



Online Learning in EFL Classroom during Pandemic COVID19 : Teaching Activities, Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

This study aims at finding out online teaching activities, online learning difficulties faced by EFL teachers and students, and students' parents during the Covid-19 pandemic and solutions to solve them. Some EFL lecturers volunteered to participate in this research through invitation. The EFL teachers were requested to make written reflections regarding their practices in carrying out online EFL learning and the challenges they encounter. Five of them were involved in a follow-up interview individually. Semi-structured interview was administered. Data coding was done and appropriate extracts were informed in results section. To validate the data, data coding was done independently by study. As results, the EFL teachers have carried out online learning through a series of activities ranging from checking the students' attendance to giving score on the students' works synchronously or asynchronously depending on each school policy. Various applications and platforms ranging from learning management system to additional resource are employed. However, many problems emerge from the students, the teachers, and the students' parents along with the valid reasons. Therefore, the online learning does not run well since it lacks of preparation and planning. Implications for better online learning are discussed. Future prospective researches are directed and encouraged.

Keywords: Online Learning, online Teaching activities, online teaching Problem and Solution

Introduction

Corona virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) has spread very fast and to almost all countries, so the World Health Organization (WHO) declared this outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020 (BBC, 2020). All life sectors are affected. To break the chain of the spread of Covid-19, several institutions have implemented a new policy, namely working from home so that there are no services at the office. Even if there are services in the office, the number of employees and visiting is limited, and health protocols are strictly implemented.

Several studies have found a phenomenon that the Covid-19 pandemic has also a major impact toward the education sector (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020). In the education sector, the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture in all countries has implemented a learning policy, namely learning from home. The learning from learning policy allows the teaching and learning process to continue even though teachers and students do not meet directly at school. Teachers can still deliver the teaching material, and students can still receive the lesson without leaving their homes.

Learning from home is implemented with a distance learning system. A study conducted by Chun, Kern, and Smith (2016) summarizes that distance learning is an education system in which learners are separated from the educator and the learning process uses various resources through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In the implementation, the distance learning system is applied through an online learning approach. In the Covid-19 pandemic condition, this learning method can be a solution so that the teaching and learning process can continue.

Online learning is a part of distance education that specifically combines electronic technology and internet-based technology or ICT in learning. Online learning is a program for organizing online learning classes to reach a broad and massive group of students. Online learning refers to the use of internet-based technology features, which are highly dependent on the availability of information technology. Dabbagh and Bannan-Ritland (2005) proposed the characteristics of online learning as follows: Constructivism, Social interaction, Inclusive community of learners, Computer-based Learning, Digital classroom, Interactivity, Independence, Accessibility, Enrichment.

Online learning is a learning system without directly face to face between teacher and students (Allen & Seaman, 2007). The online learning requires an internet

network. The teacher and students carry out learning together, at the same time, but in different places. Various applications and platforms can be used, such as whatsapp, telegram.

Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative study. A descriptive method was chosen because this study aims at providing insight into the case of finding out online teaching activities, online learning difficulties faced by EFL teachers and students, and students' parents during the Covid-19 pandemic and solutions to solve them. This study was conducted in Cokroaminoto Palopo University on February to March 2021. *some EFL lecturers volunteered to participate in this research through invitation. The EFL teachers were requested to make written reflections regarding their practices in carrying out online EFL learning and the challenges they encounter. Five of them were involved in a follow-up interview individually. Semi-structured interview was administered. Data coding was done and appropriate extracts were informed in results section. To validate the data, data coding was done independently by study.*

In this study, used Miles and Huberman concept of analyzing the data. There are some components that build up model of analyzing the data:

1) Data reduction

According to Miles and Huberman, data reduction is referred to the process selecting, focusing and transforming the data. In reduction data, the writer has to choose which aspect of the data that appeared in interview transcription.

2) Data display

Data display is the second phase's Miles and Huberman model of qualitative data analysis. This phase provides an organized and assembly of data information that permits for conclusion drawing.

3) Conclusion drawing and verification

Conclusion drawing includes stepping back to consider what analyzed data mean and to assess their implication for the research question. In this phase, the writer drew meaning from the data in a display.

Results and Discussion

Applications and platforms used by the teachers

The teachers use several applications and platforms which can be categorized into eight types. They are as follows: (1) learning management system; (2) chat and message; (3) video conference; (4) content maker; (5) assessment; (6) video streaming and sharing; (7) online learning provider; and (8) additional resource. The teachers do not employ game, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality. The teachers also employ WhatsApp to do many activities similarly to learning management system. Zoom is chosen to carry out possible

activities in tele-conference setting. They are Autodesk SketchBook, TEDEd, and FastStone Capture. Google Forms, Quizizz, and Kahoot are assessment applications which are employed by the teachers. They are used to create online quiz for students in the forms of multiple choices, essay, and true or false alternatives. YouTube is mostly used by the teachers as visual materials resource in the forms of video and animation. Ruangguru is one of online learning provider applications. The teacher takes some quiz items provided by this application.

The teachers' activities in carrying out online EFL learning

There are teachers who carry out their online learning in synchronous mode and asynchronous mode. The synchronous mode means that the teachers carry out online learning at certain time in a week. In the other hand, the asynchronous mode means that the teachers carry out online learning in a range of longer period, one week for instance. So, the asynchronous mode is more flexible than the synchronous mode. However, majority of the teachers carry out their online learning in synchronous mode since it is their schools' policy.

First, the teachers check the students' attendance. The teachers then adopt ready to use materials in the forms of PowerPoint slides, YouTube videos, and Word documents or create their own materials in the forms of videos, pictures, PowerPoint slides, Word documents, and PDF documents. The materials are uploaded by the teachers into learning management system such as Google Classroom and Schoology or shared through messaging application such as WhatsApp. After that, the teachers explain the materials by utilizing Zoom, for instance. The teachers' explanation can also be included in the materials such as in videos, Word documents, and PDF documents. The teachers then create online quizzes in the forms of multiple choices, essays, and true or false alternatives to assess the students' mastery of the subject. The teachers also assign the students to do some tasks and projects since some teachers apply project-based learning in their online learning. To gain deeper understanding and refine the students' lack of knowledge, the teachers carry out discussion along with the students. The teachers also provide question and answer session to engage the students and solve their learning problems. The teachers then give personal feedback on the students' works. The feedback is meant to help the students to progress in their learning personally. At the end, the teachers give score for every student's assessment.

A series of activities carried out by the teachers is just like teaching activities in face-to-face class generally. The chronological order of the activities is similar to face-to-face class activities. The teachers just move the face-to-face class into online learning environment. They still do not consider much on the differences between face-to-face class and online learning. The teachers also do not maximize the use of technology in online learning. They do not employ game, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality. It seems that teachers' knowledge and skill on the use of technology in online learning need to be improved. The teachers should also be creative and innovative in providing activities for students in online learning environment. In short, moving face-to-face class into online learning environment is not enough. The teachers must be knowledgeable and skillful to teach through online learning. They must master the content (the language they teach), technology in online language learning, and pedagogy of foreign language learning.

Problems of Online Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic

The first problem is the understanding on the subject materials. For example, the content of reading material delivered online may not be understood by all students. This is because the material content is presented in the e-book form which is presented per chapter, teaching materials in the PowerPoint form, and in video form. Students may be able to understand these materials, but it is not comprehensive. Students understand the material based on their own interpretation or their point of view. This is evidenced by the number of students who then phone directly to the teacher to ask for further explanation about the material that had been presented online. Based on the experience of another EFL teacher, this online system is only effective for giving assignments and quizzes to students. This means, in one meeting, if the teacher presents the lesson material accompanied by assignments or quizzes, students will actively and enthusiastically study the material because of concerns if the assignment or quiz is not completed. In contrary, if the teacher posts materials without an assignment, students are only asked to learn the materials, then students are not enthusiastic in learning them. The second problem is the teacher's ability to use technology in online learning.

Not all teachers are capable of operating computers or gadgets to use in online learning activities. In some research results, there are some teachers who are able to use computers, but in operating them to support teaching, their abilities are still limited. Some of them are still unable in accessing any further related to internet network, using various learning applications, and making media/ own lesson

videos. However, a number of teachers have mastered the ICT as a whole, have been able to produce EFL interesting learning videos, and some teachers have even become YouTubers.

The third problem is the limitation in the learning controlling. Teachers are limited in conducting the control during online learning. This is caused by the absence of a discussion forum menu in the application used. Even if the menu exists, many students do not use it well. Another phenomenon, some students fill the attendance list at the beginning, but after that, they are no longer active until the end of the learning, and some students even leave the online class to do other activities without being controlled by the teacher. This means that some students are not fully active from the beginning to the end of the lesson. However, it also should not be ignored at all; many students really keep active until the end of learning.

The researcher also reviewed the literature regarding problems encountered by EFL students in online learning. From the students' factors, some problems students felt in online learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic for listening material are found. The difficulties and problems faced by students are presented as follows.

The first problem, some students do not have devices such as gadgets or computers as online learning media, if any, they belong to their parents. To study online, a student often has to take turns using it with his parent. Another student sometimes gets a turn to use the device after his parent goes home after work. Some of the students' parents go home at night, whereas students' online learning schedules generally start in the morning until noon.

The second problem, some students are less enthusiastic to participate in online learning even though they are supported by adequate facilities, such as computers, androids, and the availability of an internet network. They are less concerned about the importance of EFL literacy and task submission. As a result, assignments that should have been submitted within one week period were often stretched to two weeks.

The third problem is that a number of students live in areas that do not have internet access. They cannot receive lesson materials and assignments delivered by teachers via the internet network. In addition, the duration of online learning that has been going on for months has caused students bored and lazy.

Apart from teachers and students, parents also experience problems with this online learning. The condition of the students' parents also affects the

implementation of online learning. They generally work outside the home, such as working in government sectors, private sectors, and self-employed fields, so that they can hardly monitor, guide, and assist their children in learning to solve the difficulties they face. In addition, some parents complain that online learning adds to their expenses, namely internet costs.

Solutions for Online Learning Problems during the Covid-19 Pandemic

To minimize the barriers or obstacles in online learning faced by teachers, especially in EFL learning, the researcher find several solutions that can be applied.

- a.** Teachers should prepare learning materials as interesting as possible. The subject material presented in PowerPoint slides accompanied by learning videos will be felt more alive by students.
- b.** Regarding the limitations on IT mastery, teachers can use platforms with simpler operations, for example: WhatsApp application. However, teachers have to gradually improve their IT competencies, for example by following related workshops, learning to other teachers who have more abilities in IT field. Following the video tutorial on YouTube that presents many learning application uses, the steps for using them, and how to produce instructional videos, can also improve the IT skill.
- c.** The EFL teacher can also proactively contact students who are less active in participating in online learning, and personally contact the parents of those students. If the condition allows, the teacher can conduct a home visit to those students.
- d.** The EFL teacher assisted by guidance and counseling teachers tries to find information on what obstacles are causing the student to be inactive, by contacting the student's parents. If it is known that student is basically lazy, so the guidance and counseling teacher asks the student's parents to accompany him in online learning.

Furthermore, for students who do not have the device or take turns using it with their parents, or who do not have internet network access, they should still do the assignments manually. The main point is to keep studying and stay at home. Students with internet connection problems can be overcome by joining to other

family members, or by saving data usage, namely connecting only when needed. The researcher adds that it can also be overcome by participating in educational programs through television broadcasts organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with the television station to facilitate the education sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

For students' parents, the problem can be overcome by communicating personally to ask them to immediately go home from work, so that their android can be used by their children for online learning. Parents should also allow time to take turns with their children in using their android so that their children can do assignments. Some efforts that can be done are:

- Asking the homeroom teacher for help to inform the students' learning progress

through the WhatsApp group which consists of parents and the teacher.

- All parents are expected to be able to motivate and assist their children who pay less attention to the assignment from the teacher.
- The EFL teacher asks students to actively inform the assignment that they have not completed.
- The EFL teacher directly contacts students by telephone to ask about the reasons for not doing the assignment given
- The EFL teacher asks for help from counseling teachers to motivate students in learning.

The above explanation illustrates that online learning can work according to the condition experienced with various problems that arise either simple or complex. Every problem faced can be solved by presenting various solutions from teachers so that learning during the Covid-19 pandemic keeps continuing. The important point is that children keep learning even although learning from home.

In the application of online learning, teachers use various technological devices in education. EFL teachers must be able to choose applications that suit the needs and characteristics of lessons, students, and the environmental situation faced, to carry

out the transfer of knowledge to all students. It is admitted that in this online learning practice, the more dominant thing is assignment, not material explanation.

After reviewing some previous studies, the researcher provides a solution that in principle, online learning or distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic should pay attention to the following points.

a. Safe

This is in accordance with the principles of teachers around the world who strive to reduce distractions and losses in learning.

b. Realistic

Teachers should have a realistic expectation of what can be achieved by distance learning, and use professional judgment to assess the consequence of the lesson plan.

c. Simple

Online learning should not overload students with burdensome tasks.

d. Meaningful

Online learning should provide a meaningful learning experience for students by implementing learning strategies and methods that are in accordance with the condition and the teaching material.

e. Applicable

The teaching material presented should be focused on life skill education, particularly on prevention and handling the Covid-19 pandemic, and advice on clean and healthy living habits.

Those points are in line with Nadim Makarim's statement ([Mendikbud, 2020](#)) that the principle of education policy during the Covid-19 pandemic is to prioritize the health and safety of students, educators, education personnel, families, and society in general, and to consider the growth and development of students and psychosocial conditions in an effort fulfillment of education services.

Conclusion

the EFL teachers have carried out online learning through a series of activities ranging from checking the students' attendance to giving score on the students' works synchronously or asynchronously depending on each school policy. Various

applications and platforms ranging from learning management system to additional resource are employed. However, many problems emerge from the students, the teachers, and the students' parents along with the valid reasons. Therefore, the online learning does not run well since it lacks of preparation and planning. Implications for better online learning are discussed. Future prospective researches are directed and encouraged.

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