

AN INDONESIAN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL NOVICE TEACHER AND STUDENTS' VOICES ON ONLINE ENGLISH CLASS

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Abstract. The present study portrays the voices of a novice English teacher and her students on online English class amidst Covid-19 pandemic within the frame of interview study. This study was conducted in a private vocational school in West Java, Indonesia. The participants were a new English teacher and two classes of grade 11 students. The obtained data was analysed qualitatively. The findings indicated that both English teacher and students felt online learning had negative impact to their psychology since it led to the feeling of anxiety and depressed. It also showed that they expected that normal situation comes back soon in order that the teaching learning process takes place inside real school and classrooms for better outcomes.

Keywords: *English class, online class, student's voice, teacher's voice*

Introduction

Online class is conducted after School closures by the government as the right decision in educational field to avoid Covid-19 spread. However, in many Indonesian schools, online learning raised serious problem especially dealing with poor or unstable internet network and students' insufficient devices. This, in turn, resulted unsatisfying quality teaching and learning.

In a broader sense, voice involves what a person says, thinks, and views about things (Canning, 2016). The presence of teacher's and student's voice hints that they are aware about the important issues dealing with their school life (including teaching and learning process) and they expect better changes (Cook-Sather, 2019). Student's voice can help marginalized or alienated students to have opportunity to boost their engagement and play key role in school betterment (Cook-Sather, 2019). Students' voices are as input for teachers. They invite the teachers to listen to the voices and to be aware of their expectation in the classroom for better quality teaching (Mayes, Black, & Finneran 2020). Teachers and students who possess a voice indicate they possess a potential chance to articulate what is in mind and heart and to be heard by others for better improvements (Cook-Sather, 2006). Regarding voices from school people on online class amidst Covid-19 pandemic, some studies have been found such as Mulyani, Yugafiati, & Fatia (2021) and Emon, Greene, & Timonen (2021). Unfortunately, studies focusing on both teacher and students have not been found. Therefore, this study is aimed to describe the voices from both teacher and students based on their experience experiencing online class amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

Method

This research is an interview study. It was conducted at a private vocational school in West Java, Indonesia. The participants were an English teacher and students of eleventh grade of the school (two classes). The teacher was a novice English teacher who has experience 6 months teaching English at the school. The participants took part in this research voluntarily. The interviews were conducted twice. The first interview was in the form of written interview, while the second was an oral one. The second interview was conducted through WhatsApp Voice Note. It was chosen because of its practicality and accessibility by the students. In addition, in the first interview, the questions were close-ended, while the second was the open-ended ones. However, in the second interview, there were only eight students who participates. Then, the gained data was analysed qualitatively using Miles & Huberman (1990) framework.

Result and Discussion

Students' voices

Based on the interviews, it is found that the students have both positive and negative – but mostly negative – responses toward the process of teaching and learning English online. At a positive side, they say that online learning enabled them to come to virtual classroom studying many subjects including English. They can meet classmates and English teacher while they are staying at home, without leaving the house. This voice is clearly stated by the students. As the examples, let's see what have been said by student 4, 5 and 7.

Online learning offers me flexible time for doing the assignments, resting, and helping parents. Besides, it gives me more time to be with my family. Unfortunately, I frequently feel annoyed when the electricity goes out, the cell phone battery and internet quota run out, while the class is still going on. And because it takes too long and hours to look at the cell phone screen, my eyes are exposed to cell phone radiation. I hope this pandemic will pass soon so I can do my normal activities again like before. (Student # 4)

It is fun to have classes without going to school. It can be done in my house. But I think it is not effective because learning English needs practice in order to avoid mispronunciation. And I can't write the material well. I hope there are no more online classes. (Student #5)

I can browse learning materials on internet by myself easily like on google and YouTube. However, it [online learning] makes me less interact with my classmates. It is boring because all subject provides similar activities. And sometimes, internet connection is poor. (Student #7)

They are right. Virtual or online class can be accessed anywhere when internet connection is available. It gives students big opportunities to stay safe at their house while at the same time they can continue schooling. Moreover, they can save their time and energy that they usually spend for coming to the real school and classroom.

On the other hand, they also say that learning English in virtual classroom is ineffective. During the class, they rarely practice to produce English sounds, pronounce English words, sentences, and texts. This, probably, due to some limitations such as poor internet access, insufficient / no supporting-devices, and limited internet quota. In fact, practice is one of the most important strategies for successful language learning (Griffiths, 2004; Oxford, 1990)

In addition, they think that online class boring, restricting, and distressing. They said that online learning is boring since all school subjects are held online. It makes them watch screen for hours every day to attend many classes. Moreover, it makes their eyes irritated. It is also restricting since the class is virtual, not in a real classroom. Because of that, when they have problem with the material, they commonly find difficulties to deliver questions to the teacher. Internet connection and limited internet quota are frequently as the reasons. Because of this limitedness of online class, they have anxiety facing final examination. They fear that the questions would be difficult to answer since some materials are not mastered. Finally, they worry about getting bad scores in this subject. In short, English class produce fear and anxiety in school students. This is in line with the work of Baloran (2020). In addition, anxiety is experienced not only by school students but also university students as reported by Arribathi et al (2021).

Because of the aforementioned reasons, they expect that Covid-19 disappear from this country as soon as possible. They hope that situations return to normal so that they can come to real classroom and interact with their classmates and teacher face-to-face.

Teacher's voice

Not only students, the teacher also views online teaching as a burden. The teacher frequently feels confused and dejected. The teaching and learning process are commonly annoyed by poor internet connection, thus the material cannot be conveyed well. Many times, it makes her students misunderstand or do not understand the material that she has delivered. It leads to the low rate of students' engagement in the English class and their' assignment submissions. With this condition, she feels confused because, in one hand, she has to value students' participations, engagement, and works; but on the other hand, many students do not fulfil these requirements. To overcome that problem, the teacher attempted some efforts. Firstly, she tries to make students to be comfortable with the atmosphere of the class. She invites students to tell their feelings and views about the subject. Secondly, she encourages students to invest their time to do extra study autonomously outside the class. This is in accordance with many scholars such as Oxford (1990), Lengkanawati (2017) who suggest language teachers to encourage language learners to be autonomous language learners. It is because learning autonomy is a key to success language learning. The third step is employing simple teaching materials and lowering or reducing the teaching objectives without ignoring the existing curriculum. Her step is in accordance with the Decree of the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture Number 719/P/2020 which provides flexibility for schools and teachers to simplify the curriculum including basic competencies and teaching materials in the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

For a better process and outcomes of the teaching and learning English, the teacher has similar expectation with the students. She wishes that the pandemic goes away soon from this country. For school students, face-to-face mode of teaching and learning process is better than online ones.

Conclusion

Indonesian vocational school students see online English class has both positive and negative sides. In the positive side, they have more times to be spent with all family members inside their house since they do not need to go to the school. They also can access rich learning materials fast from the internet. In contrast, in the negative side,

both English teacher and students voice that the teaching and learning English online is ineffective since they find limitedness for students to understand the material and to practice speaking English caused by limited internet quota, poor or unstable internet connection, unsupported or insufficient devices. Besides, it is also seen as a burden since the teaching quality and learning outcomes are low and unsatisfying. Finally, they expect that normal situation come back soon so that the teaching and learning process can be held inside real classrooms face-to-face to reach better English learning achievements.

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