



TEACHING IN PANDEMIC: TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES DURING CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

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Abstract

In 2020, novel coronavirus or Covid-19 spread rapidly via international air travel from China to many cities across the world, and it is resulting in over a million cases of infections and deaths. In Indonesia, as the virus invaded the community so did fear. This paper used a case study to investigate teachers' experiences of the role played by digital technology. The interview and questionnaire results showed that teachers were faced with the challenge of using digital technology to provide an education that would reach beyond school walls into the homes and computers of Indonesian students. Teachers had to re-think their teaching strategies and provide their students with new and different opportunities to work through curriculum requirements. Covid-19 provided a catalyst for the intense use of ICT in ways that had not been anticipated or prepared for. The plunge into ICT was a voyage of exciting discovery for some and frustration for others. Either way, it had an impact on subsequent perceptions of the potential and shortcomings of ICT in education in Indonesia.

Keywords: Covid-19, ICT, teachers' experiences

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, an unexpected virus called novel coronavirus or Covid-19 spread out from China to around the world. As stated by UNESCO, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide most governments have temporally closed schools, universities, and colleges (Daniel, 2020). Thus, it is a critical moment in 2020 because of the coronavirus outbreak. Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is known as an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people around the world have infected this virus and demand healthy protocols to prevent its spreading including in the Indonesian education system. The impact of the pandemic on the education system across the globe is immense for numerous reasons. All teaching and learning activities must be done in different ways and moved to online learning or *Daring (Dalam jaringan)* called *kuliah atau belajar dari Rumah* (study from home). School closure gave an impact not only on students, teachers, and families by having distance learning. Nowadays, it is familiar to use virtual classrooms which allow learning through the use of technology. Mulyah et al. (2020) stated that the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on the educational system is inevitable that educational institutions need to transform their instructional practices to entirely online using a specific platform. "Virtual classroom" is the term often given to online or correspondence learning, because though no physical classroom exists, classroom-like teaching and learning still take place. With digital technology, virtual classrooms are popular for several reasons (Ahmed, 2019). *ClassLivePro*, *SKYPE*, *Zoom*, *WhatsApps*, *Telegram*, *Google Meet*, and other telecommunication technologies are used to do virtual classrooms.

The transformation of the educational system by virtual learning which is done as the impact of the pandemic demanded students-centered learning rather than teacher-centered learning. Online learning is also a form of independent study as an online learner is separated from the school and instructor by space and time (Fox, 2004). It gives the benefits of a more convenient self-study environment, individual learning style, and pace flexibility of scheduling, together with access to unlimited internet resources. However, it loses organized,

mandatory, bonding face-to-face classroom activities. Although teachers or lecturers have used technology for teaching, they still need a conventional medium to fully teach at best because the technology is still lacking in some parts (Aminatun, 2019). Online students generally have limited communication with the instructor, fewer opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers, do not usually have continuous and engaging face-to-face interactions with other participants of the learning community, and do not receive critically important instantaneous feedback, which is readily available in a live classroom environment. Moreover, lack of face-to-face interactions does not foster the development of personal relationships in the class, which inhibits the feeling of belonging to a community and trust among peers. This may negatively affect learning outcomes as learning is a social activity that requires participation in a social group (class) and interaction with members of the group (Wenden, 1997).

The existence of virtual learning is surely different from face-to-face classes. However, the teachers have the same learning target and objectives. To face it, it needs to provide a clear set of objectives for online learning. Teachers are demanded to have interesting methods and strategies to attract students' attention and motivate them in online language learning. For some teachers, distance teaching is something new and difficult to be implemented. It must be different from a modern teacher who used to teach by using digital media such as the internet. Online learning is flexible and valuable for learners. However, it gives some disadvantages or negativity for both instructor and learners. Negativity can have a significant impact on online language learning. It can unproductively permeate the atmosphere of online language learning discussion forums through emotion contagion (Loranc-paszylk, 2015) and can reduce both learners and instructor engagement.

Research indicates that attitude has a strong correlation to learner motivation, particularly in an online environment (We, Yang, & Rose, 2014), and if negativity prevails, online language learners' motivation to engage with or complete the course or class will likely decline. In other cases, learners mostly need direct guidance, explanation, and instruction so the instructor must do their roles. Virtual education makes the education industry has understood the true potential of educational apps. Many educational institutions and tutors have already started integrating their platforms with mobile apps. However, creating a mobile application for education is not an easy task. An educational application only works best when the students get to learn things or organize their classroom activities seamlessly. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the negative side of online language learning and its impact as implemented by education institutions in Majenang due to the coronavirus outbreak viewed from teachers' experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this pandemic situation, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is useful and has a great impact on human life. People, from children, adults up to parents, especially in big cities are used to watching television, communicating via mobile phone, social networking, texting via the internet, as well as visiting various portals or web without limits (Daniel, 2020). ICT also affects greatly in the education world. The use of ICT in education, including language teaching and learning, is a positive response to the development of information and communication technology in the third millennium (Zhussupbekov, 2015). It is in fact can improve the quality of education by using ICT especially in language learning. As we know recently, there has been a new trend in the ICT world which is called the social network. The social network has been defined by many and generally viewed as referring to networked tools that allow people to meet, interact and share ideas, artifacts, and interests with each other (Gašević, Kovanović, Joksimović, & Siemens, 2014). This social network has opened up new opportunities for interaction and collaboration between teachers and learners. The use of social networks has become popular in everyday communication. It is even used for collaborative learning especially in language learning. Social network applications such as *WhatsApp*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *LinkedIn*, and many others alike have been phenomenally popular in the communication world.

Teaching in a pandemic: *WhatsApp*

The most recent popular social network is the *WhatsApp* application and most teachers used it to teach online. *WhatsApp* Messenger is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging application for smartphones. This application is also the most common among the students as instructional learning mobile medium, including as a teaching medium to teach writing for students (Handayani & Aminatun, 2020). In addition to text messaging, users can send each other images, video, and audio media messages. *WhatsApp* allows its users to use their Internet connection to send messages to each other. *WhatsApp* is like a chat program for mobile phones. Smartphones are becoming increasingly popular and *WhatsApp* is available for almost all smartphones. Founded in 2009 by two ex-Yahoo employees Brian Acton and Jan Koum, it is said that the Cross-platform messaging app *WhatsApp* continues to grow in popularity, with the revelation Thursday that its user base has crossed the 250-million mark (Saleh, 2019). A big reason for the popularity of such apps is that they allow their users to message one another

without paying high fees for text messages. Users take advantage of WhatsApp to text their friends in other countries without paying the exorbitant international texting costs that come with traditional communications. Laptops, netbooks, and iPad are now commonly used both by students as well as teachers. There are also mobile gadgets such as cellphone and smartphones are within this group. Using those gadgets and internet connections, anyone could chat, browse, or discuss with each other.

There have been many opposing views over the use of communication technology especially the social network which hurts online learning. In the field of e-learning, social network sites handled the big problem raised by educators in recent educators. For example, a lack of humanitarian aspect and described it as teaching lack spirit (Mualim, Ma'rufah, & Sartika, 2019). It should be noted that social networking provides participation through such virtual classrooms, chat rooms, and meetings by video. Social networking helps students to reduce stress and increase satisfaction among them. Face-to-face class is likely to enable high levels of emotional understanding, while the convenience and flexibility of online components can motivate students to complete educational tasks. A social network like WhatsApp offers various features including audio and video enable the users to take benefit from learning especially language learning.

There are still very few people who realize that using WhatsApp can support their language learning. There are many advantages we can take from using WhatsApp in education including online learning. WhatsApp is not only sending text messages but files and message broadcasting. With message broadcasting, we can select or make a list of people in our contacts we wish to share educational and learning resources with and we can create a broad-based discussion on many subjects. We can also create a forum or group discussion by using WhatsApp. We can ask questions in any subject and send it across to all people in the group through a broadcast or start a meaningful discussion on concepts we need to understand much better. Even with WhatsApp, the learning and information sharing happen in the comfort when we are in bed.

The use of WhatsApp in online learning should be aimed to encourage students in learning the lesson especially English. By doing this, the learning process will be student-centered. However, the teacher plays a great role, so the teacher must choose the suitable topic to use in the discussion, and should help the student understand the lesson by using various features on the WhatsApp application (Saleh, 2019). As a start, the teacher creates a group or forum in the WhatsApp application and the students are asked to join the group. Then, a series of activities are presented as a sample, so that teachers get concrete ideas about how to use WhatsApp in language learning. A student-centered approach is presented in this sample. This approach allows more exploration of WhatsApp in online learning, offers the students more opportunities to formulate their ideas or feeling about the issues as well as improve their basic skills in the language learning process. To cater to various learning styles, it is necessary to devise various kinds of tasks and activities.

Teaching in a pandemic: *Google Classroom*

The second Edu app that is used by teachers in Majenang is Google Classroom. It is a free web service developed by Google for schools that aims to simplify creating, distributing, and grading assignments. The primary purpose of Goggle Classroom is to streamline the process of sharing files between teachers and students (Google Group, 2018). Google Classroom as a product of the digital industry providing numerous benefits to facilitate virtual learning is suggested to be used in the teaching activities. Google Classroom is another application for education added by Google in 2014, is a free web-based learning platform, it helps simplify teaching activities from creating materials, distributing them, and grading the learning results, it could synchronize the G Suite for Education to all G Suite services, like Google Docs, Gmail, and Google Calendar. Google Classroom is paperless and time-saving, it eases the users in creating classes, distributing assignments, communicating, and staying organized (Shaharane, Jamil, & Rodzi, 2016).

In an educational institution, students are often required to complete and submit homework and assignments. And teachers have to review and grade them at the earliest. But this is not as simple as it sounds. All these processes are incredibly frustrating for everyone to say the least. Google classroom is essentially a virtual classroom of sorts. That means we can use it for seamlessly sending announcements, creating classes, starting discussions, submitting and grading assignments, asking for remarks and answers, sharing resources, and so on (Shaharane et al., 2016). It's also easy to set up a google classroom. Teachers share code with the class. And the students can join by just entering the codes. It has ratings of 3.9, is Installed by 50,000,000 users, and is available on Android, iOS (Bhat et al., 2018).

The easiest way to access Google classroom is through the play store, we type Google Classroom, download the application, open and install it on each cell phone or android. The display form that appears on handphone or android is a green square with Google classroom. After successfully downloading, opening, and installing Google Classroom it can be started by clicking the "+" sign on the top toolbar. Two options will appear, namely making classes and joining classes. The teacher can make a class by typing the name of the class, the subject, and the subject of learning that is faced by students (Sukmawati & Nensia, 2019).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a case study to investigate the teachers' experience during their teaching activities during a pandemic. This method is appropriate for addressing the research objectives to fully comprehend the characteristics of the participants and phenomena. The participant of this study were 25 teachers. Two applications were implemented by the teachers, WhatsApp Group and Google Classroom. It is used because these applications are easier to control. To obtain data, this study used an online questionnaire and online interview. In the interview session, the questions we're asking about their perceptions towards online learning. The main instrument used for data collection is an online questionnaire by using Google Forms. It is distributed to the participants in one section. The validity of the questionnaire is determined by expert opinions by judging its dimensions, clarity, and suitability to the research objectives. Meanwhile, the online interview was done by chatting via WhatsApp Group (WAG). It was a semi-structured interview as the researcher has prepared some questions but sometimes gave spontaneous questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After having an interview with the teachers related to the use of WAG, there were responses as follows:

"...I used WAG WhatsApp group is helpful, but sometimes the students are not discipline toward learning time, most of the are joining late" (T2; 29 y.o; T6 33 y.o; T)

It is seen that students sometimes misconstrue that online classes require less time and effort than traditional courses. Students who struggle with traditional course rigor often have difficulty with the time commitment required for online classwork. Teachers normally have to schedule time each day to read assignments and complete quizzes and tests that you would take in class in a traditional setting. Online students also have to engage in class discussions and complete assignments, papers, and projects. Team activities may also add to the time commitment in some classes, as students must often communicate with peers electronically and collaborate on work.

"... Due to coronavirus outbreak, WAG and google classroom is helpful, but the students do not only learn one subject so they have to manage their time. But, as students, they are not able to manage the time well". (T.3 38 y.o; T9 43 y.o)

It indicated that too much schedule can lead to poor time management in online learning. When students are enrolled in face-to-face classes, the instructor sets a predetermined schedule. Many online courses are set up with a great deal of flexibility. There may be due dates built into the course, but the students will need to set their schedule for completing course work. Flexibility is one of the greatest benefits of online learning, can create issues for students who have trouble maintaining a schedule. Students need to find a way to balance the flexibility of online learning with a disciplined schedule to be successful online learners.

"... In distance learning, we cannot control our students all the time, sometimes they are facing learning distractions and cannot concentrate to the learning activities". (T1, 45 y.o; T7 30 y.o)

It is because online learners use their computers and the Internet to participate in online learning, they may be tempted by distractions. A student working on a challenging assignment may find herself surfing the Web, checking social networking sites, or catching the latest viral video online. One-way students can combat these distractions and more effectively manage their time is to set aside breaks in between periods of work. This will allow the online learner to focus on school tasks knowing that she can check social networking sites when she completes her work.

"...Students' attention can't be assured, that not all students learn from the materials, sometimes they just view the class not joining the learning activities which really different from face to face class". (T11, 31 y.o; T15 37 y.o)

The inability to have a face-to-face chat with the tutor is one of the negative aspects of online learning. Difficulties seem to arise when students can't ask questions, receive verbal instructions, or obtain immediate feedback from their tutors. Research conducted by the International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning suggests that online courses can create student/professor misunderstandings, which lead to misinterpretation of tasks (Bhat et al., 2018). Doug Valentine of the University of Oklahoma says distance-learning tutors sometimes become demoralized from feeling isolated and professionally deprived, harming their

students' online learning experience (Mualim et al., 2019). An online class eliminates the human connection that a face-to-face, in-house teaching environment provides. An online instructor cannot gauge the mood, involvement, and engagement level of her students the way she can in a traditional lecture-based classroom. An educator's ability to adapt her course material and presentation according to her students' reactions is at the core of an enriching learning experience. This is lost in an online class setting. In addition, students enrolled in online classes aren't able to interact with their fellow classmates. Instead of being able to form study groups face to face, students in online classes rely primarily on email to interact with others.

"...at first my students are enthusiastic to online learning, but after two weeks using WAG and Google Classroom, most of said that they are tired of having online learning because they cannot focus and dependent to their direct teacher guidance". (T18, 38.y.o; T13 41.y.o)

It showed that it is hard to find the motivation to learn online. Online learning requires increased time-management skills and focus, and less dependence from learners (Valentine, 2002). It takes a highly self-motivated and independent student to complete an online course. The overwhelming majority of students in the U.S. have completed their primary and secondary educational experiences in a traditional, face-to-face teaching environment. It is naive to assume that a student with a history in a traditional learning environment should be able to easily adjust to a more independent, isolated teaching methodology. Many students who sign up for online classes are not prepared for the difficulty added by the absence of face-to-face instructor interaction.

"...online learning needs more preparation, energy and time. Sometimes I have to response my students until night and the learning activities must be prepared well and interesting, but it is difficult for me as old teacher to get used to the technology such as google classroom, WAG is easier but it is not effective related to students' assignments". (T16, 52.y.o; T20 56 y.o)

For senior and traditional teachers, online teaching is exceptionally difficult to do well. Many educators spend much of their professional lives striving to engage, motivate, nurture and truly enlighten their students. If educators are not expertly trained to handle the technical details of an online class, many of the skills and tools they've developed to teach in a more traditional setting will prove worthless. For example, discussion boards are one of the main technological tools used to connect students and teachers in an online setting. If the instructor has difficulty navigating a discussion board, it will jeopardize the success of the class.

Then, the perceptions towards the use of google classroom are gained by administering a questionnaire to the teachers, the result sowed as follows:

Table 1. Teachers' perception towards Google Classroom

Indicators	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Punctuality	10	7	8
Flexibility	12	8	5
Practicality	11	9	5

Google Classroom is operated by computer and internet so punctuality is one of its features that cannot be neglected. In a face-to-face class, the students tend to do assignments at the end of the time given or they tend to accomplish their task when the due date is around the corner. Then, they make excuses for their late submission for tons of reasons, the traditional way of task submission allows students to beg for excuses from their teachers. However, by using Google Classroom, the students are demanded to submit their assignments on time. If they are missing the deadline means missing the deadline, their submission will be marked as "missed". Thus, the teacher strongly agreed that Google Classroom is effective for asking the students to submit the assignment on time. On the other hand, some teachers stated neutral because they thought that the students have many assignments and deadlines so they still ask teachers permission to submit the assignment late. The trouble of internet connection also became the reason why they are late in submitting the task, so the teachers cannot be arrogant reject their assignments.

Flexibility is one of the advantages of online learning Google Classroom offers flexibility, it can be accessed everywhere and every time. Most teachers agreed that google classroom is flexible. However, this flexibility made them work over and out of their working time. It is because some students are sometimes late to access the class and need more explanation or guidance. In short, half of the teachers agreed on the flexibility of Google Classroom, but some of them did not agree and chose to be neutral.

The last indicator is the practicality of Google Classroom, most teachers admitted that it is practical to be implemented in online learning. However, some of them disagreed because these are senior teachers who are lack technology competencies. By using Google Classroom, teachers can organize students' tasks, like checking how many students joined and submitted their tasks and how many are left, they are also reminded by the app if the deadline of the task is approaching.

Furthermore, some teachers mentioned that some students had difficulties in understanding the materials since the teachers only provided the materials and tasks without direct explanation. The other reason is that the students sometimes did not understand the directions of doing assignments clearly so the students felt challenged to understand what they have to do in the assignment. Teachers agreed on the role of Google Classroom as an effective tool. However, it should be admitted that most teachers did not feel comfortable and confident with the use of this application, they encountered troubles such as technical problems in their devices, internet network, and lack of instructions.

Based on the questionnaire and interview results, showed that teaching in pandemics made some changes in teaching and learning activities. It is seen from their professional practices which were influenced by ICTs and teachers' awareness that different technologies privilege they used demand different types of applications (Howard & Howard, 2012). Most teachers admitted that they need more time to develop material but also the time needed for the teaching and learning process. There is also workload increasing in teaching and learning activities such as changing assessment activities, increasing peer review, and giving individual feedback. This ICT use caught teachers' attention that technologies are not pedagogically neutral nor necessarily passive (Idhe, 1990; Levy, 1997 in Fox, 2004), nor are they necessarily appropriate for substituting one form of delivery for another. Technologies are biased because they are built for particular purposes (Apple & Bromley, 1998), which means that they are undoubtedly useful for doing some things but not for others. For example, PowerPoint is better for presentation than for word processing, ignoring what various technologies privilege is likely to lead to incompatibility and poor or inappropriate use of the technology (Fox, 2004).

Students' willingness and motivation affect the online teaching and learning process as they have different needs and learning styles. Teachers viewed that online learning has disrupted the lives of students in different ways. They are demanded to reach the learning objectives in the same ways even they are in different levels of understanding (Daniel. 2020). Many teachers have to provide clear information about the material that meet students' need. Teachers should work with their full knowledge and digital skill by giving full attention to the students. Dealing with students' needs and learning styles, teachers assumed that they need to have an appropriate approach and method in online learning. The majority of teachers interviewed and those responding to the questionnaire indicated that they felt responsible for students and their teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

Coronavirus pandemic transforms all education systems and demands teachers to adapt to something new such as the use of Edu Apps. Most of them use WAG and Goggle Classroom to teach online. Most of them agreed that these apps help the teaching and learning process but they are facing some obstacles to deal with it. It is found that online learning has negativity in terms of discipline, instruction, interaction, and guidance. Teachers admitted that most students did not feel comfortable and confident with the use of this application, they encountered pitfalls such as technical problems in their devices, internet network, and lack of interaction. As it seems difficult to arise when students can't ask questions, receive verbal instructions, or obtain immediate feedback from their tutors. When this analysis was presented to the other teacher members of the department, they thought that even though the e-learning tool is found to be very efficient, it can only be utilized to the fullest when the teacher and students are properly trained to use the technology. The result of the study indicated that by comparing virtual classrooms and face-to-face classrooms, teachers need to recognize their teaching strategies and students' need relative to these two formats. Teachers who struggle with technology, need regular interaction with professors and peers, working with younger teachers who have the flexibility and strong technology skills.

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