

# **EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM USING WHATSAPP DURING PANDEMIC**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to examine the challenges faced by teachers and students in virtual classrooms using WhatsApp. This research used descriptive qualitative method. Data collection is done through observation, interviews and documentation. The participant three English teachers and eight students of MA Darul Falah Cermee Bondowoso . From the data finding, it can be concluded that teachers faced the following challenges; 1) internet access, 2) limited space between teachers and students, 3) differences in the capacity of students' cellphones, 4) checking student attendance and honesty, 5) time consuming outside of class time. While students faced the following challenges; 1) poor internet access, 2) limited space between teachers and students when studying, 3) feeling bored during online learning.

**Keywords :** challenges , teaching English, virtual classroom, WhatsApp.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent conditions, countries in the world have been hit by a virus pandemic that has caused the cessation of various sectors, namely the coronavirus disease. Indonesia is one of the countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in education (Setiawan and Iasha, 2020). As expressed by Widiastuti, Mantra, and Sukoco (2020, p.6), "In the field of education, this phenomenon certainly has a strong impact on how the learning process should be carried out. The quick solution is to take advantage of online learning as is has been suggested by the Indonesian Education authorities." In other words, there is a system transformation of how students teach from physical to virtual classrooms.

In a virtual classroom, teachers and students are all connected online through their communication tools or devices such as computers, laptops, or smartphones at the same time. There are lots of presentations and lots of interaction. However, it is not easy for teachers to teach in virtual classrooms because only a few teachers and lecturers can carry out lectures or learn through an online learning system. This happens in every area at all levels of education, especially in rural areas where they have never done online learning before. In contrast to schools in cities or schools with adequate facilities, some schools had conducted online learning before the pandemic.

The teacher offers a solution for using WhatsApp as a learning media. Based on the monitoring, it turns out that WhatsApp is the most popular application that is widely used by people both in urban and rural areas to

communicate virtually. Nitza and Roman (2016) state that WhatsApp is a smartphone application intended to send instant messages that can be sent either individually or in groups to communicate with several people simultaneously. Similar to this definition, Sampath, Kalyani, Soohinda, and Dutta (2017, p. Llc) also explain that WhatsApp offers real-time texting or communication combined with easy sharing information (for example, contact lists) and media content (for example files audio, video, image, and location data).

The integration of traditional (offline) and online learning resources is a democratic decision to bridge the rapid flow of electronic learning resources (e-learning) and the difficulty of breaking away from the use of learning resources used in the classroom. However, sophisticated e-learning technology used has not replaced face-to-face learning because conventional face-to-face interaction methods are still much more effective than online learning or e-learning. In addition, limitations in internet accessibility, hardware and software, and financing are often obstacles in maximizing online learning resources (Yaumi, 2018). For this reason, it is necessary to study the learning challenges faced by teachers and students during this pandemic, using WhatsApp as a learning medium. It is intended that researchers focus more on one online application and adapt to the needs of researchers and participants.

In earlier study conducted by Ahmad Agus Saputra (2020) The main objective of this research was to determine the challenges of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process in the education era 4.0 at Texas College Metro. The researcher concluded that teachers at the Texas College Metro Course were not prepared for learning and teaching in the 4.0 era from the opposition found in this research. The second previous research has been conducted by Rekha Asmara (2020), This research was conducted to determine some of the challenges of teaching English in virtual classrooms using WhatsApp during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings show that the challenges faced are; 1) checking student attendance, 2) students' English skills, and 3) internet connection. The third previous research has been conducted by Cholis Setyawan (2021) This research aims to identify and describe the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English online at SMK Negeri 1 Nawangan. This research found that poor internet access experienced by students of SMK Negeri 1 Nawangan is a significant problem.

The similarities in previous research with this research are examining the challenges of learning; this similarity is also located in the research method used, qualitative research. While the difference is that in previous research, there was no mention of the application or learning media used in online learning. In this research, WhatsApp was used to determine how far they learn in virtual classrooms and what challenges teachers and students face, especially in this pandemic era. In the previous research the participants were students at the university. In this research, the researchers took participants from the twelfth-grade students of MA Darul Falah, located in a rural area. This is the reason for researchers that in rural areas there will be more challenges faced by teachers and students in virtual learning during the pandemic. In previous studies, the learning methods used by students were not specifically explained. Previous

researchers mentioned all online platforms that can be used in virtual learning, such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and others, whereas in this study, researchers focused on WhatsApp only.

Based on the case above, the purpose of this study is to reveal some facts that can answer the following research questions: 1). What challenges are faced by English teacher in teaching English in a virtual classroom using WhatsApp during Covid-19 pandemic?, 2). What challenges are faced by the students in learning English in a virtual classroom using WhatsApp?

## **METODOLOGY**

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative descriptive method to examine the challenges of learning English faced by teachers and students in virtual classrooms using WhatsApp during the pandemic. The qualitative descriptive method describes the results of observations with data sought from existing sources. In this study, the subject was limited to three (Mrs.AU, Mrs.JH and Mrs.NF) English teachers and eight students (ADI, AIH, AWM, NMA, NMU, DAY, MTA, and RNY) class XI from MA Darul Falah Cermeo, Bondowoso . This research conducted from the beginning of April to the end of April 2021, and the researcher conducted this research online. In this study, the data were in the form of the written text in field notes, and interview transcripts. The primary data sources in this study were observation, interviews and documentation. In observing the data, researchers followed developments by visiting schools, obtaining information from the principal, related English teachers, and administrative staff using field notes. In interviewing teachers and students, the researcher conducted interviews via Whatsapp chat. For documentation, the researcher document online and offline activity. In this study, the technique of analyzing the data used several steps—coding, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

## **Result and Finding**

### **Challenges Faced by The Teachers**

- What are the inhibiting factors for using WhatsApp as a media for learning English?

From the teacher's answers, it can be concluded that three main factors hinder learning using WhatsApp. a. the internet is sometimes unstable; it was said by Mrs.AU, "*Internet facilities that are sometimes uncomfortable*". b. type of HP with small memory, it was said by Mrs NF, "*when their cellphones are slow (low capacity) it will be difficult to save the subject matter sent by the teacher in the form of files, videos, voice messages, and pictures. Thus students will find it difficult to save learning materials.*". c. limited space between teachers and students in online learning which is different from face-to-face learning, it was said by Mrs JH "*Limited space for teachers and students*".

The next question aims to know the challenges and problems teachers face in teaching English virtually using WhatsApp.

- Apart from inhibiting factors, are there any challenges you face in learning English online using WA? If any, what are they?

Regarding the challenges of online learning using WhatsApp, each teacher has a different answer. The first is monitoring student attendance and honesty, as evidenced by Mrs NF said, “*the most difficult challenge is monitoring student attendance and monitoring the honesty of each student in evaluating learning*”. The second is time-consuming; as Mrs JH said, “*the challenge is more time consuming, sometimes sacrificing time sold outside the predetermined lesson hours*”. And the inhibiting factors mentioned in the previous question are also challenges for teachers. Mrs AU also conveyed that “*the internet connection factor and the limited space between teachers and students in understanding learning are big challenges in online learning using WhatsApp*”.

The next question, ask in the second interview at 25th April 2021

- Besides challenges, what other problems were you faced, where did the problems come from?

From the answers, it can be concluded that no other obstacles arise other than those mentioned by the teacher in the question about the inhibiting factors and challenges of online learning during the pandemic. Three teachers referred to the answer “*There is no other problem besides the inhibiting factors and challenges that I mentioned*”.

### **Challenges Faced by The Students**

For interview questions regarding the challenges of online learning using WhatsApp, three interviews were conducted to get data saturation.

- In your opinion, what challenges did you face in using WA during English online learning?

From the interview results, it can be seen that all students have challenges in understanding online learning using WhatsApp. The challenge is that they must always be ready to accept the material given by the teacher, even though not all of them can understand it. Almost all students answered the same thing, as they said, “*The challenge that I have to accept is that the material explained is often difficult to understand.*”

The following seven students answered their challenge also from poor internet access because they live in rural areas. As they said, “*A bad internet connection also often hinders the running of online teaching and learning activities.*” Only one student said there was no problem with internet access. ADI said, “*internet connection rarely occurs because my house is located in an area that is quite comfortable with an internet connection.*”

This question asked the next day (20<sup>th</sup> April 2021) in the second interview.

- Besides the challenges you face in learning English, are there any other problems you face?

From the results of the interview, it can be seen that there are five students (ADI, AIH, AWM, NMA, and NMU) who have different answers to the question about challenges; they feel bored when learning online. As AWM said, "besides internet problems, I feel bored with online learning so I don't have the enthusiasm to learn, this is because learning English is quite difficult without face to face." In contrast, DAY, MTA, and RNY had no other problems besides understanding the material and poor internet access; as MTA said, "*Not able to master the material, because the internet network is very bad in my area.*"

This following question asked (24<sup>th</sup> April 2021) in the third interview.

- To strengthen your opinion, I want to ask again, and maybe there are other obstacles or other difficulties that you faced during online learning using WhatsApp?

From the third interview question, it can be concluded that all students said that their problems were the same as the challenges they faced, internet connection, difficulty understanding learning, and laziness that arose from being bored with online learning. This was said by NMU, "*I think all the students experienced the same thing as me, the problem I mentioned in the previous question.*"

## **Discussions**

The teacher plays an important role in this online learning, where the teacher is the person who coordinates the course of learning. During this pandemic, teachers have their challenges. Teachers must carry out a dual role, namely as movers and coaches who have extraordinary abilities to carry out distance learning. Based on the results of interviews, the challenges faced by teachers are as follows:

### **a. Internet Connection**

The first challenge faced by teachers is internet network constraints. Things that become challenges for teachers in online learning include difficult internet network access, especially in rural areas, unstable internet networks. Due to the slow network, the information and learning materials delivered take a long time to be accepted by students, or vice versa (Arifah Prima Satrianingrum and Iis Prasetyo, 2021). All regions in Indonesia have not felt the speed of internet access. Remote areas, inland, and remote areas can still not enjoy the quality of the internet network. This ultimately affects teachers and the implementation of online learning, all of which use the internet network. Yensy (2020) stated that the obstacles in using WhatsApp as a learning media were signal interference and full cell phone memory.

### **b. Student Learning Facilities**

In terms of learning support facilities, the obstacle is the capacity of each student's cellphone. This was conveyed by the teacher concerned that "when their cellphones are slow (low capacity) it will be difficult to save the subject matter sent by the teacher in the form of files, videos, voice messages, and pictures, thus

students will find it difficult to get learning materials". According to Arifah Prima Satrianingrum and Iis Prasetyo (2021), in the implementation of online learning, one of the limitations in its performance is the facilities and infrastructure that do not support it. Infrastructure facilities are significant in accommodating the implementation of learning for students. According to M. Wahyudi (2020) the facts on the ground, the obligation to study at home is a serious obstacle, especially for students from economically disadvantaged circles. This is indirectly also a challenge for teachers because teachers must find ways so that students who do not have learning facilities such as low-capacity smartphones can still participate in learning. One of them is allowing these students to go to school or giving special notes to receive the material being taught.

#### **c. Limited Teacher-Student Interaction**

The lack of interaction between teachers and students conveyed by one teacher, who said that the limited learning time made the interaction between teachers and students also limited so that the learning objectives sometimes did not meet the standards. According to Pane (2017), learning and learning activities are educational interaction processes to achieve educational goals.

#### **d. Students' Attendance And Honesty Checking**

Teachers use WhatsApp as a learning media to determine how efficient it is to support learning in virtual classrooms. The students did get a new experience in learning English through the use of WhatsApp. However, the teacher found it quite time-consuming at the beginning of class activities. The teacher must wait for each student's response, which is considered student attendance in the virtual classroom. Not all students are responsive to showing their presence in WhatsApp groups even though they have joined the group since the lesson. The same thing was expressed by Rekha (2020) that checking student attendance in online learning using WhatsApp is a challenge faced by teachers. No feature in WhatsApp shows the number of present participants in class from the beginning to the end of the lesson.

In addition, the problem is checking students' honesty in the course of learning, especially when given an assignment. This becomes a challenge for the teacher, because the WhatsApp application does not have features that help teachers check whether students are honest or not in doing assignments. Sari (2021) also said that student cheating could occur during online learning because teachers cannot see student activities directly.

#### **e. Time Consuming**

The next challenge faced by teachers in online learning using WhatsApp is that it is more time consuming than offline learning. Hayati (2020) said the challenges of teachers when using WhatsApp as a media in time management. This is because when the teacher checks student attendance, it takes a long time to wait for students to respond to the teacher's response. After all, not all students can immediately respond to the teacher's response. It is also due to designing materials for online learning that are different from offline classrooms. It takes a lot of time to prepare online learning materials (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum,

2020). The teacher shows an awareness of designing interactive, simple, and appropriate materials to improve students' abilities.

Judging from the students' responses to WhatsApp as a learning media, they have an excellent response to all the features available on WhatsApp. However, in online learning activities, of course, there are challenges for students. The challenges they face are undoubtedly diverse, especially in their schools in rural areas and the eight students who also live in rural areas. The following are the challenges that students face based on the results of the interviews.

#### **a. Internet Connection**

Learning virtually using WhatsApp is highly recommended for students during this pandemic. A good internet connection must support the implementation. The eight students who participated and registered in the WhatsApp group Class 'English' live in several villages with low internet access. Asmuni (2020) said several students live in areas that do not have internet access. They cannot accept assignments submitted by teachers either through WhatsApp or virtual classes. Indeed, not all villages in Indonesia can be touched by the internet, so the internet facilities needed by students to implement learning become a formidable challenge for some students. Surahman (2020), according to Bambang Dwi Anggoro, acting Director of Information and Communications Application Services, stated that there are still 24,000 villages that have not been touched by internet service access, which is a challenge in implementing intelligent cities in Indonesia.

#### **b. Difficulty In Understanding Lessons**

From The interviews conducted with students found that they had difficulty understanding the material given, too much material, and not given in-depth explanations. The ability of students to understand English lessons online is a particular problem for students, Rekha (2020). The level of student's English proficiency is different from each other. This level is one of the challenges in using WhatsApp for students in a virtual classroom. According to Alqahtani, Bhaskar, Elumalai, and Abumelha (2018), one must understand and be familiar with English to exploit the application because it features English in all aspects. Students' understanding abilities are different, but if the teacher is less creative in providing online material, then students tend not to understand what the teacher teaches. In addition, the limited online learning space and online learning time between teachers and students make the material sometimes delivered incomplete, causing confusion and misunderstanding of students in the lesson. Amelia and Huzaimah (2021) said another thing is the limited interaction between teachers and students online, so the subject matter is not delivered correctly.

#### **c. Feeling Bored With Online Learning**

Another challenge faced by students is the emergence of boredom and saturation of the online learning process carried out so far. They feel bored with online learning, so they are not enthusiastic about learning, this happens because learning English is quite difficult without face to face. Students hope that teachers should make more innovations and more exciting learning variations such as using games and others. This is in line with Brown (2001), which states that

learning activities can lead to boredom and discomfort if teachers are not good at communicating and building lively interactions with students. Students need to be involved as the subject of the activity rather than as the object of the activity. A study conducted by Colinie and Pawicara (2020) found that students experience learning saturation due to various factors, including media or less attractive material. The presentation of material during the online learning process is carried out monotonously. A good environment and interaction with teachers and fellow students can encourage an optimal learning process.

## Conclusions

This study aims to find out about the challenges of online learning in virtual classrooms using WhatsApp during the pandemic. After describing and analyzing the data result and discussion, the researcher drew conclusions about the online learning challenges that teachers and students face in virtual classrooms using WhatsApp during the pandemic.

The first challenge faced by teachers is internet network. Second, the teacher's challenge is when each student's cell phone capacity is different. Third, the lack of interaction between teachers and students. Fourth, check the attendance and honesty of students in the learning process, especially when given assignments. Fifth, the next challenge faced by teachers in online learning using WhatsApp is that it is more time consuming than offline learning.

For the students, The first challenge is Internet connection which is the main challenge faced by students. Second, students have difficulty understanding the lesson. Third, the boredom felt by some students when learning online using WhatsApp.

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