



TEACHERS' REFLECTION ON THEIR PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS USING ONLINE METHOD

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Abstract

Since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted people's normal lives across the globe, educational institutions have been compelled to embrace virtual education. This mixed-method study aimed to investigate the teachers' preparedness for online teaching at an elementary school in West Java in Indonesia and to find out the challenges they face while teaching young learners. It employed a close-ended questionnaire followed by interviews to collect necessary data from seven purposively selected English language teachers based on their availability and experience in online teaching. The data demonstrated that most of the teachers in the context were well prepared to teach online. The findings entailed their mastery of necessary technical skills, prior experience and responsiveness with online teaching, commitment to carry out their duties as teachers and efficiency in time management in online teaching. However, the results also revealed a number of issues from some respondents such as limited knowledge in using different virtual media, high internet cost, lack of support from the education department, unstable internet connectivity, limited cellular broadband data, lack of skills in navigating available technology, inadequate knowledge of internet technology, unfamiliarity with online resources, and insufficient training. The research will help English language teachers, educational policymakers, and other stakeholders adopt more successful online education.

Keywords: Online teaching, teaching English to young learners, teachers' preparedness.

INTRODUCTION

Young learners aim to stimulate all aspects of child development, including physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and language development, so that they can develop optimally. Each aspect of the child's development affects each other. According to Nuryadi (2015), the surrounding environment, culture, gender, parents' expectations are some of the factors that influence the maturity of children. As a young learner teachers, they must realize that they should not make the child's age the basis for maturity. Thus, any activities given to young learners, including the provision of English lessons, must be

adjusted to the abilities and stages of child development. Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) is the age range from about six to twelve years, which is the age group in which children's development progresses rapidly. On the other hand, the writers have experienced six years old wondering if dolls I use in storytelling are somehow alive. Twelve years old, have independently acquired more English outside of school than at school in some context (albeit without the language-related educational opportunities of English lessons), often through watching subtitled films and spend hours on English video games (Lindgren & Munoz, 2012; Sundvist & Wikstrom, 2015).

The teachers' role is key with young learners (YLS). Ideally, teachers function as a model of language and intercultural awareness, a model of the teacher as a reader, as a learner, and most importantly a model of the language to be studied. Wilden & Porsch (2017), argue that teachers are concerned to the student centred of the FL (Foreign Language) classroom compared to the basic education approach which is generally more student-centred. Young language learners rely heavily on teachers because they have not acquired a language repertoire in English, confident general learning strategies or usually the opportunity and maturity for responsible learner autonomy (J, 2015). To support inexperienced learners, TEYL researchers recommend focusing on 'learning literacy' which can help avoid the potentially turbulent consequences of children aged more than challenged, unfocused and anxious (Ellis, 2018; Ellis & Ibrahim, 2015).

This makes young learners' teachers are the hardest job, and this agrees with Minicozzy (2016), that young learners' teachers have a large burden or even more difficult to prepare for early childhood learning and development. For this reason, as young learners' teachers, it is best to have sufficient preparedness to face teaching and learning activities. According to Korth et al., (2009), states that teachers who have the preparedness to learn in conditions will improve teachers' quality. This opinion can be concluded that the preparedness of teachers in teaching is very important, especially since the world is experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic which has an impact on any field, including education. The impact obtained in the field of education is that learning cannot be done at school but home. Learning is carried out by teachers and children through online learning to run effectively, preparation is required by the school and parents of students' parents. The school and the students' parents provide facilities in the form of Laptop or Smartphone devices and the necessary internet packages.

Related to this, online learning with Synchronous and Asynchronous methods should be carried out to be more effectively and efficient. According to Shahabadi & Uplane (2015), synchronous and asynchronous learning tools, such as threaded discussions, instant messaging, and blogs, play an important role in humanizing online course by replicating the classroom experience of information exchange and social construct, not just between learners and teachers but among the learners as well, people might just know it by reference to a particular vendor, tool or software program that enables the creation and delivery of synchronous e-learning, synchronous e-learning is live, real-time (and usually scheduled), asynchronous e-learning is similar to synchronous e-learning which is a learner-centred process which uses online learning resources to facilitate information sharing regardless of the constraints of time and place among a network of people.

Based on these statements that teachers' preparedness is very much needed in doing online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, the writers formulated the problem formulation "how is the preparedness of teaching English for young learners using the online methods?". And the purpose of this study was to obtain information of the preparedness

for teaching English to young learners using online method. In recent studies, many mention that the preparedness of teachers is very influential on the learning process, especially by teaching young learners with a prominent level of difficulty. And with the Covid-19 pandemic, learning is a bit hampered; making teachers must have a backup plan in how they are prepared to face learning even with pandemic conditions. The preparedness of teachers in teaching young learners, especially in English material makes teachers must think about how to make students understand the material, and with the online asynchronous and synchronous method students and teachers can experience online learning a varied, interesting, and can also adapted to the circumstance (Shahabadi & Uplane, 2015).

According to Kimosop (2015), teachers' preparedness for an effective classroom, and only focuses on teacher preparedness to implement effective classroom and aims to examine whether teachers can manage instructional and structure content to be delivered. This writer mentions there is a need for teachers to complement skills and knowledge by studying modern teaching methods, therefore, teachers are expected to help support formal education because they are the driving force of learning in the classroom. In addition, Hamida (2020), focused on exploring the way teachers deal with problems related to remote education since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic until recently. The results showed that technological competence as well as conceptual understanding of online teaching has not been the concerns of all teachers before the competence, yet psychological barrier over the use of technology and test of the fittest between lesson and learning application has hindered some teachers to pursue an intensive use of the technology. The study adds to literature the resource which describes a holistic journey of teachers facing the issue on remote education during the pandemic. Meanwhile, Manalo & Benavides (2021), assessed how ready the public-school elementary teachers are to teach online. It is measured by self-efficacy of public elementary teachers on online teaching in terms of capability to organize and capability to execute, readiness of public elementary teachers to teach online, and the challenges faced by the public elementary teachers on online teaching. The challenges faced by the young learners' teachers on online teaching, the foremost problems encountered by the teachers is the poor and unstable internet connectivity and the limited broadband mobile data, teachers unfamiliarity with the online resources, teachers lack the skills in navigating the available technology, and the last is the insufficient seminar and training on online teaching. Besides, Ventayen (2018), explores the readiness of the teachers of department of education in open and distance education environment which includes technical skills, experience with online teaching and learning, attitudes towards online learning, and the time management and commitment. The results of the research indicated that teachers had a positive attitude, where the majority of the respondents are ready for online teaching. It is recommended that a virtual learning environment training should be implemented from the benefit of the teachers.

Based on the background of study above, the objectives of study are to find out the teachers' preparedness for teaching English to young learners using online methods and knowing the issues in teachers' young learners' preparedness in online teaching.

METHOD

This study used a mixed-method design where quantitative data was supplemented by qualitative data to achieve the research objectives. Mixed Methods Research is unique because the researcher can address multiple research objectives in one project (Creswell et al., 2007). The researchers used a 30-item survey questionnaire to collect data for the first

research objective, which is, to measure their preparedness in facing online learning. In addition, individual online interviews were conducted to collect data regarding the issues they face in online teaching of English language to the young learners.

The authors collected data from seven English language teachers for young learners from an elementary school in West Java. First, the data was collected through a questionnaire comprising 30 questions. The authors primarily depended on relevant literature to prepare the questionnaire. The first draft of questionnaire was checked by the researchers and an external colleague for reliability where all four researchers gave almost same ratings. It was then piloted among three respondents to understand user-friendliness, check for any possible language errors, and more importantly, to assess if it contains the appropriate content and able to measure the required skills. The questionnaire was slightly modified based on the feedback from emerged from piloting before finalizing. Seven English language teachers and elementary school in West Java region in Indonesia were purposively selected based on their commitment and availability to respond to both the survey questionnaire and interview. The other criteria behind their selection was, each of them were involved in online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The quantitative data has been analyzed and presented in percentage.

At the second stage, the authors conducted individualized online interview for in-depth responses on the issues they are facing since their emergency shift to online teaching due to COVID-19. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each interview took five to eight minutes and generated about 2,500 words of transcribed data in total. The authors categorized the interview responses following interaction model analysis in four stages as mentioned by Miles & Huberman (2005, cited in Ayuni et al., 2021). Data condensation was done in the next stage. Condensation is different from reducing data, where the authors use condensation to process data by adjusting the data collected without having to sort (parse data) while data reduction tends to sort out and then selected existing data and discard data that is not appropriate. Finally, the qualitative data was narrated based on their prominent themes emerged from the interviews. According to Assjari & Permanarian (2010), the term narrative comes from the verb "to tell" (as a story) in detail and used to describe human action. According to Creswell et al., (2007), narrative research studies reveal individual life experiences from time to time. Narrative research consists of obtaining qualitative data from individuals and then reflecting on their life experiences through collaboration between researchers and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interactions with the environment (Downey & Clandinin, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The writers divide the results and discussions into two parts, namely; (1) Preparedness of Teachers for Young Learners in Teaching Online and (2) The Issues in Teachers Preparedness in Online Teaching. The data and discussion are explained below:

A. Preparedness of Teachers for Young Learners in Teaching Online

in determining the results of the preparedness of teachers' young learners. The writers categorized teachers' preparedness through 4 aspects, technical skills, experience, attitude, time management and commitment.

1. Technical skills

In the first aspect, it discusses the preparedness of teachers' young learners in the skills to use existing technology, according to Adrianto (2011), skills are needed by teachers

in carrying out their roles and functions in order to achieve the goals that have been set. To find out the preparedness of teachers in the aspect of technical skills, the writers give 8 questions related to preparedness regarding technical skills.

The first question asks about the availability of media such as laptops, computers, and smartphones and whether they can operate them properly. The results obtained from this question 85.7% of teachers' young learners have laptop, computer, and smartphones media and can operate them well, while the remaining 14.3% do not have these media. The data generated is supported by Ferdianto, Dwiniasih (2020), that the teachers impressed during accessing Schoology as the e-learning platform which is the easiness features offered.

The second question asks whether teachers can easily access the internet anywhere and anytime. The results obtained 85.7% of teachers can easily access the internet anywhere and anytime, while the remaining 14.3% is not easy to access the internet and can only accessed at certain times and certain place.

The third question is about using online application media such as google classroom, schoology, etc. The result is that 71.4% of teachers' young learners can use and operate well, while the remaining 28.6% cannot use online application media.

The fourth question is about using live session media such as zoom, google meet, etc. The result is that 85.7% of teachers can operate the media, while the remaining 14.3% cannot operate the media.

The fifth question about making an attractive online learning plan easily. The result is 71.4% of teachers can plan interesting online learning easily, while the remaining 28.6% are less able to plan interesting online learning.

The sixth question is whether the teachers can use presentation software such as power point. The result is 85.7% of teachers can use power point software in learning, while the remaining 14.3% do not have the ability to use the software.

The seventh question is about the ability to use data processing software such as Microsoft word. The results obtained are 71.4% of teachers can use data processing software, and the remaining 28.6% do not have this ability.

The last question in the technical skills aspect is about the familiarity of the teachers in using social media such as Facebook, and Twitter, the result is 100% or all teachers are familiar in using social media, especially Facebook.

2. Experience

The second aspect is preparedness which is measured through the experience of the teachers, here the writers give 4 questions which contain the teachers' experience in using application technology in online teaching. According to (Moelyono, Natsir, & Rahmawati, 2015), education and teaching experience are absolutely a concern in improving the learning process and increasing teachers professionalism, for teachers who do not have sufficient teaching experience are also considered for improvement and evaluation.

The first question is about the experience of teachers using technology to support previous face-to-face learning. The result is that 100% of teachers have used technology in learning before the pandemic.

The second question is about the experience of teachers who have conducted online learning instruction training. The result is that 85.7% of teachers have attended online instructional training, while the remaining 14.3% have not attended online instructional training.

The third question is about the experience of teachers using online discussions to teach. The result is that only 14.3% of teachers have had online discussions, the remaining 85.7% of teachers have never had online discussions.

The last question from the experience aspect is whether the teacher has ever used chat while teaching. The result is 100% of teachers have used chat in teaching and even now still use chat in online teaching media.

3. Attitude

The writers give 3 questions regarding the attitudes of teachers in dealing with teaching using online methods.

The first question is about the belief that online learning is as rigorous as classroom teaching. The result is 57.1% believe that online teaching is as rigorous as classroom teaching, the remaining 42.9% of teachers do not believe it and believe that classroom learning is more rigorous.

The second question is that quality learning experiences can occur without interacting with students directly. The results show that 57.1% of teachers believe that quality learning experiences can occur without having to interact with students directly, and the remaining 42.9% of teachers do not agree with that, teachers believe that quality learning can occur only when interacting directly with students.

The last question from the attitude aspect is about feeling comfortable communicating online. The result is 57.1% of teachers do not feel comfortable communicating online, especially when teaching, the remaining 42.9% of teachers feel comfortable communicating online.

4. Time Management and Commitment

The writers give 5 questions regarding the time management and commitment in dealing with teaching using online method.

The first question is whether teachers can post online classes 4 to 5 times per week. The result is 57.1% of teachers regularly post online classes 4 to 5 a week, while the remaining 42.9% of teachers post less than 4 online classes per week.

The second question is about whether the teachers can manage time well. The result is that 85.7% of teachers can manage their time very well, while the remaining 14.3% of teachers are less able to manage their time.

The third question is whether teachers are flexible in dealing with students with problems such as due dates, absenteeism, and assignments. The result is 100% teachers flexible in dealing with students.

The fourth question is whether teachers are sufficiently organized and tend to plan in their teaching. The result is that 100% of teachers plan in learning and are quite organized.

The last question in this aspect is whether the teacher is responsive to his students. The result is 100% of teachers responsive in class and outside the classroom.

B. The Issues in Teachers Preparedness in Online Teaching

In terms of preparedness of teachers' young learners, the writers provides 10 statements about common issues that occur in online learning. The results for the first question with statements about poor and unstable internet connectivity. 85.7% of teachers experience problems with unstable internet connectivity, while 14.3% of other teachers have no problem with that issue.

The results for the second statement about limited mobile broadband data. The result is that 71.4% of teachers experience issues in their limited mobile broadband data, while the remaining 28.6% do not make limited mobile broadband data an issue.

The results of the third statement about the lack of skills in navigating available technology. The result is that 71.4% of teachers are less skilled in navigating available technologies, the remaining 28.6% of teachers are skilled in navigating existing technologies.

The results of the fourth statement about inadequate knowledge with internet technology. The result is that 71.4% of teachers have inadequate knowledge of internet technology, while the remaining 28.6% of teachers have more knowledge with internet technology.

The results of the fifth statement about being unfamiliar with online resources. The result is that 71.4% of teachers are not familiar with using online resources, while the remaining 28.6% of teachers are accustomed to using online resources.

The results of the sixth statement about the lack of ability to use various online teaching methods. The result is that 71.4% of teachers are less able to use various online teaching methods, while the remaining 28.6% of teachers can use various online teaching methods.

The results of the seventh statement about the lack of seminars and training on online teaching. The result is that 57.1% of teachers do not attend training or seminars on online teaching, the remaining 42.9% of teachers attend training or seminars on online teaching.

The results of the eighth statement about limited knowledge about the use of different virtual learning environments. The result is that 100% of teachers have limited knowledge about virtual learning or different online media.

The results of the ninth statement about lack of support from the education department to provide media such as computers. The result is 85.7% of teachers agree on this statement that the education department does not facilitate computer media in schools, the remaining 14.3% disagree with this statement.

The results of the last statement about the use of internet technology that incur too large a cost. The result is 85.7% of teachers agree with this statement, and 14.3% of teachers do not agree with this statement.

The results showed that the participants were English teachers for young learners at one of elementary schools in West Java. Identifying that preparedness is important in learning online. On the other hand, the teachers stated that some preparations needed to be done and problems would hinder online teaching.

The teachers said that they preparedness in online teaching was quite good, this is known from the results obtained regarding the technical skills of teachers who have media such as computers, or laptops and smartphones and are able to operate them well, the teachers in one of elementary schools in West Java know the current learning situation, in this case, the teachers are aware that there will be changes in the learning support media and think that smartphones, laptop, computers will often be used in online learning. This is in line with Clark & Mayer (2016), online learning can be characterized as a guide delivered on a gadget that is expected to support learning.

The results show that preparedness can also be seen from teachers who access the internet anywhere and anytime, because the learning situation, especially in one of elementary schools in West Java, allows teachers not to have to always use the internet, and of course teachers are aware that internet is very important for learning then. This is in line with Rosalina et al., (2020), online learning is completely dependent on internet network access.

The next result in preparedness in the technical skills aspect is that majority of teachers can operate online application media and live sessions such as Google classroom, edmodo, schoology, zoom, Google meet, etc. The results also show that most teachers can operate software such as Microsoft word, and power point. The teachers consider this application to be necessary to master during the current situation, in line with Hamida (2020), the conceptual basis of online learning, there are many technological applications that can be accessed by online teaching teachers that need to be mastered, there are application for live teaching session such as zoom, Ms team, Google meet, discord, etc. There are also platforms for learning management systems such as Google classroom, Moodle, edmodo, schoology, blackboard, and so on.

The next results are that the most teachers can make interesting learning plans, teachers consider the teaching and learning process to be inseparable from class management or planning for a teacher, especially when entering online classes, educators must carefully organize and plan distance learning as effectively as possible. In line with Nurlaila (2018), learning planning is important because the active learning process between teachings and students is based on the plans made. According to Kurniawati et al., (2021), lesson plans are also prepared to find out how capable students and educators are to achieve the planned goals.

Preparedness in the aspect of teacher experience, according to Wiranti (2021), teaching experience has a significant effect on teacher professionalism. For the first statement the results are that teachers agree with the statement that they have used technology to support face-to-face learning. Of course, this can be interpreted that the teachers already know some of the existing technologies before online learning is carried out. According to Suryatni (2021), the existence of technology in the educational process has a crucial role in supporting educators and students for face-to-face and online learning.

Preparedness in the experience aspect of teachers who have attended seminars of online learning instruction training, and this training is certainly very much needed for teachers to be able to add insight in teaching using online methods. This is in line with that online instructional training for teachers in a solution for learning preparedness because teachers training and motivation are the most important factors in online learning (Chao et al., 2005; Hauck & Stickler, 2006; Hung, 2015).

The results of the preparedness question in the experience aspect of majority of teachers have used learning using chat even until know, because its practical and does have to release a lot of mobile data in its use, this is in line with Lestari (2021), some of the

advantages of chat media are easy, practical use, fast and save internet data, and can be accessed online with mobile phones.

Next is the preparedness of teachers in their attitude towards online learning. The first statement discusses online learning strictly as classroom teaching learning. The results only have a difference of 1 teacher who does not agree with this statement, because the teachers assumes that online learning certainly has many shortcomings and cannot be equated with learning in class. In line with (Astuti et al., (2020), explaining that sometimes online learning issues can come from the teachers or students, the material presented is not understood dues to distance learning process, students who rarely collect assignments, or problems with facilities such as signals or the internet. And this makes teacher feel uncomfortable in online teaching.

Preparedness in terms of time management and commitment, most teachers can use their time well, this can be seen from the results of most teachers agree with the statement that teachers can manage time well and teachers plan in teaching and quite organized. In addition to time management, it is also about commitment, the results show that teachers are responsive to their students, flexible in dealing with students on issues such as due dates, absenteeism, and teachers post materials or assignments 4 to 5 times per week. The results received are in line with Subagya (2014), that commitment and good use of time can encourage teachers to create, innovate, and make every effort to accommodate the need of all learners.

Regarding issues on teaching preparedness using the online methods, the writers have sorted the issues from the biggest and the lowest. The first issue of teachers in online teaching preparedness is limited knowledge about the use of different virtual learning environments. Teachers who previously used technology in face-to-face learning were online in basic technology because the current situation that still requires using technology makes teachers must think and are required to know other technologies, especially online. In line with Ningsih (2020), that teachers can always explore the potential that exists in them, especially in the use of technological devices so that learning objectives can be achieved and learning activities are more interesting.

The next biggest problem is that internet connectivity is unstable and the use of internet technology costs too much. The problem is that almost all schools in certain areas have the same problem, in line with Astuti et al., (2020), that the technology is less supportive and the package insufficient mobile data and signal where they live is a common obstacle in online learning situations. The third biggest problem is that teachers are not accustomed to using online learning methods; this is due to their inadequate knowledge, lack of ability to use various online teaching methods. According to Astuti et al., (2020), issues in using online media are not a barrier to educating students. And this is because teachers routinely attend online instructional training to add insight into online teaching, the issues statement regarding the lack of participating in online instruction training is low and can mean that teachers do not consider the lack of training as the biggest issue because most teachers in One of elementary school in West Java have attended the instructional online teaching training.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents data from a questionnaire and interviews with seven English language teachers of young learners from a school in West Java, Indonesia, about their preparedness to teach online and the challenges they face when doing so. The findings revealed that the

majority of respondents are well prepared to deal with online teaching. This was due to the fact that, they were able to master existing technological media, they already had some experience with the latest technology and online media, they have positive attitudes to respond well to online learning, they can utilize and use time efficiently, and they are committed to online teaching. However, the results of the study also divulged several critical issues relevant to online teaching. They include (1) limited knowledge about various virtual learning platforms, (2) unstable internet connection, (3) lack of logistic support from the education department, (4) excessive costs to use internet technology, (5) limited mobile broadband data, (6) lack of skills to navigate the available technology, (7) unfamiliarity with online resources, (8) inadequate knowledge of internet technology, and (9) lack of professional trainings. The findings will benefit English language teachers, education policy makers and all relevant stakeholders to implement more effective online teaching.

The findings of the study will benefit English language teachers, teacher trainers and educational policy makers to implement more effective online teaching. Future research on the topic may involve a larger sample size and employ different methodological lenses to validate the findings.

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