TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH ONLINE CLASSES IN PANDEMIC ERA: A PERSPECTIVE OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PALEMBANG

A THESIS

by

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English Education Study Program

Language and Art Education Department

FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

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Certify that this thesis entitled "Teaching English through Online Classes in Pandemic Era: A Perspective of High School Teachers in Palembang" is my own work, and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethic and rules commanded by the Ministry of Education of Republic Indonesia, Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, 1 April 2022

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DEDICATON

This thesis is wholeheartedly dedicated to:

My beloved family who always endlessly loves and supports me whenever and wherever it is.

MOTTO

"Always appreciate every single moment in your life because you can never turn back the time"

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The writer,

Fanny Tifano

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TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH ONLINE CLASSES IN PANDEMIC ERA: A PERSPECTIVE OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PALEMBANG

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic has been influencing all aspects of life, and the educational aspect is not an exception. Since COVID-19 transmission occurs by having direct contact with the infected people, maintaining physical distance is considered necessary to avoid the spread of the virus. Due to this situation, school closures were implemented to prioritize the health of all school's members. Henceforth, to maintain the educational process amid the pandemic, online classes were implemented. The aim of the present study was to explore Palembang high school English teachers' perspective on the online classes implementation, especially while conducting the online ELT, including how they taught four English language skills through online class, benefits and challenges emerging during its implementation, and potential solutions they could offer to deal with those challenges. This study employed a survey design followed by in-depth interviews. Fifty-five English teachers teaching at senior high schools located in Palembang city participated in filling out the online questionnaire, and four selected teachers who met specific criteria participated in the interview sessions. The findings of the study revealed that: the participants had varied ways to teach English language skills through online classes; they opined that online classes implementation possessed numerous benefits and also several challenges; and conducting online ELT during the pandemic was easy and effective enough. Additionally, the participants apparently enjoy teaching through either face-to-face or online, but for the preference, teaching face-to-face was still favorable.

Keywords: *ELT, online classes, English teachers, perspective, COVID-19 pandemic.*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents (1.1) the background of the study, (1.2) the problems of the study, (1.3) the objectives of the study, and (1.4) the significance of the study.

1.1.   Background of the Study

The world first encountered coronavirus in December 2019, in Wuhan, Hubei Province of China. The COVID-19 outbreak did not take a long time to spread worldwide as it was declared as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). Pandemic is defined as the result of a disease outbreak widespread from the transmission of human-to-human infection (Qiu et al., 2016-2017). Furthermore, based on the WHO website (2022), by February 25, 2022, there were 430,257,564 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been giving a significant impact on all aspects of life, all over the world. Harapan et al. (2020) state that the transmission of the virus occurs from one person to another (person-to-person) by having close contacts, primarily by the respiratory droplets of the infected person, especially while coughing and sneezing. Therefore, controlling the infection sources, protecting the susceptible people, and cutting off the chain of the virus transmission are the best efforts to cope with COVID-19 (He et al., 2020).

COVID-19 outbreak affecting the educational field is a matter that must be considered. Since stopping the rapid transmission of coronavirus is necessary, maintaining social distance is required. Hence, to reduce physical contacts, as the worldwide first response, school closures were implemented (Yucesoy-Ozkan et al., 2020). This is in line with what has been mentioned by Mikušková and Verešová (2020) that one of the ways to slow down and prevent the COVID-19 transmission was school closures, from kindergarten to universities. Similarly, Sahu (2020) stated that as the effort to diminish the spread of coronavirus disease, the widespread of educational institutions closures in many countries were promoted.

However, the educational process, specifically teaching and learning, must go on. Since no one knows when the pandemic will end, educational institutions globally chose to utilize the available technology to create the online learning material for students (Kaur, 2020, in Adnan & Anwar, 2020). In line with this statement, due to this global pandemic, in the educational field, Louis-Jean and Cenat (2020) stated that it was a must for teachers to modify their way of teaching from face-to-face learning to web-based distance learning.

In Indonesia, the coronavirus first encountered in May 2020, and it resulted in *PSBB* policy and SFH program. As cited in *The Jakarta Post* (2020), the first two cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia were confirmed by President Joko Widodo on the 2nd of May 2020. Due to this condition, since COVID-19 is transmitted through a close contact among humans, the Indonesian government decided to implement the Large-Scale Social Restriction (*PSBB–Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar)* which was first announced and implemented in Jakarta, in April 2020, as an attempt to prevent the spread of the virus. As the solution for Indonesian education system, School from Home (*Belajar dari Rumah*), a program migrating the learning process from school to home, was applied, to keep students, teachers, school staff, and the school community, healthy and safe (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). In addition, Fauzi and Khusuma (2020) stated that the original face-to-face learning system had turned into online learning system that utilized technology, and due to this situation, teachers had to make the teaching transition, from physical learning to online learning (Rahayu & Wirza, 2020).

During the past decades, teachers and students used to meet face-to-face, and the lessons were taught directly at school. Sujarwo et al. (2020) stated that before the pandemic, the teachers usually taught the lesson in front of the class, continued with the feedback session, and it usually ended with students' assignment. Additionally, at the same time, virtual learning has been spreading widely and quickly over the past 15 years (Hart et al., 2019) which means that it apparently has been being implemented since years ago, but not dominantly, in order to support the physical leaning process. In line with this, Yükselir and Yuvayapan (2021) also stated that before COVID-19 outbreak emerged, online

learning apparently has been conducted as the supplementary to face-to-face learning.

Contrarily, during the pandemic, the teaching and learning process was totally done through online platforms without having to meet physically. The various choices of the available online platforms assisting online classes usually used in Indonesia were *WhatsApp, Zoom (Cloud Meetings), Google Classroom, Telegram, Edmodo, Google Meet, YouTube, Google Forms, Quizizz, Kahoot, Schoology, Google Drive*, and so forth (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Safira et al., 2021; Sujarwo et al., 2020), and there was still a plenty of platforms that can be utilized, such as e-learning websites, learning applications particularly designed by the educational institutions, social media, and so forth.

Managing online learning, of course, possessed both advantages and challenges, and conducting the virtual classes for English Language Teaching (ELT) in this pandemic era was not an exception. Firstly, a study conducted by Mathur and Singh (2020) entitled "The Perception of Teachers on Unlocking Technology by Redesigning Education System during and after COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown" revealed that even though using technology to teach had several benefits, there were also some complication factors which negatively impacted teachers' satisfaction towards unlocking technology by redesigning education system. The advantages mentioned were being helpful in syllabus completion, equipping students with better learning materials, varying students' knowledge, and allowing a better time usage and problem solving. On the other hand, the limitations stated were the improper communication between teachers and students (the primary one), technical skill needs, the lack of appropriate learning sources, bad internet connection, and privacy issues.

Secondly, in line with the previous study, a study conducted by Lestari et al. (2021) entitled "English Teachers' Perspective on The Implementation of Virtual Classes During COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 Palembang" found that there were some both advantages and limitations from the online classes implementation. The advantages included the increase of teachers' and students' awareness on technology, well-organized class

management, enhancement on students' learning interest and self-directed learning, accessibility of time and place, and the efficiency of the material delivered by the teachers. On the other hand, the barriers mentioned were the bad internet connection, the lack of digital facilities, passive participation of the students, parents' lack of knowledge and skill to operate the technology (to assist their children's learning), and teachers' difficulty to observe students' performance during the class.

Additionally, a library research conducted by Efriana (2021) entitled "Problems of Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic in EFL Classroom and the Solution" found that the problems of online learning in the pandemic era were the students' difficulty to appropriately understand the online material, the incapability of some teachers to use technology, and the limitation of learning controlling. Regarding these teachers' perspectives, some students' points of views about the limitations they had in virtual classes were also reviewed, such as the unavailability of digital devices to support their learning, the lack of enthusiasm to participate in the online class (which leads to the late task submission), and the unavailability of good internet access. Henceforth, the solutions that can be offered to teachers to deal with those problems were: trying to present the learning material more interestingly; using simpler platforms to facilitate online classes (e.g. *WhatsApp*), and having a personal a talk or counselling with the students (or their parents) who were passive during the class to find out the reasons and solutions of their passiveness.

Following those previous related studies, the present study necessarily focused on high school English teachers' perspective on the implementation of online classes to conduct ELT during the pandemic era. Specifically, since the studies aimed to investigate the online English language skills teaching are still rarely found and limited, the author expected to explore more on the (four) English language skills teaching including listening, speaking, reading, and writing during the COVID-19 outbreak which was held through online.

Hence, the current study was aimed to find out Palembang high school English teachers' perspective and insights including several aspects, namely their

general opinion about holding the online classes during the pandemic, the ways they taught the four English language skills through online classes, the benefits and the barriers emerging while implementing the online classes, and the solutions they could offer to solve those barriers based on their teaching experience.

1.2. The Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study, the problems aimed to be explored were formulated into four research questions.

1.2.1. What was the perspective of English teachers on conducting the online classes in the pandemic era?

1.2.2. What methods did the English teachers use to teach the four English language skills through online classes?

1.2.3. What were the advantages the English teachers could take from the online classes and the challenges they faced while conducting it?

1.2.4. What were the solutions the English teachers could offer to solve those challenges?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

In relation to the research questions, therefore, the purposes of this study were to find out:

1.3.1. The perspective of English teachers on conducting the online classes in the pandemic era.

1.3.2. The methods the English teachers used to teach the four English language skills through online classes.

1.3.3. The advantages the English teachers could take from the online classes and the challenges they faced while conducting it.

1.3.4. The solutions the English teachers could offer to solve those challenges.

1.4.   The Significance of the Study

The present study was conducted to give meaningful contribution for educational field, especially for English Language Teaching (ELT). Henceforth, it was expected that the results of this study would be beneficial for teachers, specifically for English teachers; students; and future researchers.

Firstly, for teachers, this study may provide useful insights related to online teaching, for example, the appropriate technology and methods used in the online classes, since educators play an important role within students' learning process (Jaya, 2019). This article also can be a spot for teachers to share their opinion about online English teaching and to offer solutions for the obstacles they faced while having the class virtually throughout the pandemic period.

Secondly, for students, it is expected that they can see and consider from their teachers' points of view, and hopefully they can be more open to participate actively in virtual classes and to have a great synergy with their teacher for a better online learning process in the future.

Lastly, for the future researchers, more various related studies which always have the novelty within, with different research methods, instruments, or participants, are expected to be explored and conducted, in order to give varied positive contributions for education. At the end, it is sincerely hoped that this study will be advantageous to all the readers.

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