

EFL TEACHERS CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF ONLINE LEARNING IN INDONESIA

Rina Miftachul Ajizah

Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, English Education Department,

Universitas Islam Malang

21921073121@unisma.ac.id

Abstract: This article aims to knowing what challenges faced by high school EFL teachers in online teaching and learning during COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. Then, this article also aims to knowing how they overcome the challenges in that situation. The research design of this study is qualitative research in the descriptive method. The subject of this study is high school EFL teachers, a total of 34 teachers from East Java, and Central Java participated in the online questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 30 items with a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly agree. Then, a total of seven high school EFL teachers participated in online focus group discussion (FGD) as the second instrument of data collection. This instrument is used to strengthen the results of the online questionnaire. The finding of this study is that high school EFL teachers in some regions of Indonesia have challenges in conducting the online teaching and learning during that situation, and they have strategies to overcome the situation of online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia.

Key words: EFL Teachers, Challenges, Strategies, Online Learning

INTRODUCTION

Based on a circular from the Ministry of Education and Culture on March 17, 2020 (Kemendikbud, 2020), teaching and learning activities at all levels should be carried out online. It is because the case of COVID-19 in mid-March 2020 increased

threefold in affected countries outside China (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). Then, (Efriana, 2021), stated that online learning is a type of distance learning that uses internet-based information and communication technology (ICT). According to (Ratheeswari, 2018) ICT is a technique or science used to manage information in various fields, one of which is closely related to the role of teachers in Indonesia. (Mardiah, 2020) stated e-learning as a model for almost all subjects and can also be applied in language learning, including English. From these statements, we know that English teaching and learning should be conducted online during the COVID-19 pandemic using information and communication technology (ICT) like other subjects.

Challenges for EFL teachers in online learning are problems such as no e-learning platform in the school, less knowledge and technology skills of teachers, difficulties in creating appropriate materials for students, internet connection and quota, and students' motivation and participation (Nugroho et al., 2020). Then, (Rahmawati et al., 2021) state that students tend to be lazy about speaking skills in asynchronous e-learning. From these facts, it can be concluded that online teaching and learning, especially in English-based subjects, have internal and external challenges. EFL teachers have strategies to overcome the challenges. Learning strategies are preparations made by teachers to make students more active in learning through various activities and discussions (Freeman et al., 2014). Then, online teaching and learning strategies themselves, according to (Sutarto et al., 2020), consist of four strategies. First, keep learning for students. Second, providing interesting materials. Third, utilizing simple media. Fourth, schedule evaluation. In that statement, it shows that strategies in online learning that adapt to the needs and conditions of students allow teachers not only to get the expected learning outcomes. But also keep students interested in joining the process of online learning through easy media to understand, and simple materials.

Based on this situation, researcher formulated the research problems as: "What are the challenges faced by high school EFL teachers in online teaching?", and "How do high school EFL teachers overcome the challenges in online teaching?".

From these research problems researcher aims to know what challenges of EFL teachers during conducted online teaching and learning in COVID-19 period. Then, describe how EFL teachers overcome the challenges of online teaching and learning.

METHOD

The researcher used a qualitative method with a descriptive research design. According to (Shona, 2020) descriptive research aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon. Descriptive research in education gains data collection from more than one instrument such as classroom observation, field notes, interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussion (FGD), etc.

A total of 34 high school EFL teachers from East Java and Central Java filled out the online questionnaire, consisting of 30 items regarding challenges and strategies of online learning through google form. It distributed the first week of June 2021 to the respondents. They had three weeks to fill out the questionnaire. After that, in the fourth week of June 2021, the researcher processed the information obtained from the answers of the respondents. Next, after processing the data from the questionnaire, the researcher conducted an online focus group discussion (FGD) from the fourth week of June until the first week of July 2021. Then, in the second and third weeks of July 2021, researcher descriptively analyzed the data obtained from questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGD). The researcher analyzed the data from questionnaire using percentage formula from (Sugiyono, 2012) and the Likert scale interval from (Sugiyono, 2015). Then, researcher analyzed data from the results of the discussion in the focus group discussion. The last, researcher summarizes descriptively the results of the topic discussed to make good and credible findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher found challenges and strategies of online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The findings of this study consist of two parts. First, part of the results of the study are the questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD) regarding the challenges of high school EFL teachers conducted learning during the COVID-19 Period in Indonesia. Second, part of the result of the study from the questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD) regarding the strategies of high school EFL teachers conducted learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia.

A total of 34 respondents answered questions in questionnaires numbers 1 to 14 regarding the challenges they faced during online learning in the COVID-19 Period in Indonesia. This is the results of the questionnaire:

Table 1. Findings of EFL Teachers Challenges in Conducting Online Learning During COVID-19 in Indonesia

Questions	Result of Percentage
Preparation	
1. I have not sufficient skills related to Learning Management Systems (e.g., Google Classroom, Edmodo, Google Meet, Zoom)	46,47%
2. I find some difficulties how to arrange my lesson plan in online during COVID-19 period	59,41%
3. I have limited internet data to conduct teaching online during COVID-19 period	45,29%
4. I sometimes feel bored to conduct teaching online during COVID-19	73,52%
Questions	Result of Percentage
Implementation	
1. I find some difficulties during the work from home to focus on teaching students	70,58%

2. I find some difficulties in checking students understanding regarding to the learning objectives	84,1%
3. I find some difficulties to create opportunities for students to interact each others in synchronous classes	75,29%
4. I find some difficulties to provide illustrative media for learning	53,52%
5. I have unstable connections on Learning Management Systems (e.g., Google Classroom, Edmodo, Google Meet, Zoom)	55,29%
6. I find some difficulties to make students active in asynchronous classes	81,76%

Questions	Result of Percentage
Evaluation	
1. I find some difficulties to minimize dishonesty in student task and assignment	84,11%
2. I find difficult to ask students on their camera during synchronous classes	74,70%
3. I feel my students not enthusiastic during synchronous classess in COVID-19 period	72,35%
4. I find some difficulties to assess student's achievements in online learning during COVID-19 period	65,88%

From the results of the questionnaire in the challenges section, these are the results of focus group discussion (FGD) that is in line with the results of the questionnaire;

“Online learning during the COVID-19 period was bored because of the monotonous learning both through Work From Home (WFH) and Work From Office (WFO). Then the students are less enthusiastic about learning, and the teacher has to adapt to the online learning situation...” (Participant 2).

“Amid online learning conditions, teachers cannot directly monitor students' understanding. Punctuality in submitting assignments is a reference for students' level of understanding...” (Participant 3)

“Students do not understand how to use Learning Management Systems (LMS). They are not diligent enough to learn it...” (Participant 2).

“Yes, sometimes they think that the important thing is to be present, only one or two children are active because of their difficult internet connection and other obstacles. So the teacher must try to understand and pray so that learning can be accepted by students...” (Participant 2).

“When online, it is difficult to prevent student dishonesty in doing assignments because they cannot monitor directly. They can copy their friends or look for answers via the internet. To minimize student dishonesty, the teacher immediately makes questions and answers right away...” (Participant 3).

From the results of the questionnaire numbers 1 to 14, we can conclude that high school EFL teachers in Indonesia are experiencing challenges in preparing, implementing, and evaluating online learning during the COVID-19 period. The challenges they face the most include adapting learning to students' conditions, facing internet signals that are sometimes unstable, and because learning is not carried out face-to-face, they have difficulty checking their students' learning achievements.

A total of 34 respondents answered questions in the questionnaire numbers 15 to 30 regarding their strategies during online learning in COVID-19 Period in Indonesia. This is the results of the questionnaire:

Table 2. Findings of EFL Teachers Strategies in Conducting Online Learning During COVID-19 in Indonesia

Questions	Result of Percentage
Preparation	
1. I join webinar for increasing my skills regarding to online Learning Management Systems (e.g., Google Classroom, Edmodo, Google Meet, Zoom)	81,76%
2. I make online learning model not only focus on student understanding, but also focus on learning objective	81,17%
3. I make asynchronous learning to make students responsible with their learning process	77,05%

4. I make my online teaching model detailed including pre activity, main activity, and closing activity	76,47%
5. I use internet accommodation from school to conduct teaching online during COVID-19 period	72,94%
6. I change my space to reduce flatness during work from home in COVID-19 period	70,58%

Questions	Result of Percentage
Implementation	
1. I frequently use asynchronous classes to maximize focus during work from home in COVID-19 period	71,17%
2. I frequently give students individual task to assess their achievements	80,58%
3. I change learning media according to the condition of COVID-19 period	81,76%
4. I frequently use interactive learning in synchronous online teaching	75,29%
5. I use YouTube videos and authentic materials around students	78,82%
6. I send learning video through WhatsApp to overcome unstable connections in synchronous classes	72,94%
7. I give specified time to make discussion session in asynchronous classes	77,64%

Questions	Result of Percentage
Evaluation	
1. I give students deadline in completing their assignments	84,11%
2. I motivate students to stay enthusiastic in online learning during COVID-19 period	87,64%
3. I give my students written or spoken feedback once a week regarding their achievements during online learning in COVID-19 period	79,41%

From the results of questionnaire in strategies section, these are result of focus group discussion (FGD) that in line with result of questionnaire;
“I once attended a webinar that discussed the use of learning management systems (LMS) such as Kinemaster, Quizzes, Edmodo, etc” (Participant 3).

"I did asynchronous learning using the WhatsApp application so that those who were constrained by quotas and signals could follow the lesson. Either through group chat or video call..." (Participant 2).

"We use online lesson plan, but the implementation adapts to the situation and conditions on the ground, such as the economic condition of students, and the estimation of learning time is increasingly limited..." (Participant 1).

"When I work from office (WFO) I use school wifi. If I work from home (WFH) I used wifi at home..." (Participant 6).

"I gave more individual tasks to prevent the transmission of covid-19 if they have to do group work and meet their friends..." (Participant 2).

"I prepared a lot of learning media to be used according to students' conditions. For example, do not use learning media in the form of videos to save internet quota. Instead, use pdf material files or other forms of material sent via WhatsApp..." (Participant 1).

"I used teacher-centered learning. I made a learning video, then I uploaded it to YouTube and I shared it to students via Google Classroom..." (Participant 6).

"I will only give a special time if they contact me via WhatsApp. As for those who don't ask, I assume they already understand..." (Participant 3).

"Yes. I gave them a deadline. Unless they have family problems and there are obstacles to submitting assignments, I tolerated submitting at the end of the semester with a "late submission" note. If you exceed the deadline, and you don't finish it, the school allows you to repeat your assignments for a month..." (Participant 3).

"Yes. I reminded them that this covid is a test from Allah. May our spirit and faith be maintained even though the conditions are different..." (Participant 5).

"Feedback is often in the form of value on the paper or when the task file that has been collected is given back to the students. This will be applied when children go to school on shifts, semi-offline and online..." (Participant 1).

From the results of the questionnaire numbers 15 to 30, we can conclude that high school EFL teachers in Indonesia have strategies to overcome challenges in

preparing, implementing, and evaluating online learning during the COVID-19 period. The strategies they use, according to students' conditions, are to prepare asynchronous learning to maximize learning without being constrained by internet signals. Changing learning media models according to student conditions. Understanding students' circumstances by giving them more time to do assignments, and motivating them to stay enthusiastic about participating in online learning during the COVID-19 period.

The findings that have been presented show that the results of the questionnaire have the same response as the results of the focus group discussion (FGD) regarding the high school EFL teachers' challenges and strategies of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic period in Indonesia. Online learning has two methods: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous online learning means using the internet network at the same time and in different places, while asynchronous online learning means using the internet network in different places and times. Online learning (often used interchangeably with e-learning) is a form of distance education that involves using technology as the mediator of the learning process, and where teaching is entirely delivered through the internet (Siemens et al., 2015). The challenges in the preparation stage are teachers must have sufficient skills in learning management systems (LMS) As stated by (Farooq et al., 2020) teachers must be able to get used to giving material through learning management systems (LMS). They must be able to choose suitable media to be applied to online learning according to students' conditions. At the implementation stage, teachers also experience difficulties in providing illustrative media and unstable internet networks. This finding is also in line with what was conveyed by (Simamora, 2020) in the results of his research, that problems that increase when the internet signal is unstable can hinder the learning process. In the evaluation stage, teachers have difficulty checking students' understanding during learning. Teachers also face challenges in how to check students' learning achievement because teachers have difficulty measuring students' honesty in doing assignments or exams. This is in line with the

results of research from (Rosalina et al., 2020), said it is difficult for teachers to measure the achievement of students during online learning.

The strategies to overcome the challenges of online learning are to improve skills related to the learning management systems (LMS) by participating in online webinars. Then, to overcome quota and signal constraints at the implementation stage, teachers choose media that are easily accessible and economical in quotas, such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, and WhatsApp. The right step to improving this online lecture is by utilizing all available media, facilities, and applications and choosing the right learning concepts to use (Simamora, 2020). This statement is also in line with the results of this study in the implementation stage, namely that media changes are carried out based on the material and to maintain students' enthusiasm in participating in online learning. For example, the teacher records a learning video and then distributes it to the class. This fact is in line with the statement by (Sutarto et al., 2020) to increase student interest in learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic period by choosing simple and attractive learning media. Finally, in the evaluation stage, the teachers collaborate with the homeroom teachers and parents of students to remind students to work on and collect the assignments given on time. As stated by (Pratiningsih, 2017), cooperation between teachers and parents of students is needed to build student character.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research is in line with two research problems: “What are the challenges faced by high school EFL teachers in online teaching?”, and “How do high school EFL teachers overcome the challenges in online teaching?”. From the findings of the research and discussion in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the findings are in line with two research problems. First, high school EFL teachers in Indonesia experienced challenges during online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 period. These challenges come from both internal and external. The challenges faced by high school EFL teachers in Indonesia occur at the

preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages. Second, high school EFL teachers have strategies to overcome the challenges of online teaching and learning during COVID-19 pandemic. In the preparation, implementation, and evaluation stage.

High school EFL teachers can use the results of this study to reflect on the online learning that they have done regarding the challenges and strategies of online learning during COVID-19 pandemic. The existing strategies can be applied to their online learning if it suits the challenges they face. Then, they also can be applied when they want to apply different strategies in the results of this study according to the condition of the students. The results of this study can also be used by future researchers for reference in their research.

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