



HOW DO TEACHERS COPE WITH BLENDED LEARNING? A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY AT HIGH SCHOOLS IN LOMBOK – WEST NUSA TENGGARA

Bq. Nurul Alya^{1*}; Henny Soepriyanti²; Untung Waluyo³

English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
University of Mataram, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: baiqnurulalya@gmail.com

Abstract: Following the policy of New Normal in the post Covid-19 Pandemic, the Indonesian government has begun introducing blended learning activities. Because of this policy, teachers have been encouraged to establish a plan for using blended learning that is aligned with the learning interests of the students. Therefore, the emphasis of this research was on the technique that the teacher and school administration employed in order to improve the English language education system after the COVID-19 outbreak. The purpose of this study was to provide a description of the approach taken by English teachers following the establishment of the new normal in the time period following the Covid-19 Pandemic. A descriptive qualitative methodology was utilized for this investigation. Participants in the study were English teachers working at SMAX, SMAY, and SMAZ schools located in Mataram City. In this particular study, the methods of data collecting that were utilized were observation, interviews, and documentation. According to the findings of the study, educators devised a variety of instructional methods in order to deal with the challenges posed by blended learning modes, which placed equal emphasis on synchronous and asynchronous learning. The findings of the research answered well the guiding research questions. The study concludes that teachers encountered significant challenges when utilizing asynchronous learning mode. The challenges arose as a consequence of insufficient student involvement as well as inadequate assistance for internet connection. As a result of the decreased amount of time allotted for learning, it was discovered that certain teachers struggle with managing their time effectively.

Keywords: teachers' strategies, blended learning, teaching English

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INTRODUCTION

The present study report was conducted during the pandemic time. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the status and conditions of education in Indonesia underwent significant shifts. During lock-down the Government replaced face-to-face learning activities into online learning. Because of the widespread spread of the coronavirus epidemic, schools are compelled to run a mixture between face-face and online learning programs. Blended learning is implemented, even though it leaves hurdles and confusions among teachers and learners (Aji et.al. 2020).

This mode of learning shifted into blended learning when schools started to open again under strict social distancing. Literally, blended learning is a learning mode that combines face-to-face (conventional) teaching with online (remote) learning or internet-based teaching. This mixed learning mode is introduced with the hope of sustaining the policy preventing the spread of the covid-19 virus, or at the very least reducing its severity.

During covid-19, many schools in Indonesia apply blended learning. Apart from online learning from their own home, sometimes students also study in the classroom with predetermined time and a limited total of students. If the total of students in one class is 30, then during the pandemic, there were only 15 students in a class with a study time of 30 minutes to an hour. It is an effort to limit further transmission of the virus. With this condition, the course should be designed to maximize learning.



Blended learning mode suddenly came in the world of education since 2019, and became the newest thing teachers and students face in the classroom. Conducting blended learning mode of learning, especially online learning in covid-19 situation is possibly accompanied by some problems. Teachers and students might lack guidance on the use of technology. It means teachers and students lack readiness in using the platform. Therefore, it important to investigate what are teachers' strategies in employing blended learning in teaching English during covid-19 pandemic.

According to Hussamah (2014), blended learning is a learning mode or method that combines the advantages of traditional classroom instruction with those of online study. Learning using an internet connection is referred to as online learning or distance learning (Ghounane, 2020). This style of education is also known as "distance learning." Students who opt to pursue their education over the internet have the flexibility to study whenever and wherever they choose. Students have access to a wide range of communication tools, such as Google Classroom, video conferencing, phone or live chat, zoom, or a WhatsApp group, via which they may have conversations with their instructors. Learning in a blended setting and studying just online are two very different approaches to education. E-learning is limited to learning that takes place solely online, whereas blended learning incorporates both online and in-person instruction into its curriculum.

In designing blended learning course, teachers can start with a simple way. It can be discrete unit of learning, for example, a particular topic. First step is to establish clear learning goals for the topic. The second step is to design activities and strategies to help students meet the learning goals. The third step is to classify the activities into online and face-to-face. Writing the goal of effective learning objectives is a skill that every teacher must constantly hone (Kyriacou, 2010). Designing activities and strategies require a creative mind. Especially in this pandemic, teachers and students are faced with something new, such as online teaching and learning systems and applying the blended learning method in schools that have never previously used it.

Blended learning can take place either synchronously, such as through chat or videoconferencing, or asynchronously, through offline, e-mail, message boards, or forums. Blended learning can also take place in both of these ways simultaneously. The term "synchronous e-learning" refers to online instruction that fosters learning-focused engagement and that takes place in real time (and is often planned). On the other hand, asynchronous e-learning refers to the process of simultaneously teaching and learning via the use of an online platform. According to Hyder, et al. (2007), synchronous e-learning may be traced back to three key influences: the traditional classroom setting, the media, and professional conferences.

The purpose of developing blended learning is to incorporate the best features of classroom learning with the best features of online learning in order to encourage active self-learning by students while reducing the number of face-to-face time in class (Hussamah 2014). The aim of implementing blended learning can be stated as follows:

1. Helping students in their development by learning according to their learning styles and interest.
2. Provide teachers and students with meaningful opportunities for independent, useful, and continuous learning growth.
3. Students can have more scheduling flexibility as the program combines the best features of face-to-face and online learning. Students can engage in immersive environments through face-to-face section. The online section, on the other hand, provides students with rich multimedia content at any time and from any location as long as they have internet access.

Asynchronous learning, which is distinct from synchronous learning, simplifies the process of learning by employing online tools such as streaming media, social media, email,



and online discussion forums. According to Hrastinski (2008), this kind of learning fosters critical thinking, which in turn enables learners to reflect, engage with the content, and participate in the learning process. Learners in asynchronous contexts have convenient access to a variety of instructional materials, including audio and video lessons, handouts, postings, and PowerPoint presentations. During the COVID-19 epidemic, the usage of blended learning has been proven in several studies to assist instructors in the development of instructional techniques for the classroom teaching of the English language. The findings of this investigation were corroborated by an earlier study that was carried out by Lestari (2022). Her research demonstrates, via the use of evidence, that blended learning, a method of teaching English, is appropriate for use in language classrooms after the COVID-19 epidemic was brought under control. This research shows the implementation of blended learning as well as the challenges that are presented to teachers in the process of adopting blended learning.

In the current investigation, the researcher makes use of two different ideas in order to explain for the observed behavior. The first theory is that of Carman (2005), who argues that there are five critical factors to use blended learning in the classroom. Carman's theory is represented by the first theory. The live event, the online content, the partnerships, the assessments, and the material distribution make up these five crucial elements. The second theory is represented by Hofmann, (2014), who says that the problems of applying blended learning in the teaching of English include 1) Technology challenges, 2) Organizational challenges, and 3) Design issues. This theory is also known as the blended learning model.

RESEARCH METHOD

The approach utilized in this study is known as qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of the study was to get an understanding of the circumstances or environments in which individuals participate in research and address a problem or concern that has been remedied. In this study, a descriptive qualitative approach was taken in conjunction with a case study research design. This study was carried out at the senior high schools run by the state in the west of Lombok. Seven English instructors from SMANX, SMANY, and SMANZ were recruited to take part in this study as participants. These teachers were all currently employed in their respective countries. The writing of interview employed initials such as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, and T7 correspondingly. These initials went from teacher one to teacher seven. In order to maintain secrecy, the researcher utilized codes for each of the institutions that were the subject of the examination.

Interviews, observations, and documentations were the three methods that were used in order to gather the data. These are the three sorts of data collecting approaches. In the interview phase of this research study, the researchers utilized semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview will consist of both open-ended and closed-ended questions, depending on the topic. Within this phase of the interview, the researcher compiled a list of questions pertaining to how instructors implement the blended learning technique, teachers' challenges when implementing the blended learning method, and teachers' solutions to adapt to the blended learning method. Every subject was questioned for somewhere between fifteen and thirty minutes by the researcher. In order to prevent misunderstandings and make the participants feel more at ease when answering the questions, the interviews were conducted in Indonesian.

In addition, the researcher watched, took notes, or filmed the process of online learning as well as learning that took place in a traditional classroom setting. The researcher wired field notes into the classroom to document the teaching and learning activities that occurred there. The study looked at several online platforms, such as group discussion forums, that let students participate more actively in the online teaching and learning process.



After requesting a copy of the lesson plan from the English instructors and conducting an analysis of it, the researcher compiled the necessary paperwork. The researcher was able to determine, based on the study of the lesson plan, whether the process of teaching and learning was in agreement with the lesson plan that had been created or if it was not. For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed an approach to data analysis that was modeled after Miles and Huberman (1994). In descriptive qualitative research, the process of data analysis may be broken down into three distinct steps: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) deriving conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings from the observations indicate that the processes of teaching and learning at the research site had been carried out regularly in the classroom ever since the beginning of the year 2022. They delivered the learning content using this method of teaching and learning modes known as synchronous communication. The findings of this classroom observation and the findings of the interviews were supportive one another. It was asserted by each and every English instructor at SMAX, SMAY, and SMAZ that they delivered the curriculum to their students using a synchronous teaching and learning mode. As a consequence of this, all of the students were present in the classroom without any shifts being required, and the teaching and learning procedures were carried out routinely as they had been prior to the introduction of covid-19 into the educational system.

According to the findings of the document study, teachers developed their lesson plans before beginning instruction. The positive attitudes were displayed by participants such as T1, T3, T4, and T5 are evident. They were capable of providing a condensed explanation of the topic in accordance with the lesson plan. T2, T6, and T7 all confessed that they were unable to fulfill their lesson plans according to the proposed plan since the amount of time allocated for learning had been reduced to 90 minutes each week. Due to a lack of involvement from the students, the instructors stopped delivering the learning content via online delivery as of the beginning of the year 2022. They relied exclusively on their WhatsApp group chat as their internet outlet. Students in SMAX, SMAY, and SMAZ were seen to utilize WhatsApp group chats for communication only in extremely rare instances, according to the findings of the observations conducted in each grade. There were some kids in the group who decided to leave, and they did not return to the group under any circumstances.

The challenges that educators encountered when implementing the blended learning technique originated with the students. These challenges, according to the data, were identified from results of interviews, observations, and other forms of documentation. When students were doing their schoolwork online, it could be challenging for teachers to obtain their engagement. The fact that some students did not turn in the tasks assigned by their teachers was a source of frustration for many teachers. The teachers were required to wait for a significant amount of time and had to continuously remind the students to hand in the assignments timely.

According to the findings from the interviews, virtually all of the students were found to have cellphones; however, since they did not have access to the internet in the classroom, they were unable to join in the WhatsApp group. In the process of adopting blended learning, there are times when the students were still limited by the internet connections that were utilized for online learning. This can be a hurdle for them. Both students and instructors need to have access to and facilities for a high-quality internet connection in order for the implementation of blended learning to be successful. However, the reality shows that students lacked internet connectivity while they were doing online for assignments. As a result, for

students who were unable to access or complete the assignments online, the teachers were required to provide them with the chance to submit the assignment in the classroom.

When it came to teaching English in the classroom, almost all English teachers relied on a technique that incorporated a variety of different kinds of instructional materials. In the classroom, textbooks, worksheets for pupils, and handouts are frequently utilized. According to the information obtained from the interviewees, the piece of technology that was most frequently utilized by English instructors was the android phone, which allows them to maintain a connection to the internet and access WhatsApp groups.

As a result of the school policy that says students were not allowed to bring smartphones to school, the pupils were unable to make use of the technology to enhance the teaching and learning processes that took place in the classroom, as was seen by the classroom observers. The observation of the data in the classroom revealed that all of the English instructors still utilized the conventional methodology in their lessons. This approach is still employed since there are some subjects and things that are more effectively conveyed through the lecture format. This time-honored strategy has endured for a good reason—after all, it has a good track record of producing desirable results.

The findings from the interviews and observations indicated that each instructor had their own unique grading system. T1 and T3 each conducted an evaluation of the students based on the lesson plans that they had created: first, an evaluation of the students' knowledge, and then, an evaluation of the students' ability. T4 will change her evaluation during the course of the lesson plan, first basing it on the students' attitudes, then basing it on the students' knowledge, and finally basing it on the students' skills. According to the observation, T2, T6, and T6 were unable to display their instructional plan; nevertheless, they vary the evaluation through student attitude, student knowledge, and student competence.

According to the findings of the interviews and classroom observations, each and every educator utilized a diverse range of group work approaches, including group presentations, group work, and classroom discussions. T1, T3, T4, T5, T6 and T7 have just finished giving a presentation to the entire class as a group. In addition, for T2, she has given the students the assignment of forming a group to discuss the topic of advertising. T2 gave the students an assignment to create a video that was relevant to the topic, and then she gathered the videos via WhatsApp. In this particular scenario, T1, T3, T4, and T5 performed admirably with regard to the execution of the lesson plan. They carried out, step by step, the activities that were included in their lesson plan. The lesson plans for T2, T6, and T7 were not provided.

Discussion

In the implementation of blended learning, the researcher showed from the results of interview, observation and document, almost all of English teachers in SMAX, SMAY and SMAZ are not well-trained in implementing blended learning. They did not implement the blended learning as the government instructed. Many of them did not understand how to expand their knowledge about information and technology they learned. To compensate, they only used WhatsApp group and Google platform to share assignment and information.

Since 2022 the teaching and learning processes in SMAX, SMAY and SMAZ have been carried out face-to-face in the classroom. There was no explanation regarding the subject-matter online. Google classroom is deprecated. The findings revealed that problems coming from student participations and student supporting system through online learning.

The result of this study also support the previous study conducted by Lestari (2022) who describe the problems faced by English teachers in implementing blended learning during covid-19 pandemic. She found that the English teachers had some problems in implementing blended learning such as, lack of facilities and lack of internet connection.



According to the findings, the problems faced by the teachers are only related to the technology and organizational challenges. Meanwhile, based on the theory from Hoffman (2014), there are three challenges in implementing blended learning, namely; technological challenges, organizational challenges, and design challenges. Then based on the theory, teachers have no problem with the design because WhatsApp group is easy to make and easy to implemented.

Furthermore, according to Stauffer (2020) there was seven of the best blended learning strategies in teaching; (1) Use multiple types of instructional materials, (2) incorporate technology for reinforcement, (3) try new teaching techniques, (4) keep traditional method, (5) vary the assessment, (6) mix up group works style, and (7) try digital curriculum. Based on the data from classroom observation, interviews and lesson plan observation only five strategies by Stauffer (2022) were used by the teachers such as (1) the use of multiple types of instructional materials, (2) incorporate technology for reinforcement, (3) keep traditional methods, (4) Vary assessment, and (5) mix up group works styles. Two strategies found in the study, i.e., trying new teaching techniques and digital curriculum were in contrast with the theory postulated by Stauffer (2022).

Many of teachers in this study are still confused in choosing their strategies and method in teaching during the implementing of blended learning. They did not understand well about how to implement blended learning in teaching based on government recommendations. In reality, all of teachers used WhatsApp group for the assignments and information. They never sent any subject-matter in form of pdf, link or pictures. The teachers also never gave the explanation about the subject-matter through online learning. They more focus on face-to-face learning. The students can get the explanation about the subject-matter only in the classroom. Some teachers let the class run monotonous with lecture method, or only read instruction from the textbook provided from the school to kill the time.

There is a teachers stated that he doesn't prepare his lesson plan in the second semester. It means he did not have any plans before teaching. He thinks that in this era, making lesson plan make him feel disappointed because the rule and the regulation of education are changing rapidly.

Teachers in this study can be categorized having sufficient and low understanding about the implementation of blended learning. The teachers need to understand blended learning well so that they can build effective, conductive and fun learning environment in this era. Moreover, the learning objectives and curriculum goals can be achieved.

CONCLUSION

Based on the statement of the problems of this research, finding and discussion delivered, it can be concluded that:

1. Data obtained from in-depth interviews show that all of participants in their teaching English used synchronous mode of teaching and learning for material delivery. In addition, all of English teachers only used WhatsApp group for assignments and information.
2. Findings have informed that the teachers face a lot of problems in using WhatsApp group in teaching English during and post-pandemic covid-19, such as lack of student participation, and lack of internet connection support (quota internet) to access the internet. Based on the result of classroom observation, there are some teachers who have problem with time management during covid-19 pandemic. It cause the time available for face-to-face learning is limited.
3. There are 5 strategies that the teachers used in teaching English during and post-pandemic covid-19 pandemic; use multiple types of instructional materials,



incorporate technology for reinforcement, keeping traditional methods, varying assessment, and mixing up group works styles.

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