Teaching English Amidst Covid19 Pandemic: A Cross-level Educators' Perception

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Abstract

The impact of the corona virus makes it difficult for teachers and students to adjust learning. The purpose of this study is to analyze as well to investigate the phenomenon of teaching English online amidst the re-emerging pandemic situation forcing the teaching learning process to be re-implemented online. The subjects were 10 cross-level English teachers situated in Java and Sumatra. Qualitative approach utilizing semi-structured interview method in obtaining the necessary data was chosen as the best method and approach in the study. The participants mainly agreed with the online learning system, though they faced challenges like limited subsidiary quotas, students' poor conditions, students' misbehavior and lack of better equipments. Besides various approaches and solutions in facing the challenges, it was also known that writing was considered the most challenging to teach among the four basic skills. The implication of this study endeavor the insights on tackling down the challenges of teaching amidst a pandemic. Synergy among so many elements like cross-level teachers, students, parents and policy makers was badly demanded to make the progress of online learning comes to betterment.

Keywords: Cross-Level Educators, Online Learning, Perspectives

1. INTRODUCTION

The cataclysmic situation brought by the worldwide pandemic of Coronavirus has put the world into the state of semi-quarantine due to how fatal the virus can be (Karasmanaki & Tsantopoulos, 2021; Roosa et al., 2020). Teachers from various background of teaching were demanded to cope with this situation according to their own wits or following the regulation set up by the governments or the institution where they pledge their loyalty with (Durnali, 2020; Selvaraj et al., 2021). Overall, the new online model of teaching gives the teacher hard time due to the challenge of teaching in a form of operational and psychological (Fathema & Akanda, 2020; Luo et al., 2012). The shifting from face-to-face to online classroom requires the teachers to be innovative and creative since students, in this condition, only have fewer opportunities to engage with the institution (Abidah et al., 2020; Karasmanaki & Tsantopoulos, 2021). The study also revealed that students' trouble in engaging online learning was due to feeling less guided by their teachers and also the lack of online facility such as poor internet connection in their domain (Khurriyati et al., 2021; Selvaraj et al., 2021).There are some previous studies reported about the challenges faced by both the students and the teachers during online learning amidst the covid-19 pandemic crisis related to the implementation of four basic language skills.

Listening in a form of online learning was more challenging since the problem of technical issue was not easy to deal with remotely (Bahasoan et al., 2020). Online learning was not entirely supporting the progress of learning since indirect interaction between students and teacher and also students and students was limiting the class in having a good

comprehension towards the conveyed courses (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2021). Online learning was indeed considered a new topic within the context of Indonesian education which to some teachers, it was found to lack in understanding and misconception toward the online learning concept and to some students, it was found difficult since many of them were indicated to be highly dependent on the situational existence of the teachers in the classroom (Hidayati & Husna, 2020). However, there are also studies that described online learning as a fresh start for something new to integrate. The students shows positive response during applying online learning in terms of their responses toward assessment, learning outcomes and also evaluation (Selvaraj et al., 2021; Sutrisna et al., 2021). Instance, described that It is also supported by the study, online learning; specifically in Indonesia was suitable due to the condition of its execution which had wider range of implementation depending on each region's characteristics (Agung et al., 2020; Maqableh & Alia, 2021). Furthermore, the this study is intrigued not only investigating and analyzing the perception of the teachers of one level of education, for instance elementary school, but also the teachers or lecturers from high school, vocational school and varsity as well so that this study is expected to be going to fill the gap especially on viewing cross-level educators' perceptions.

We cannot agree more that teaching is no easy job, for, teachers are bound to be students for life that have the obligation to attend classes for their professional growth (Niones, 2018; Nugroho et al., 2021). Perception was affected by three kinds of variables namely; the objects or events being perceived, the environment in which perception occurred and lastly the individual doing the perceiving (Li et al., 2018; Sadeghi & Sadeghi, 2012). In this study, the objective is to find out and investigate the perspective, challenges, solution and suggestion toward the on-going implementation of online learning in Indonesia based on the perceptions of 10 (Ten) cross-level education teachers. With the differences of teaching background foreshadowing the educators, the study will reveal underlying causes faced by each teacher as the subjects of this study. In teaching languages, the teachers are demanded to underline the importance of four basic language skills which is considered essential in setting a high standard of ESL classroom (Khong et al., 2017; Lorena & Sadiku, 2015). The four language skills were quintessentially interrelated from one to another, so it was badly demanded for educators to implement those required skills in order to make the students acquire better linguistic comprehension and production in learning language, in this case, English (Jiang, 2018; Karimi & Sanavi, 2014; Solano-Flores, 2006). Due to the pandemic situation, implementing the four basic language skills to students will be challenging. Nevertheless, teaching online has a lot of beneficial aspects such as being sustainable, saving on transport and travel costs and being environment friendly for it reduces the usage of printed materials (Fitria, 2020; Satyawan et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study was to broaden previous researches' teachers' perspective of teaching during Covid-19, to get information related to the implementation of online learning managed by cross-level teachers ranging from elementary schools, junior high schools, high school/vocational schools and varsities in Indonesia, revealing the obstacles undergone by the educators also how they cope with the problems of conducting online learning. Another purpose of this study was to find out which one of the four basic language skills proven to be the most challenging to be implemented during online learning so that from the findings there will be a string of answer lined by educators from heterogeneous background. Later it was hoped that based on the input from the educators' perspective, the learning of four basic language skills will be better and well balanced.

2. METHOD

This study focused on investigating and analyzing cross-level educators' experience and perspective toward online learning amidst the covid-19 Pandemic. The employed research design in this study is basic qualitative, which has the intention to produce make deep and better understanding of online learning from the data collected from teachers of various teaching background (Sutrisna et al., 2021). This research design also provides ameliorated understanding of some sort of phenomenon that is underwent by the participants of the study. The scope of this research is centered in Indonesia, specifically on the subject, teachers who are domiciled in Java and Sumatera. Convenience sampling technique was adapted in selecting the participants of this study. Ten (10) participants were picked out from various teaching background; Elementary Schools, Junior Highschool, Senior Highschool, Vocational School and Varsity's lecturers. Convenience Sampling was non-probability type of sampling in which subjects were taken as samples simply because they were convenient sources of data for this study to carry on (Lavrakas, 2008). The participants were chosen purposely and were gladly willing to give the author assistance via interview through online messaging and phone calls. The purpose of this study is to seek out the perception of the research subjects in regards of; opinion, perspective, experience and notions toward online learning and its impact in the implemented teaching of the four language skills in learning English.

The collection of the data in this study is the perception of the teachers with different teaching background toward online teaching during the covid19 Pandemic. This is strengthened by the case in Indonesia that is going ascend, resulting in the announcement of Presidential degree implementation of society's activity restriction, for the period of July 3rd until July 20th. The primary data of this research was accumulated from the results of the semi-structured interview. This model of interview is chosen due to its ability to enhance the researcher in bringing forth new ideas or question during the conversation, in taking responses from the subjects' answers. The data gathered from the answers then would be organized according to different constellation based on the answers; the researcher then would interpret and represent the answers.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Online learning is world widely chosen as a solution for education to keep striving amidst the pandemic of covid-19. In implementing as well adapting with online learning, teachers and lecturers may bear the same or different perspective, especially distinguishing those who are familiar with technological advancement in communication and those who are just adapting with it for the first time. The teachers' perception of online teaching and learning in this study are sorted out according to the research questions seeking the information of teachers' opinion, challenges faced during implementation, how the challenges be coped with, suggestion for the policy makers and the most challenging aspect to be implemented out of four basic language skills during online learning. The result of the study is as follows; Overall, the perspective of the teachers toward online learning is positive, because it is seen as the only solution to be implemented in this pandemic situation. Teachers mentioned that they can't fail to execute the program of online learning designed for this current situation. (Teacher 7) uttered that since the Pandemic is over yet, then it is badly demanded for them teachers to be able to comprehend, readily prepared and better equipped so that they are confident in facing the whole program which length of duration is uncertain. The opinion is fully supported by (Lecturer 1) who feels confident of her mastery on advance

technological application means for teaching and learning English. (Teacher 4) added that online learning helps students and teachers in acquiring knowledge, even though there were problems faced along the way experienced by him and his students.

The response of (Teacher 3) was breathtaking since the first answer she provided was the word "unfortunate". She then continued explaining that the lack of direct interaction really affects her teaching ability in the classroom. She felt like it was difficult to convey the lesson the same way she always did offline. Teaching remotely felt like a barrier between students and teacher. This statement is corresponded with the perspective of (Teacher 4), which described online learning as hindrances for her and the whole teachers in the institution where she worked at. The reason is due to not every part of the lesson cannot be delivered maximally to the students. She also argued that teachers cannot freely express themselves freely and actively during the teaching learning session, mainly when trying to evaluate the students' spiritual and social aspects. Shortly, the teachers and lecturers agreed that online learning is the only method of teaching available to be implemented amidst the pandemic. This resulted in different perception which some described online learning as a fresh start for adapting to the new routine or new normal. They did believe that the online learning will enhance both teachers' and students' digital knowledge. On the other hand, some teachers viewed online learning as hindrances that limit their creativities as well activities in teaching the students. Not all aspects could be valued by the implementation of online learning, they believed.

After interviewing every single participant, the researcher found out that there is one similarity of issue found among them. The similar issue was the unavailability of excellent internet connection throughout the whole region where the students resided, so that may give negative feedback in implementing the online teaching and learning. Not only accessibility, the problem of having less to none knowledge in utilizing technological tools both in the form of hardware and software was also considered major for the teachers. Ranging from the lowest level of education to the higher one, the similar problem is in the poor connection and lacking in knowledge of technology, both experienced by teachers and students. (Teacher 9) witnessed that due to the unavailability of better internet connection, it affected in turning her class to be not conducive because the students occasionally came late to join the class via Zoom or Google Meet. She added that sometimes when it came to rainy days, quite a number of her students were not present due to poor internet connection. The statement fitted in (Lecturer 1) experience whereas she found herself in trouble when the website for online learning like Edmodo suddenly stopped working for 10 minutes or more. Not only that, (Teacher 8) also stated that due to the circumstances of internet unavailability, a small number of students took advantage of this situation by closing the camera, telling to the teacher that the signal was not good enough for them to open the cam. Concisely, the whole participants of this study had experienced poor internet connection throughout online teaching and learning, and this is one of the obstacles that are still going on up to the day the report was made.

Another perspective of challenges faced during online learning came from (Teacher 4) who undergone difficulties complained by the students regarding technical issues. Not every student has good comprehension in operating technological equipments. Some of them still need guidance from their parents or guardian. Furthermore, according to (Teacher 4), this was where the challenge rose. Neither the students nor parents could handle the situation related with technical issues in online learning. Teachers like her sometimes needed to go door-to-door just to understand what the problem was. In line with the previous witness, (Teacher 7) also stated that not every students was provided with suitable gadget for online learning. Some of them did not have gadget to support application like Zoom meeting and sadly, some others did not even have any equipment like Laptop or Smartphone. He then got

complained from the parents for being monotonous in using WhatsApp and Telegram for online teaching but he did so since he did not have any other choices.

After the participants bore witnesses about their perspectives of online teaching and the challenges that they encountered along the process, the researcher seek out how they deal with the challenges mentioned on the answers to the second question. The solutions they came up with were various. (Teacher 10) stated that in coping with students' distraction during online teaching learning session, the class was split into two so that the students could maintain their focus on the lesson given and also they could freely give questions without having to be distracted by other students. Regarding teachers' focus, (Lecturer 2) implemented the regulation in her classroom to open the camera so that she could monitor and watch over her students anytime. Those were the solution given by the subject of the research to cope with the challenge or problems they faced. One of the discerned challenging problems encountered was the condition of the students that was not supported with good equipments to conduct online learning. (Teacher 5) along with (Teacher 6) gave solution for the students having no possession of supportive equipments to come to the school or institution to utilize the facilities at school under very strict protocol. Students who were considered appropriate and allowed to use those facilities such as laptop, computers and smartphones at school were those who met the requirements such as those who were below the poverty line, provided by the letter of statement from the authorities. On the other hand, it also infers that not all students were able to utilize the school facilities. The participants of the research also informed that the program had already going on since long time ago, hence nowadays were the most crucial time for the program to operate.

In handling with the parents who were not ready to guide their children in learning online, (Teacher 3), (Teacher 4), (Teacher 9) and (Teacher 10) conveyed that they made a separated WhatsApp group consisted of the homeroom teachers and the parents or guardian of the students. In the separated WhatsApp group, they made sure that the parents were well informed about the use of some sort of applications helping them to assist their children in learning. Separated group of social media under strict rules and regulation was also proposed by (Efriana, 2021). (Teacher 4) and (Teacher 9) also said that it was important to make a legal agreement between the teachers and parents, because they witnessed that there have been a case where parents filed complaints against the teachers due to the students' less understanding upon the online lesson during learning, doing the homework, or operating some sort of applications. Nevertheless, the solution to the problems were not permanent since the teachers also believed that rules and regulation of teaching learning progress will change as time goes by. As for the problem rose and solution stated, they were agreed upon by the boards of teachers and parents (for some institution) during the meeting of the stakeholders of the education institutions.

During online learning, teacher might have input in the form of; suggestions, complaints, and objections to the policy maker either it was in the name of the teachers or representing both the teachers and students challenges. In this section, the teachers and lecturers as the subject of the research were asked for their input for the policy maker related with the challenges the teachers faced during the implementation of online learning. Lecturer 1, 2 and Teacher 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 filed the same voices in regards of internet quotas. The teachers believed that the internet quotas provided by the government was not sufficient for the students to use. (Teacher 8) even said that the online learning's quota had been used by the students for another activity beside learning, for example like streaming online videos, opening social medias and even playing online games. She added, it could happen due to the creativity of the students themselves in converting the subsidiary quotas into free general quotas. The government was expected to give additional subsidiary quotas for both teachers

and students, and make the quotas available to be used for learning only by blocking some applications which can turn the subsidiary quotas into general quotas.

Aside from asking the government to increase the amount of quotas, (Lecturer 2) also made a proposal for the government, or, at least, the educational institution that she worked at, to legalize the regulation so that the students always keep their front camera on. She witnesses that some of the students tended to manipulate the camera closed state so the students could be considered logged in yet in fact they did something else besides learning. (Lecturer 1) as well (Teacher 7) suggested that the policy maker upgraded the computers or facilitated the school with laptops, smart phones and etc which could be utilized by the unfortunate students who did not have such facility at home so that they were struggling in coping with the challenges of online learning. (Teacher 5) put some addition by stating that students and teachers from rural area needed to be facilitated with free WiFi so they could also follow up on the online learning program. (Teacher 9) and (Teacher 10) gave insights about their challenge in giving assessment of mental and social aspects. They believed that assessing those two aspects via online could not be done precisely. So they suggested the government to review the students' assessment regarding mental and social aspects. In the end of the day, given the question on what the stakeholders should provide, the teachers stated boldly that the input that the teachers uttered was focused on the subsidiary of online learning's quotas and also the procurements of supportive online learning equipments.

In teaching English, the substantial existence of four basic language skills is badly demanded. Teachers are demanded to give comprehension to the students about the skill of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Even before the implementation of online learning, teachers found it challenging to apply the four basic language skills, moreover nowadays when everything needed to be taught remotely. So in this section, the researcher tried to seek the answer of the most challenging among four basic language skills to be implemented during online learning. (Lecturer 1), (Lecturer 2) and (Teacher 4) agreed that the most challenging basic language skill to teach online was listening. They had already measured that listening was the most aspect that could be easily distracted by so many factors such as poor signal, poor equipments and poor comprehension of English vocabularies and pronunciation. The problem occurred not only when teachers tried to convey the lesson but also when the students got their turns in presenting their assignments to the class. (Lecturer 1) had ever been trying to utilize multi-call in some sort of application but she uttered that it did not work out at all. The same issue about poor internet connection was the main reason.

The rest of the participants of this study gave the researcher same voices. They agreed that writing was the most challenging aspect to implement among the four basic language skills. (Teacher 4), (Teacher 5) and (Teacher 6) added another perspective. The challenge of teaching writing was in the moment when they assigned the students with homework. Some of the students relied on their parents or guardian and there even some pitiful occurrence told by (Teacher 6) that the parents made a group so they might help each other in finishing the students' assignment. In line with what aforementioned, (Teacher 7) and (Teacher 8) also felt taken aback knowing that mostly, the students just copied and pasted their writing assignments from Google and such activity was done from time to time when the assignment about writing was given.

Discussion

The limitations toward implementing online learning which were mentioned beforehand, online learning was still considered the only solution since it could be helpful for both students and teachers to keep maintaining the learning process during critical conditions of the worldwide epidemic of covid-19 (Satyawan et al., 2021; Sutrisna et al., 2021). The teacher's readability and comprehension in mastering as well utilizing online tools for

teaching was essential in making conducive circumstances in the teaching learning process (Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). Indonesian context, online learning was given negative reaction from both the students and the teachers, according to the teachers' perspective in the study, due to the lack interaction for both students – students and students – teachers and also the lack of teachers' provision in implementing online learning program (Hidayati & Husna, 2020).

This particular problem of students' distraction or less concentration during teaching learning progress, affecting the teachers' performances. The solution given is in line with the solution which states that with the action steps that must be taken both parents and teachers in utilizing smartphones that will be used by students (Efriana, 2021). Another input is about the availability of supporting equipments and poor signal problems. This particular issue was also found in the study that pointed out poor signal or connectivity and the inadequate tools for online learning were named as the biggest obstacle in implementing teaching and learning activities amidst the pandemic of covid-19, especially in Indonesia (Efriana, 2021; Fitria, 2020; Hidayati & Husna, 2020; Nartiningrum, 2020).

Readiness of knowledge of technology and equipment and provide support and motivation to all interested parties in this improvement. Knowledge of the skills of creating and compiling and understanding the four language skills is the most complex and important knowledge that students must possess. This was in line with studies that mentioned writing was considered as major challenge among four basic language skills to be taught to students, especially via online (Amrina & Sundari, 2021; Gündoğmuş, 2018; Moses & Mohamad, 2019). (Teacher 3), (Teacher 9) and (Teacher 10) described that writing was ideal to be taught face-to-face because during learning online, mostly young learners would not pay attention to what the teachers write on the screen, resulting in the students being not able to grasp the writing lesson thoroughly.

4. CONCLUSION

The perspective of heterogenous educators in this current research are highly demanded not only as an input for the next researchers with similar topic of interest, but also as the future planning and constructive insight to all concerned parties. Due to the limited scope of this research that included only heterogenous teachers domiciled in a few regions in Indonesia, mostly Bandar Lampung provinces, it is expected that the next researchers conduct the nationwide-scaled researchers to enrich the insight of the findings. While every elements of education prefer going back to the previous state of offline learning, in the meanwhile, to maintain the knowledge transfer, technological knowledge and readiness must be optimized.

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