

TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING BLENDED LEARNING IN EFL CONTEXT

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the challenges in implementing blended learning to teach English during Covid-19 Pandemic and describe the optional solutions used by the teachers to highlight the challenges. This is a descriptive qualitative study and the main data collection method that apply are observation and interview. The researcher used purposive sampling for choosing the subject. The finding showed that there are two main categories in challenges identified, namely internal factors and external factors. The challenges related to the teachers' internal factors including low of motivation, lack of interest, anxiety and lack of confidence. The challenges related to the teachers' external factors including students' behavior, complex curriculum, time selection, environmental situation and facilities. The optional solutions that could highlight the identified challenges are provided for each of the factors contributions to the challenges. Besides, the optional solutions are also grouped into prior and during class solutions that could be easily applied by the teachers. Based on the result of this study, teachers could understand to anticipate the challenges and be able to use the proper solutions to highlight the challenges.

Keywords – Teachers' Challenges, Solutions, Blended Learning, EFL

Introduction

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) has spread very fast even to almost all countries, so the World Health Organization (WHO) declared this outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020. Covid-19 in Indonesia affects so badly. Government regulations No. 20 year 2020 about accelerating the handling of Coronavirus Disease 19 within the local government is implemented. The Coronavirus is transmitted by someone

who already has symptoms to someone who is close through droplets. The mode of transmission when a person has respiratory symptoms like coughing or sneezing. All life sectors are affected. Many sectors had a crisis as the result of the spread of Covid-19 itself. One of them is the education sector. The education sector was also affected. Face-to-face activities that are usually carried out at schools or campuses have turned into online activities to break the chain

from the spread of Covid-19. Because this pandemic is very serious, the government finally decided to have a regulation namely “learning from home”. Learning from home is implemented with a distance learning system. This regulation has officially changed the teaching and learning system during the spread of Covid-19. The interaction of teaching and learning has changed immediately to cut the chain of the spread of this virus, from face-to-face shifted to online learning. Shifting face- to-face interactions of the teaching and learning process then carried out by online learning is applied at almost all educational levels. In schools, this learning activity is called PJJ (Distance Learning), while at universities, it is known as e-learning or online learning. There is significant diversity between conventional learning and even online learning.

Conventional learning gives the instructor a chance to create interest in a subject and clarify the confusion immediately. In conventional learning students places a passive role rather than an active one. Mostly one way communication is possible as all students listen to the teacher. Teachers are required to have effective writing and speaking skills and teachers are mostly required to solve student’s problems in a limited time frame. On another side, online learning is an education that takes place over the internet. It is often referred to as e-learning among other terms. The online learning system is different from face-to-face learning. The main thing is that in online learning, learners and teachers do not meet in person. Online learning is a program for organizing online learning classes to reach a broad and massive group of students. Online learning refers to the use of internet-based technology features, which are highly dependent on the availability of information technology. Online learning is a learning system without face-to-face between

teachers and students (Allen, I. E., & Seaman, 2007). The online learning requires an internet network. The teacher and students carry out learning together, at the same time. However, in different places. Various applications and platforms can be used, such as telegram, zoom meeting, google meet, google classroom, and others. To support this online learning, the main device that we can use are computer, laptop and android connected to the internet network.

Online learning can be conducted in asynchronous and synchronous. An asynchronous mode of learning/teaching has been the most prevalent form of online teaching so far because of its flexible modus operation (Hrastinski, 2008). Asynchronous environments provide students with readily available material in the form of audio/video lectures, handouts, articles and powerpoint presentations.

Synchronous e-learning, on the other hand, refers to learning/teaching that takes place simultaneously via an electronic mode. Synchronous voice or text chat rooms provide an opportunity of teacher-student and student-student interaction. Apart from chat, video-conferencing facilitates face-to-face communication. Web conferences through surveys, polls and question-answer sessions can turn out to be more interactive than video conferencing. Synchronous mode instills a sense of community through collaborative learning (Teng, D. C. E., Chen, N. S., Kinshuk & Leo, 2012). A synchronous virtual classroom is a place for instructors and students to interact and collaborate in real time. Using webcams and class discussion features, it resembles the face-to-face classroom, except that all participants access it remotely via the Internet.

Blended learning is provided by the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning which are exercised in an interactively meaningful learning environment. Blended learning courses combine online and face-to-face learning activities and uses resources in an optimal way in order to improve student learning outcomes (Garrison, 2004). Blended Learning can be defined as the combination of thoughtfully selected and complementary face-to-face and online approaches and technologies (Graham, 2006). In general terms, blended learning combines the online delivery of educational content with the best features of classroom interaction and live instruction in such a way as to personalize learning, allow thoughtful reflection, and differentiate instruction from student to student across a diverse group of learners. Based on the preliminary research result of interview with the teachers about teachers' challenges in implementing blended learning, the researcher found challenges faced by the teachers in implementing blended learning at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar. The researcher used interview guide for the instrument of interview. It means that the interviewer prepares the set of questions before conducting the interview. The questions of interview used by researcher related to challenges which are categorized into internal and external factors (Aryana & Apsari, 2018). Preliminary research is conducted by the researcher during December, 2021. The subjects are two teachers at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar.

The result of preliminary research conducted by researcher showed that teachers explained facing challenges some of internal and external factors, such as teachers felt tension when speaking in front a lot of people with the responsibilities carried by teachers, confuse selecting best words to explain the materials which easy understanding,

dealing with unstable internet network, dealing with students who is not discipline or not really active when learning process and even students didn't do the assignment and difficulties in teaching because lack of facilitate.

The result of preliminary research conducted by researcher also showed that for the type of blended learning used at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar is a combination between online learning and face-to-face learning. When explaining the material of learning teachers teach students through face-to-face learning. On another side, when giving some assignment teachers use online learning, such as google meet, google classroom and zoom meeting application. From those symptoms can show there are existing the challenges faced by teachers in implementing blended learning at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar which related to the objectives of the study.

According to the case above, the researcher also found some research which is related to the case. The first study was conducted by Dahmash (2020) type of blended learning used is a combination between face-to-face learning and online learning. The research is studying about challenges and benefits in implementing blended learning. It showed the result encountered challenges related to technological problems, instructor's performance, online tests, the attitudes and limited resources of students.

The another previous research that also inspires the researcher is a study conducted by Aryana & Apsari (2018), internal factors which came from the respondent himself such as; he feels the difficulties in teaching, preparing listening materials, choosing method, technique, and strategy. While, external factors are; sound from environment activities like woodcutter machine,

module, media problem as cable injector of sound system to laptop, English laboratory, electric off, and the difference of listening materials in syllabus 2013 curriculum and National Examination materials.

Based on the statement above, this research conducted at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar based on teachers' perspective. The researcher wanted to identify the challenges faced by the teachers and described the optional solutions used by the teachers to highlight the challenges in teaching used framework from Aryana & Apsari (2018). However, in the context of blended learning, Dahmash (2020) studied about challenges in implementing blended learning. However, based on students' perspective. The researcher is expected that identifying on the challenges experienced by the teachers and describing the optional solutions used by the teachers in implementing blended learning will give a valuable contribution for the teachers in order to understand how to anticipate the challenges in implementing blended learning and using the proper solutions to highlight the challenges.

Methodology

This research was a descriptive qualitative study. The population in this research were 2 English teachers at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar. Teachers became participants in this research chosen through purposive sampling and the main data collection method that applied were observation and interview.

The instrument of data collection used by the researcher was observation sheet and in-depth interview. First, the researcher did observation while the teachers taught through face-to-face and online learning. After the observation conducted, the researcher did interview to gain in-depth data about teachers' challenges in implementing blended learning and the

optional solutions used by the teachers to highlight the challenges at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar during Covid-19 Pandemic.

The data analysis techniques of this research were data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verifying.

Finding and Discussion

The research finding and discussion presented to answer the research problems in this study those are identifying the challenges in implementing blended learning faced by teachers at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar during Covid-19 Pandemic and describing the optional solutions used by the teachers to highlight the challenges in implementing blended learning at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar during Covid-19 Pandemic. Furthermore, the analysis data of observation and interview were compared with related previous studies.

3.1 Teachers' Challenges in Implementing Blended Learning

3.1.1 Internal Factors Related Challenges

A. Low of Motivation

The first internal factor related challenges, namely low of motivation was directly affected by decreasing spirit and uncomfortable feeling of the teachers. Those two aspects were also strongly affected by the external factors, such as the teachers dealing with students faced trouble in internet network, less attendance for no reasons, less of students' concentration, they did not do the assignment and the noisy situation.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Juhana (2012) stated that motivation is a change of energy in a person characterized by the emergence of feelings and reactions to achieve goals. With this understanding, it can be said that motivation will cause a change in

energy that exists in someone, so that will give impact with feelings and emotions, to then act or do something. Motivation has a very important role to improve the spirit of teachers in teaching. However, the previous research conducted by Juhana (2012) was gathered from students' perspective. The participants consisted of 62 second grade students at Senior High School in South Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia.

B. Lack of Interest

The second internal factor related challenges, namely lack of interest was directly affected by the teachers felt disappointed and sad. Those two aspects were also strongly affected by the external factors, such as the teachers dealing with students rarely gave feedback during discussion session, they did not do assignment according to the instructions given by the teachers, did not open the camera when online learning and less of responses from students. The finding above is in line with the finding from Yulia (2013) she said that, most students think English language is the most difficult lesson. Students sometimes do not listen to the teacher. It makes they do not get anything after the lesson end. Even though they understand the lesson, they will forget it quickly. Students only think about how they pass the course and not get remedial. It becomes the indications lack of students' interest in learning. However, the previous research conducted by Yulia (2013) was gathered from students' perspective and teachers' perspective. The subjects of the research were students and English teachers in twelve randomly selected junior high schools in government and private schools in five districts in Yogyakarta Province.

C. Anxiety

The third internal factor related challenges, namely anxiety was directly

affected by the teacher felt worry or tension when speaking in front a lot of people. It made the volume of the voice became coughing and hoarse when speaking in front a lot of students because the room was large and there were so many students made teacher felt tension.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Juhana (2012) stated that anxiety is a feeling of tension, apprehension and nervousness with the situation of teaching and learning a foreign language when speaking in front a lot of people.

D. Lack of Confidence

The last internal factor related challenges, namely lack of confidence was directly affected by the teachers felt doubt, confuse, unsure, lack of knowledge and skill in time and classroom management. Those aspects were also strongly affected by the external factors, such as the teachers had lack of preparation for teaching and less attractive teacher's outfit.

The finding above is in line with Cicek (2013) which stated that by having a good preparation, the planned activity can be done systematically and effectively since the preparation guides and helps to do something, so that lesson plan is needed in order to lead teachers to do activities in the class effectively. So that, teachers do not get puzzled in teaching process.

3.1.2 External Factors Related Challenges

A. Students' Behavior

Based on the data in research finding showed that the challenges faced by the teachers related students' behavior. It found the challenges faced by the teachers were students had a significant impact in teachers' teaching process. The significant impacts for teachers dealing

with students who were less discipline and being out of control such as, it decreased teaching time and decreased the quality of learning itself because of dealing with students who were less discipline and being out of control.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Abrar (2016) he said that, when teaching-learning English, some students preferred to do other activities, like playing, chatting with friends, and also making some noise. It becomes the signs of students' lack of discipline. The previous research conducted by Abrar (2016) was gathered from teachers' perspective. The participants consisted primary school teachers in Kuala Tungkal, Jambi.

B. Complex Curriculum

Based on the data in research finding showed that the challenges faced by the teachers related complex curriculum. Teachers stated that the challenges including, teachers felt difficult in designing learning activities with limited time, overwhelmed with dense material and students complain there were so many assignments because of adjusted curriculum 2013.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Rahayu (2016) she stated that, In the 2013 curriculum, the number of hours of learning English in the classroom is less than that of the previous curriculum. It brings about a big challenge for both teachers and students to work harder in achieving the learning goal in a limited time. The limited hours per week surely reduce the students' chance to learn English and teachers cannot cover all materials in the syllabus. The previous research conducted by Rahayu (2016) was gathered from participants consisted eight English teachers.

C. Time Selection

Based on the data in research finding showed that the challenges faced by the teachers related time selection. It found the challenges faced by the teachers such as, teaching in the morning, afternoon and evening mostly students felt sleepy, lack of energy and less of attention. It made the material taught by the teachers difficult for students to understand.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Abrar (2016) stated that, Teaching English is need more time to make the students enable speak the language, especially if English is not the first language. Two hours in a week is a brief time to teach English lesson considering there are many aspects in English lesson. Students' indiscipline in the classroom affects teaching and learning; because failing to properly manage students' indiscipline in the classroom may prevent the teacher from maximizing the use of the allocated time for teaching and learning.

D. Environmental Situation

Based on the data in research finding showed that the challenges faced by the teachers related environmental situation. Teachers stated that the challenges including teachers felt uncomfortable and less enthusiast with the situation when it comes too noisy and it caused learning process was not optimal or not well received so that students ask the same things over and over again. It meant they didn't pay attention.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Abrar (2016) stated that, When the number of students are more than 35 or 40 or even 50 more, the teacher would not have time to give attention to each student individually. This sized group will cause problems in English teaching-learning process such

as; discomfort in the class, individual attention and noisy class.

E. Facilities

Based on the data in research finding showed that the challenges faced by the teachers related facilities. It found the challenges faced by the teachers such as, when facilities or teaching media during teaching process did not support, teachers felt difficult and unpleasant when teaching including teaching and learning time became not efficient and learning process became less effective because of unable to use the facilities or teaching media.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Songbatumis (2017) which stated that teaching English process will not achieve the goals if the tools in teaching cannot support it. While teachers want to teach about song or film, of course they need projector to show the visual, and the speaker to display the audio. If the projector and speaker are not available how teacher teaches the students about it. In addition Roinah (2019) also argued that the teaching and learning process cannot run optimally and maximally without any learning facilities available in the school. However, the previous research conducted by Roinah (2019) was gathered from the sample amounted to 310 students. Respondents were chosen randomly by simple random sampling technique.

3.2 The Optional Solutions used by the Teachers to Highlight the Challenges in Implementing Blended Learning

The optional strategies used by the teachers to highlight the challenges in implementing blended learning grouped into prior class strategies and during class strategies which aimed to be easily applied by the teachers. Prior class strategies used by the teachers before teaching process. While, during class

strategies used by the teachers during teaching process.

A. Prior Class Solutions

Based on the data in research finding showed that the optional strategies used by the teachers related to prior class strategies consisted of (1) preparing everything; material, method and equipment in advance to make the preparation in teaching more optimal, (2) coming early for study again to be clearly, (3) mixing and matching clothes to make it attractive outfit, (4) having good time management as a teacher so that the class management becomes better, (5) making class contract and rules, (6) lighten the task load on students by giving assignments according to their abilities with allowing them to choose whether they want to make their own or in groups.

It can be described that the optional strategies used by the teachers such as, preparing everything; material, method and equipment in advance to make the preparation in teaching more optimal, coming early for study again to be clearly and having good time management as a teacher so that the class management becomes better related to prior class strategies could highlight the challenges faced by the teachers when lack of teachers' preparations in teaching.

The finding above is in line with Cicek (2013) which stated that by having a good preparation, the planned activity can be done systematically and effectively since the preparation guides and helps to do something, so that lesson plan is needed in order to lead teachers to do activities in the class effectively. In addition, Terada (2019) who defined classroom management as the methods and strategies that educators adopt in maintaining the environment that is conducive for students' success in learning.

The challenges faced by the teacher stated that less attractive and untidy teachers' outfit could affect the teacher's confidence in teaching. In order to highlight the challenge, the teacher used to mix and match clothes which aimed to make it attractive outfit. Therefore, the teacher could feel confidence in teaching,

Based on the data in research finding above teachers experienced dealing with students were less discipline and being out of control. Making class contract and rules are the optional strategies used by the teachers to highlight the challenges which aimed to remind students that there were consequences for misbehavior.

The finding above is in line with Griffith, D. & Adam (2019) which stated that in dealing with student's indiscipline, the teacher must create and enforce discipline plans; such that the students will be provided with acknowledged consequences for misbehavior.

The optional strategies used by the teacher such as, lighten the task load on students by giving assignments according to their abilities with allowing them to choose whether they want to make their own or in groups could highlight the challenges related toward overwhelmed with dense material and students complained because of so many assignments.

B. During Class Solutions

Based on the data in research finding showed that the optional strategies used by the teachers related to prior class strategies consisted of (1) resending the material in google classroom or whatsapp group, (2) giving reward and punishment for students, (3) trying to adapt with the situation, (4) writing the instructions of the assignment on the whiteboard, (5) taking the students who are being out of control to the counseling guidance for follow-up, (6) engaging students when

learning process through interaction and explaining the unclear instructions of the assignment in details, (7) approaching the students for giving advices and motivation, (8) students playing games, (9) creating learning activities such as, mind mapping and group discussion, (10) innovating when teaching for example when teaching about English song, teacher asked what song they like and then play it so they feel interested when learning.

It can be described that the optional strategies used by the teachers such as, resending the material in google classroom or whatsapp group and giving reward and punishment for students could highlight the challenges related dealing with students who experienced trouble in internet network, less attendance for no reasons, less of students' concentration, even didn't do the assignment and broken projector. Therefore, students could learn through the material resent in google classroom and teachers who experienced broken projector could resend the material through whatsapp group so that students can see the learning material.

The challenge faced by the teacher such as, teacher experienced noisy situation caused by students could be highlighted with the optional strategies used by the teacher such as, trying to adapt with the situation and approaching the students for giving advices and motivation. Therefore, teacher can create a conducive situation and learning process runs well organize.

The optional strategies used by the teacher such as, writing the instructions of the assignment on the whiteboard so that teacher can be less of speaking loudly could highlight the challenges related to the volume of the voice became coughing and hoarse because the room is large and there were so many students made teacher felt tension.

It can be told that when teachers faced the challenges such as, dealing with students who was being out of control or misbehavior could highlight with the optional strategies used by the teachers such as, taking the students who are being out of control to the counseling guidance for follow-up.

In order to highlight the challenges faced by the teachers dealing with students rarely gave feedback during discussion session, students didn't do assignment according to instructions given by the teachers. Teachers used strategies such as, engaging students when learning process through interaction and explaining the unclear instructions of the assignment in details which aimed the challenges will be highlighted.

The optional strategies used by the teachers such as, approaching the students for giving advices and motivation could highlight the challenges related dealing with students who were making a noise which aimed to create an ease learning environment.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Keramida (2014) which stated that motivating the students and creating an ease environment in class are important to be noticed by the teacher since it can lower students' anxiety, increase their confidence, and encourage their willingness to communicate. However, the previous research conducted by Keramida (2014) was gathered from fifteen students in the third grade of a lower secondary school and qualitative research techniques were employed in the case study.

It can be told that the optional strategies used by the teachers such as, teachers involved students with playing games could highlight the challenges faced by the teachers when dealing with students who were sleepy, lack of energy and less of attention and dealing with students

who were making a noise which aimed to make students felt enthusiast and focus in learning process.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Ardianto (2017) which stated that games helped both the teacher and students in teaching and learning process. Games provided a fun atmosphere that can avoid class boredom, increase students' motivation, and help students to improve their cognitive and motoric skills. The previous research conducted by Ardianto (2017) was gathered from teachers' perspective. There were two teachers was chosen to be interviewed.

The challenges faced by the teacher when one of the facilities weren't be able to use for instance, the broken projector made teacher couldn't present the material in powerpoint could highlight with the optional strategies used by the teacher such as, creating learning activities for example: mind mapping and group discussion activities.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Fatiloro (2015) which stated that in handling English teaching problems, teachers must use a variety of methods for teaching the English language to make students interested in learning through used role-play and downloaded a song and let students listen to it in order to be enjoyable with limited facilities. However, the previous research conducted by Fatiloro (2015) was gathered from teachers' perspective and students' perspective as Second Language (ESL) in Nigeria.

Based on the data in research finding above the challenges faced by the teachers dealing with students' lack of interest in learning showed from the signs such as, students rarely gave feedback during discussion session could highlight with the optional strategies used by the teachers such as, innovating when

teaching for example when teaching about English song, teacher asked what kind of songs they like and then play it. Therefore, students felt enjoyable in learning which means they felt interesting in learning.

The finding above is in line with the finding from Fatiloro (2015) which stated that in handling English teaching problems, teachers must use a variety of methods for teaching the English language to make students interested in learning through used role-play and downloaded a song and let students listen to it in order to be enjoyable when learning process.

Conclusions

Based on the results finding and discussion in the previous chapter, the researcher drew the conclusion. It can be concluded that the challenges in implementing blended learning faced by the teachers at SMA PGRI 4 Denpasar. There are two main categories in challenges identified, namely internal factors and external factors. The challenges related to the teachers' internal factors including low of motivation, lack of interest, anxiety and lack of confidence. The challenges related to the teachers' external factors including students' behavior, complex curriculum, time selection, environmental situation and facilities.

In addition, the optional solutions that could highlight the identified challenges are provided for each of the factors contributions to the challenges. Besides, the optional solutions are also grouped into prior and during class solutions that could be easily applied by the teachers. Based on the result of this study, teachers can understand to anticipate the challenges and be able to use the proper solutions to highlight the challenges.

There are also some suggestions than can be made based on the result of this study. The teachers must develop their skills in teaching English with combining technology so that can make learning process more interesting and boost students' interest in learning English. The teachers should adapt their strategy with this condition to make the fun and effective learning, know their students' characteristics in learning the language, having positive attitude to motivate the students that will balance the balance of students' lack of knowledge. As a good teachers, knowing the challenges and strategies in implementing blended learning can help teachers so that the English teaching and learning process can run well and teachers always remind the students before the learning process to always comply with the current health protocols, namely washing hands, maintaining distance and wearing mask. The teachers as a role model should obey with these rules of health protocols.

Hopefully, the result of this research can be a reference as the overview or additional insight for other researchers who do advanced research about teachers' challenges in implementing blended learning. It also can provide an alternative source for the next researcher to get a better and more accurate result.

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