., Chathiphot, P., Saengsai, P., & Prasri, S. (2022). Online learning challenges in Thailand and strategies to overcome the challenges from the students' perspectives. *Education and Information Technologies*, 1-18.

Azhari, B., & Fajri, I. (2022). Distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: School closure in Indonesia. *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology*, 53(7), 1934-1954.

Bakar, R. A., & Halim, M. A. A. (2022). Study on acceptance of Google Meet as a learning platform among students in higher education preliminary. *International Journal of Practices in Teaching and Learning*, 2(1), 1-5.

Bakar, R. A., & Tazijan, F. (2022, November). Revisiting engineering students' affective components to online learning during Covid-19: A narrative review. In *AIP Conference Proceedings* (Vol. 2532, No. 1, p. 070001). AIP Publishing LLC.

Bana, K. F., & Sarfraz, S. (2020). Impact on mental health of undergraduates and the ways to cope stress during COVID-19 pandemic. *Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal (PAFMJ)*, 70(5), 1453-59.

Ennis, M. J., Massimo, V., Silvia, M., Marieta, S. P., Staci, K., & Andrew, W. (2021). A telecollaboration project on giving online peer feedback: Implementing a multilateral virtual exchange during a pandemic. *Journal of Language and Education*, 7(4 (28)), 66-82.

Flores, M. A., Barros, A., Simão, A. M. V., Pereira, D., Flores, P., Fernandes, E., ... & Ferreira, P. C. (2022). Portuguese higher education students' adaptation to online teaching and learning in times of the COVID-19 pandemic: Personal and contextual factors. *Higher Education*, 83(6), 1389-1408.

Gumede, L., & Badriparsad, N. (2022). Online teaching and learning through the students' eyes–Uncertainty through the COVID-19 lockdown: A qualitative case study in Gauteng province, South Africa. *Radiography*, 28(1), 193-198.

Hopkyns, S. (2022). Cultural and linguistic struggles and solidarities of Emirati learners in online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Policy Futures in Education*, 20(4), 451-468.

Lazarin, M. (2022). English Learner Testing during the Pandemic: An Early Readout and Look Ahead. *Migration Policy Institute*.

Li, L. (2022). Students' Isolation Challenges in Blended EFL Learning During COVID-19: How Can Social Presence and Interaction Help Develop Sense of Community?. Psychology research and behavior management, 3117-3131.

McGorry, P. D., Mei, C., Chanen, A., Hodges, C., Alvarez-Jimenez, M., & Killackey, E. (2022). Designing and scaling up integrated youth mental health care. *World Psychiatry*, 21(1), 61-76.

Metruk, R., & Rafajlovičová, R. (2022). Perspectives and Challenges of Online Language Learning: Slovak University Students' Viewpoints. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (Online)*, 17(8), 206.

Müller, L. M., & Goldenberg, G. (2021). Education in times of crisis: Effective approaches to distance learning. *Chartered College of Teaching*: London, UK.

Nayman, H., & Bavlı, B. (2022). Online teaching of productive language skills (PLS) during emergency remote teaching (ERT) in EFL classrooms: A phenomenological inquiry. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 10(1), 179-187.

Saha, S. M., Pranty, S. A., Rana, M. J., Islam, M. J., & Hossain, M. E. (2022). Teaching during a pandemic: do university teachers prefer online teaching?. *Heliyon*, 8(1), e08663.

Shaw, B., Kuwahara, L., & Gao, A. (2023). Best Practices for Health Literacy Education for English Language Learners. *Georgetown Scientific Research Journal*, 3(1), 32-43.

Siddiqui, K. A., & Ahmad, S. (2022). Comparative Study of Alternative Teaching and Learning Tools: Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom during COVID-19. *In Teaching in the Pandemic Era in Saudi Arabia* (pp. 120-129). Brill.

Theberath, M., Bauer, D., Chen, W., Salinas, M., Mohabbat, A. B., Yang, J., ... & Wahner-Roedler, D. L. (2022). Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health of children and adolescents: A systematic review of survey studies. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 10, 20503121221086712.

UNESCO. (2021, January). Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19. *UNESCO*. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse

Utaminingsih, S., & Pratama, H. (2022). Implementation of School Principal Academic Supervision During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Learning. *ICCCM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(1), 29-36.

Volpe, U., Orsolini, L., Salvi, V., Albert, U., Carmassi, C., Carrà, G., ... & Fiorillo, A. (2022). COVID-19-related social isolation predispose to problematic internet and online video gaming use in Italy. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(3), 1539.

Yen, E. L. Y., & Mohamad, M. (2021). Spelling Mastery via Google Classroom among Year 4 Elementary School ESL Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 8(2), 206-215.