

ENGLISH TEACHERS' LIVE STORIES OF TEACHING WRITING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AN INDONESIAN EFL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has made the Indonesian government announce learning activities from face-to-face to homeschooling learning. This is something new for all teachers, especially English teachers in teaching writing. This research focused on English teacher's stories of teaching writing during the pandemic in an Indonesian EFL junior high school. This study aimed: (1) To portray the English teachers' writing practices in an Indonesian EFL junior high school during pandemic COVID-19 (2) To know the English teachers' perceptions in writing practices in an Indonesian EFL junior high school during pandemic Covid-19. In this research, the researcher used narrative inquiry research design as a qualitative research branch.. The participants of this research is two English teachers at two public junior high schools in Bojonegoro. The techniques of collecting data are interview, observation, and documentation. In this research, researcher analyzed data by coding, data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions. The research results are: (1) the writing learning process during the pandemic is different from before, namely using an online platform with an emergency learning plan (2) according to the teacher's perception of writing learning during the pandemic, which is less than optimal, because there are several challenges that teachers encounter, such as poor signals and class management.

Keywords: COVID-19, E-Learning, Writing

Abstrak

Pandemi Covid-19 membuat pemerintah Indonesia mengumumkan aktivitas pembelajaran dari tatap muka ke pembelajaran di rumah. Hal ini merupakan suatu yang baru bagi semua guru, terutama guru bahasa Inggris dalam mengajar Writing. Penelitian ini berfokus pada cerita pengalaman guru bahasa Inggris dalam mengajar writing selama pandemi di SMP EFL Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan: (1) Untuk menggambarkan praktik guru Writing bahasa Inggris di SMP EFL Indonesia (2) untuk mengetahui persepsi guru bahasa Inggris dalam praktik writing di SMP EFL Indonesia selama pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan penelitian narrative inquiry sebagai cabang dari penelitian qualitative. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini yaitu dua guru bahasa Inggris di dua SMP umum di Bojonegoro. Pengumpulan data dengan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menganalisis data dengan pemberian kode, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan menggambarkan kesimpulan. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) Proses pembelajaran writing selama pandemi berbeda dari sebelumnya, yaitu menggunakan platform pembelajaran online dengan rencana pembelajaran darurat (2) berdasarkan persepsi guru terhadap pembelajaran writing selama pandemi, yaitu kurang optimal, karena ada beberapa tantangan yang dihadapi guru, seperti sinyal yang buruk dan pengaturan kelas.

Kata kunci: Persepsi Siswa Bahasa Inggris, Grup Whatsapp, Kelas Berbicara

INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, the world was shocked by emergence of a new virus, namely Coronavirus or Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-Cov-2). This disease due to this virus infection is called COVID-19. This virus appeared first time in Wuhan, China. It continued to spread to various parts of the world quickly and became the highest cause of death rates in several countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared on March 11, 2020, that COVID-19 as a public health emergency of international concerns in this case a world pandemic. According to WHO, since China reported its first cases, authorities in 218 countries and territories have reported about 88.8 million Covid-19 cases and 1.9 million deaths (CNN, 2021). Quoted from CNN Indonesia, as of Wednesday (8/4/2020), positive cases of COVID-19 infection reaches 2.956 people, 240 died, and 222 patients were cured. The government around the world do various policies and decisive actions such as deciding lockdowns, social distancing and wearing a mask to break the chain of the virus. These actions bring significant changes to human life in various aspects such as economy, religion, tourism, and education.

In education, this virus has changed many things dramatically. It brings students to face-to-face study to 'home-schooling', especially in countries with the heaviest virus infection. Depend on Lei (2020), In Peking University, China, there are 2,613 undergraduate online courses and 1,824 graduate online courses launch to ensure the normal teaching operation, with 44,700 students stay at homes or dorms. Beside that, the Education Management Information System in Georgia has created the accounts for 55000 teachers and 530100 students and has built-in the virtual classrooms for all classes and relevant

subjects by default (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

The outbreak of COVID 19 impacts education in Indonesia too. After the announcement of an emergency over COVID-19, The Education system is being transformed. It has made several regions closed school to decline the spread of COVID-19. On march 16, Jakarta's governor, Anies Baswedan announced to close all schools in Jakarta (Silkina Ahluwalia, 2020). Then, other cities and provinces, such as Depok follow this policy and change the model of learning from face-to-face to home learning from March 16 to March 28 (Jakarta Globe, 2020).

This condition is a challenge for all teachers, especially English teachers. According to Huang et al. (2020), the three main challenges in online learning during a pandemic. First, teachers have very limited time in preparing and / or adapting offline learning materials to online. Second, the lack of or limited opportunities for teachers and students to interact directly and freely during online learning which results in disruption of the learning process. Third, using an effective pedagogical approach requires a greater effort in motivating and activating students in online learning. Meanwhile, Huber & Helm (2020) who surveyed school barometers in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, the availability of equipment such as computers, laptops, tablets for learning is still a challenge. Suputra et al. (2020) said that the challenges of teaching English during the pandemic are related to classroom and technical management. Also, student-centered learning cannot be done because all material, activities, questions, assignments, and information are centered or sourced from the teacher.

In English, writing is one of difficult skill for junior high school students as writers have to balance issues such as writing elements to create written products that demonstrate mastery of all the elements of writing in a new language that they rarely use (Rachmayanti and Kumalarini, 2013). Therefore, teachers must be creative in teaching to create an attractive learning atmosphere to improve students' English skills, especially in writing skills. In the implementation for Junior High School students, teachers use various strategies and media to support the development of students' skills in writing, such as mind mapping, Pen-Pal, etc. (Utami, 2020).

With the condition of Covid-19 pandemic, e-learning must be applied and adapted in a class, especially writing class so that teaching and learning process can keep going. many English teachers use technology as a means of learning writing such as Google Classroom, Moodle, Cisci Webex, etc. to share material and assignments with students. According to Utami (2020) the use of technology in writing learning, especially in junior high schools, can make learning and teaching easier, especially during a pandemic like this. The use of technology can also help and improve the quality of students' writing because technology makes it possible to detect errors in spelling automatically (Mendizabal, 2016).

The English teachers choose an E-learning platform that is easy and efficient to use in the writing learning process at junior high school. During teaching writing using technology, there are many obstacles and opportunities encountered by the teachers. This is the reason why researchers chose this issue because the use of technology, especially e-learning platforms in learning English writing during the

Covid-19 pandemic, is something new for teachers. Researcher are interested in exploring the experiences of English teachers in teaching writing during the Covid-19 pandemic online learning platform in An EFL Junior High School.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the writer used qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research design which describes and analyzes the data in depth. According to Sutopo and Arief (2010) writes that qualitative research is research that is used to describe and analyze an event, phenomenon, social activity, attitude, perception of a person, both individuals and certain groups.

The researcher used narrative inquiry research design as a qualitative research branch. Narrative inquiry, as its name suggests, can generally be defined as a qualitative approach which captures the personal and human dimension of lived experiences and presents them narratively. This argument is relevant to Cresswell (2012) that a typical form of qualitative research, narrative research usually focuses on the study of a single person or single individual and how that individual gives meaning to his experiences through the stories being told, reports data by collecting stories, reporting on individual experiences, and discussing what those experiences mean for individual.

The research conducted at two public junior high schools in Bojonegoro. The two schools were chosen because they had been carrying out writing lessons using e-learning during the pandemic. Also, these two schools were deemed suitable for conducting research. The sources of data in this study consists of two types, namely primary and secondary.

The primary data sources in this research were writing teachers' responses in

interview and WhatsApp chats. The two teachers were selected as research subjects because the two teachers had experience teaching writing for more than 10 years at the selected junior high school. In addition, they also remain teaching writing during pandemic using online platform. The data obtained through interviews are in the form of original data or detailed stories about the experiences of two teachers teaching writing during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, secondary data sources in this study were obtained through observation and documentation. Observations were made to see how teachers taught writing during the pandemic. Meanwhile, documentation can be in the form of students' writing results, teacher teaching materials, and screenshots as proof of virtual teaching-learning activity. Through observation and documentation, the data can be used by researchers to add or complete primary data sources.

The researcher use some techniques in collecting the data. Those are interview, observation, and documentation. The type of interview used is a structured and an unstructured interview. The researcher used this type of interview because the researcher want to find problems more openly and in-depth. The interview consist of four topics. The technique used are recording, rewriting, summarizing, and analyzing data. Interviews were conducted with 2 english teachers. In conducting interviews, Indonesian is used to facilitate third semester english students answering questions. After that, the researcher translated the results of the interview in English.

For observation, the researcher used participant observation. The reason the researcher chose this observation was that the researcher made direct observations of the two participants and the researcher wanted to obtain the validity of the data in

the field. This observation was carried out directly by the researcher acting as the observer and two English teachers from different schools as the object of observation. This observation is carried out directly when each teacher teaches writing virtually. In this case, the researcher will act as an observer. The researcher will also invite a friend to ensure that the observed results are not subjective.

The researcher also collecting the data using documentation. In this case, the researcher made a note, took photographs, the students' writing, the teacher's writing assessment, and took a screenshot chat as proof of teaching-learning activity. Documentation data comes from documentation conducted by researchers during interviews and observations.

In this study the researcher used four steps in analyzing the data. The first is coding. The second is data reduction. Data will be selected and reduced so that only relevant data is used. The third is data display. In this study, data following the formulation of the problem is then displayed or presented in the form of a narrative essay or story. And the last is drawing conclusion. The conclusions of the results of the study must be able to provide answers to the formulated problems.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this research, the researcher tried to find out English teachers' live stories of teaching writing during Covid-19 pandemic in the second grade in an Indonesian EFL Junior High School. To obtain the data the researcher used an interview, observation, and documentation.

According to the results of interviews with 2 sources, the process or practice of teaching writing during the

pandemic is very different from before the pandemic. Before the pandemic, learning was done face-to-face. Meanwhile, during the Covid-19 pandemic, learning English, especially writing, was done online using an online learning platform, and learning was done through technology. SR used the WhatsApp platform, while GA uses the Google Classroom platform.

In practice, first, SR shared the absent link via the Whatsapp group. Then, SR gave materials and assignments. Meanwhile, assignments could be submitted directly to the school. SR gave students a maximum of a week to take their assignments to the school. Of course, students still adhered to health protocols by wearing masks and washing hands. This statement is under the statement of the results of the interview with SR related to the practice or process of learning writing during the pandemic, namely as follows:

“First I share the absent link, then I share the material and assignments through the WhatsApp group. For the collection of assignments, I give a maximum of 1 week. Students can deliver their work to school but still adhere to health protocols”.

According to the results of interviews with teacher 2, GA. GA used Google Classroom as a learning platform. In the practice or process of teaching writing during the Covid-19 pandemic, first, GA reminded students to take attendance through the link that has been shared in the WhatsApp group. Then, GA shared material in the form of an interesting PowerPoint (PPT) that had been prepared in Google Classroom. To test students' understanding, GA gave a writing practice assignment. GA provided examples and project worksheets to make writing easier for students. Similar to SR, GA also gave students time to work on assignments for a week. Students can submit assignments through Google Classroom. This statement

is based on the results of an interview with GA about the process of learning writing during the Covid-19 pandemic:

“First, I remind students to be absent from the link I have shared via the Whatsapp group. Then I share the material in the form of PPT that I have prepared in Google Classroom. To test students' understanding of the material, I give assignments within a maximum of 1 week for collection”.

SR and GA said that learning writing during the pandemic focused on recount text. During the pandemic, writing lessons are conducted once a week for 90 minutes. However, the English teacher did not state at the allotted time. Online learning is done with flexible time. Students can submit assignments or ask questions about the material at any time. The teacher gives a maximum of a week for the collection of assignments. This explanation is based on the results of an interview with GA regarding the time allocation used during writing lessons during the Covid-19 pandemic: “Once a week with 90 minutes. But because I use an online platform, I don't state on time, it's more flexible...”.

The assessments carried out on students' writing results before and during the Covid-19 pandemic were almost the same. SR (T1) assesses students' writing results by checking what students have collected. GA (T2) said that she checked the students' writing results one by one through Google classroom based on the general structure of the recount text, the sentence used, and the context or content. Both also said that during the pandemic, the assessment was not only based on the results of students' writing but also on timeliness when collecting. However, the assessment carried out on students' writing results cannot be carried out optimally. This statement is based on the results of an

interview with GA regarding the assessment of student writing assignments during the pandemic, as follows:

“Assessment is also based on the timeliness of students when submitting assignments. But sis, during this pandemic, in my opinion, the assessment of students' writing results is not optimal.”

Meanwhile, based on the results of observation, before learning is carried out, the teacher prepares a lesson plan first. The lesson plans used during the Covid-19 pandemic are called emergency learning plans. SR uses a lesson plan compiled by the MGMPS team, while GA prepares its lesson plan. In the process of learning writing during the Covid-19 pandemic, SR was not following the lesson plans that the MGMPS team had prepared beforehand. The stages left by SR, namely SR did not ask students to restate the structure of the recount text. The reason is that the teacher already assumes that through the students' writing results, the teacher already knows enough about students' understanding of the structure of the recount text. While, GA carries out all the stages that have been arranged in the lesson plan.

In addition, based on observations, during the writing learning process, there is very little interaction between teacher and students. Students interact more with fellow students through WhatsApp group. Also, from the observations it was found that not all students were present in the lesson, meaning that students did not take attendance. Observational data showed that only 50% took part in the learning.

Besides that, based on the results of interviews with the two participants about English teachers' perceptions in writing practices in an Indonesian EFL Junior High School during Covid-19 Pandemic, they said that teaching writing during the pandemic was very difficult, less than optimal, and less effective. There are

several challenges experienced by teachers when teaching writing during the Covid-19 pandemic using online platforms, these challenges are related to signaling and class management. SR (T1) said that many students complained about the bad signal so that most of the students were left with information about learning writing. This statement is based on the results of an interview with SR about the challenges in teaching writing during the pandemic.

“Teaching English, especially writing during this pandemic, through online, is very difficult. Sometimes even face-to-face is difficult, especially online like this. Many students complain about the signal, so they sometimes miss information about learning. In addition, class management is also difficult, all class activities are limited”.

In addition, the challenges of learning to write during the pandemic are also related to classroom management. The lack of interaction and even almost no interaction between teachers and students is also a challenge in learning writing during the pandemic. This causes many students who do not understand the writing material. In addition, the lack of vocabulary that students have is also a challenge in learning writing during the pandemic. This statement is based on the results of an interview with GA about the challenges found during learning writing during the pandemic:

“....and the lack of vocabulary that students have so that the material I share or convey is not understood. So that learning is not optimal. And also sometimes some students are absent or online but they are not there...”.

Also, many students only did absent attendance but did not follow the learning process. GA (T2) said that there were also students who did not use their face photos as profiles, so the teacher had

difficulty recognizing students. Student learning motivation is also one of the challenges for teachers in learning writing during the pandemic. During the pandemic, students' learning motivation has decreased, especially in writing. Students are more focused on using their mobile phones to play rather than study. For teachers, students have done assignments and read the material is quite good..

In responding to these challenges, English teachers cannot force students. They took the initiative to make material in the form of attractive power point slides so that students easily understand the material. In addition, to increase student motivation, the teacher will provide additional value for students who do assignments on time. For the signal, the teacher can't do much. However, the school is very supportive of teachers in carrying out learning during the pandemic.

However, through teaching writing online, teachers also find opportunities or benefits for themselves. While teaching writing during the pandemic, GA also mentioned that she got experience or benefits for herself. She explained that online learning is the first time in Indonesia, especially for her too, so she has to learn to use technology, especially online learning platforms. So, the benefits she get are that she understands more about the use of online learning platforms, what are the types, and can determine what platform is suitable for her to use for teaching. This statement is based on the results of an interview with GA about the special experiences or benefits that teacher got while teaching writing during pandemic:

“Because distance or online learning is the first time in Indonesia, especially for me too, so I have to learn to use technology, especially online learning platforms. So, the benefits I get are that I understand more about the use of online

learning platforms, what are the types, and can determine what platform is suitable for me to use for teaching”.

Discussion

From the research finding, the process of learning to write in English during the pandemic is different from before the pandemic. Previously, writing learning was carried out face-to-face, while during the pandemic writing learning was carried out online through an online learning platform. This is in line with Suputra (2020) who says that learning English, especially writing is carried out using online learning methods. This is also in line with the Circular issued by Ministry of Education and Culture as a preventive measure Covid-19 so as not to continue to spread. The first step, preventing the spread of Covid-19 in the Ministry of Education and Culture regulated by Surat Circular Number 2 of 2020. The second step is the prevention of Covid-19 in the educational environment which is regulated by Circular Letter Number 3 of 2020. The third step, implementation of education policies in times of emergency the spread of Covid-19 regarding home study arrangements in Circular Letter number 4 of 2020 (Arifa, 2020).

According to Utami (2020), some strategies can help students to understand the material of writing clearly. In addition, the opinion from David (1976 as quoted in Sanjaya, 2006) strategy is a method, plan, or series of activities designed to achieve a particular educational goals. In this case, in the writing learning process, the teacher uses a strategy so that students can easily understand the material presented. The teacher uses attractive powerpoint slides that contain pictures or videos to increase students' enthusiasm for learning. Also, the teacher makes project worksheets to make it easier for students to practice writing.

The second discussion focuses on the English teachers' perceptions of writing practices in an Indonesian EFL junior high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the result finding, learning writing during the pandemic is considered less than optimal and less effective. There are several implementing online learning. The results of previous studies show that learning during the Covid-19 pandemic has very diverse challenges and problems. These challenges and problems are faced by all levels of education from early childhood to tertiary education (Bazimaziki, 2020; Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020).

In this case, the biggest challenge that teachers have to face is bad signaling. Febriyanti & Sundari (2020) stated that the signal is a challenge for teachers in Indonesia in implementing online learning during the pandemic because Indonesia's internet access has not been evenly distributed. In addition, the lack of interaction between teachers and students is also a challenge for teachers. This is in line with Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison (2020) who conducted a study of 27 (twenty-seven) prospective English teachers in Cilli about exploring challenges and opportunities in virtual learning experiences. It was found that the lack of

challenges that teachers must face when learning is carried out. This is in line with Gao & Zhang (2020) who emphasized that in online learning there are several challenges for teachers and students, especially in countries that are just

direct interaction with students and sudden changes in learning settings were the most influential factors in online learning in the country. This also creates challenges faced by teachers and students in interacting, sharing information, planning, and managing classes.

From the discussion above, we can see that learning writing during the Covid-19 pandemic is a new thing or experience for education, especially for English teachers in Indonesia. The application of the online learning model is very different from previous learning. Online mode learning is also considered less than optimal because there is no mental or technical readiness for teachers, so there are several challenges that must be faced by teachers. The challenges are in the form of bad signals, classroom management, and technical. It is undeniable that online learning also has a positive impact in general in building the readiness of all education actors to always improve their quality and be ready for various changes in the new era of life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research with the research problem of how are the english teachers' writing practices in an Indonesian EFL junior high school during pandemic Covid-19 and what are the English teachers' perceptions in writing practices in an Indonesian EFL junior high school during Covid-19 pandemic that has been presented, it can be concluded that during the pandemic, English teachers use

online learning platforms. First, the teacher will ask students to be absent through the link that the teacher has shared through the WhatsApp group. Then the teacher will share interesting material through the selected or used online learning platform. To test students' understanding of the writing material that has been given, the teacher gives assignments and gives a week to collect assignments. Assignments can be collected through online learning platforms

or submitted directly to schools, of course, still complying with health protocols.

Learning writing in the online pandemic period at Indonesian EFL Junior High School it is currently considered less effective and maximal. The application of this online mode always provides challenges as well as convenience to all parties involved in it. The main challenges are the poor network where students live, decreased learning motivation, and lack of interaction between students and teachers. However, it cannot be denied that online

learning also has a positive impact in general in building the readiness of all education actors to always improve their quality and be ready for various changes in the new era of life. For teachers, while teaching writing during the pandemic, teachers could know and understand more about online learning platforms that could be used to teach writing online. Teachers also know more about the benefits of technology in education. So, in the future, teachers can use technology in learning writing.

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