

LECTURERS' CHALLENGES: TEACHING ENGLISH BY USING BLENDED LEARNING IN PANDEMIC ERA AT PGRI SILAMPARI UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to discover the lecturers' challenges in teaching during the pandemic situation at PGRI Silampari University. The method used in this research was the descriptive qualitative approach. The subjects of this research were five lecturers in the English education study program. In collecting the data, the researcher used two instruments. There were questionnaires and interviews. The researcher followed three concurrent activity flows to analyze the data: data condensation, data display, and conclusion, for the results showed some challenges they faced when implementing teaching and learning activities in blended learning both in the online and offline classroom. The challenges were the lack of student control and monitoring, the problem in applying technology, and the problem with time allocation due to the Pandemic. In conclusion, students faced many challenges in teaching by applying blended learning during Pandemic Covid -19 at PGRI Silampari University.

Keywords: *blended learning, challenges, lecturer.*

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease has become the hottest topic in the world in 2020. This virus has suddenly become a terrible terror for the world community, especially after claiming hundreds of people's lives in only two weeks. According to Abidah, Hidaayatullaah, Simamora, Fehabutar & Mutakinati (2020), the spread of Covid-

19 profoundly affected the world of economics. Starting to fade, but now the impact of the world of education is being felt. One of the countries exposed to the Coronavirus is Indonesia, especially in the field of education; the government made some issues about online teaching policies and removing national final exams.

The adaptation of blended learning is required because the government initiated its application at this time. This is because blended learning has advantages which were the reasons to be applied and the importance of this blended learning in the New Normal in the Pandemic situation. According to Innes and Wilton (2018), there were advantages of blended learning for the student, including improved learning skills, increased access to knowledge, satisfaction, and learning outcomes, and opportunities to both study with and teach others. However, he also added that there were weaknesses in blended learning, Isolation, a lack of connection, and other negative emotions were possible.

Derived from pre-observation, which was conducted through an interview with one of the lecturers at PGRI Silampari University, it was found that in this pandemic era, the activities of the lecturer for delivering the material by giving the material first, doing some discussion to the students and also providing assignment via applications. Sometimes she uses google classroom and WhatsApp because these applications are the fastest media for all students. In the teaching and learning process lecturer also faces some challenges, typically bad signals, forgetting the schedule, and low student response.

Ahmad, Parihin, Hidayat, and Halimatuzzahra (2021) have analyzed blended learning at desa Montong Sampah. From their observation, many factors influence blended learning, such as teachers' and students' understanding of technology, internet connection, and content of material or instruction. In addition, the challenges faced by teachers in applying blended learning at desa Montong Sampah are teachers and students still lack technology, and internet connection in that area is usually disturbed.

Still, in line, Menggo, and Darong (2022), in their research about blended learning in ESL/EFL Classes, explained that blended learning requires digital technology transformation for lecturers and students, up-to-date teaching methods, flexible learning processes, the effectiveness of time, space, budget, learning motivation, learning autonomy, all of which contribute to improving student learning achievement. However, current empirical research results do not support the claim that blended learning improves students' English proficiency and learning autonomy. Evidence shows blended learning affects students' English competence, autonomy, motivation, and ICT literacy.

In conclusion, the new online education policy in 2020 changed the learning process from face-to-face to online learning. The use of technology in the online learning process is necessary and must be understood by the lecturer. Thus, lecturers

must face many challenges and new activities during the Pandemic. This research is required to describe lecturers' obstacles in using blended learning after the Pandemic, especially in teaching English skills. Consequently, the researcher is interested in conducting research titled "Lecturers' Challenges: Teaching English by Using Blended Learning in Pandemic Era at PGRI Silampari University."

LITERATUR REVIEW

a. Definition of Corona Virus

In 2020, coronavirus disease became the hottest topic in the world. This virus has suddenly become a terrible terror for the world community, especially after claiming hundreds of people's lives in only two weeks Paudel et al. (2020) state that Coronavirus is an infection caused by a single-strand, positive-sense RNA genome that belongs to the subfamily Coronaviridae. The onset of the Coronavirus is a phenomenon with no known cause; on 31 December 2019, The WHO China Country Office notified of cases of unknown etiology (unknown cause) pneumonia discovered in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. As of 3 January 2020, the national government in China has registered 44 cases of pneumonia of uncertain etiology to WHO.

b. Changes Learning Activities at PGRI Silampari University during Coronavirus Pandemic

Starting from the beginning of the Pandemic in March 2020 to January 2021, the teaching and learning process at PGRI Silampari University should be online to continue all lecture schedules according to recommendations from the government. At this time, there is a new policy from the government to allow lectures in face-to-face or offline classes. The minister of Education and Culture said Indonesia had reopened some schools in the country's "poorest" and "most marginalized" regions where the risk of Covid-19 spread is assessed to be relatively low. He explained that those schools were allowed to operate at 50% capacity (cnbc.com 2020). Now, PGRI Silampari University has been able to conduct two types of lecturing, namely online and offline class.

Additionally, one of the policies of the Indonesian government is New Normal. Therefore, Praghlapati (2020) says that in the midst of the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak, Indonesia is preparing to enter a new normal era in which people can leave their homes. The only surefire way to combat the Covid-19 Pandemic before a vaccine is found is to follow a normal lifestyle in a different (new normal) way. In the new normal, education in Indonesia, especially in the education sector, uses blended learning, as implemented at PGRI Silampari University.

In short, changes in learning activities at PGRI Silampari University during the coronavirus pandemic follow the Indonesian government's regulations, which

required two types of learning, especially in the new normal current situation, by complying with several learning requirements such as keeping health protocols during the learning process.

c. Blended Learning

The development of the current technology revolution has invited lecturers to integrate technology into their teaching to facilitate students with better learning. Utilizing technology in teaching is known as e-learning or online learning. Online learning has brought people a more natural way of learning. It could be done anywhere and anytime as long as they have an internet connection. Therefore nowadays, there is a teaching strategy called blended learning. Blended learning, as one of the teaching strategies, mixes a traditional method of teaching with an online course to achieve specific learning goals.

Blended learning is a type of learning that seamlessly integrates face-to-face with online instruction. Experts share their thoughts on blended learning, claiming that it is the only effective teaching technique that combines technology in its execution (Dziuban et al., 2018; Galvis, 2018; Kumar et al., 2021; Menon, 2019). It is a teaching technique that combines two fields of study: education and the application of educational technologies (Zhang, 2020). Additionally, it is also known as a type of education that involves merging, mixing, and integrating traditional and digital-based education systems. Thus, blended learning combines face-to-face and online learning that utilizes technology, for instance, Google Classroom, Zoom, Moodle, or Spada (Ma'rifatulloh, 2020).

In reality, blended learning is evolving with advancements in information technology, computers, audio, audio-visual, and mobile learning. It emerges as a form of constructive criticism of the monotony of students whose learning process is still conventional, face-to-face in classrooms. However, this conventional learning is still required in the development of a student's affection. In addition, blended learning is a learning innovation that adapts to shifting patterns of human interaction and the advancement of information, communication, and technology (ICT) (Abdullah, 2018).

Blended learning has some benefits to the innovation of teaching methods and improvements in student learning patterns. The strengths of blended learning include improving the digital literacy skills of lecturers and students, composing content of teaching materials that align with current standards, unlimited sources of information, responsible and enthusiastic students, and accommodating differences in educational learning styles. These advantages can promote the improvement of student's academic and non-academic achievements.

In the context of studying English as a Second Language (ESL) or a Foreign Language (EFL), it is also proven that the use of blended learning may enhance students' English proficiency (Ginaya, Rejeki, & Astuti, 2018). These researchers

explain that implementing blended learning in English courses could boost language and non-language skills. The English language skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In contrast, non-language skills are related to a more engaging and meaningful classroom atmosphere, strengthening students' critical thinking skills and developing students' digital literacy skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted at PGRI Silampari University, on Mayor Toha Street, Air Kuti Village, Lubuklinggau City. This is a location where the learning process took place. And the researchers used the descriptive qualitative method. The subject of this research was nine lecturers of an English study program that used blended learning in their teaching and learning process. In collecting the data, a questionnaire and interview were used. The questionnaire was adapted from Komang (2014), and consisted of 20 questions. And there were only 5 of 9 lecturers interviewed by the researchers.

Data gathered were analyzed by applying three concurrent activity flows: data condensation, data display, and drawing the conclusion.

FINDING

1. The Findings from the Questionnaire

As stated in the previous part that there were 20 statements adapted from Kumang theory. The result of the questionnaire is explained per each statement below:

Table 1. Result of questionnaire

No	Statement	Yes	No
1	Lecturer says, greeting the students	100%	
2	The lecturer checks the attendance list	100% (by using various ways)	
3	The lecturer tells the students about what they are going to learn.	100% (use the same ways both online and offline)	
4	Lecturer explains the objectives of the research	100%	
5	The lecturer starts showing the picture and asking the students to answer the questions orally based on the image.	80%	20% (In offline, one lecturer does not use pictures)

6	Lecturer gives the material, discusses together, and the students answer the question based on the material	100%	
7	Lecturer asks students to open and log in to the website, find the material, read the material and answer the question.	40%	60% (in offline, the lecturers ask students to find the material from books, journals or any other sources related to the material discussed that day)
8	Lecturer gives feedback about the material that had discussed.	100%	
9	Lecturer gives a chance for students to ask a question about the material	100%	
10	Lecturer gives homework for students	100%	
11	Lecturer reviews the important point of the material	100%	
12	Lecturer asks student to log out from the website.	100% (Yes in online classroom)	
13	The lecturer tells the next material to the students	100%	
14	The lecturer closes the class by saying goodbye	100%	
15	The lecturer feels that internet technology is a danger.		100%
16	The lecturer feels that technology is unsuitable for education.		100%
17	Students are difficult to adapt blended learning		100%

18	The lecturer still lacks and established design framework for teaching blended learning.		100%
19	The lecturer has sufficient knowledge to ensure the instructional design with the applicable curriculum	60%	40%
20	Lecturer takes a longer time to redesign the syllabus or RPS that is used for blended learning activities (Material, activities and teaching method, teaching strategy)		100%

2. The Findings from the Interview

- 1) Do you think blended learning will be accepted by students in teaching (skill), especially on Covid-19 period? Why?

Informant 1

"Yes, I do. Because blended learning for Musi Rawas and Lubuklinggau should be accepted because 50 % of students should be on online learning and 50 % of students learn from offline learning, they have to balance teaching and learning between daring and luring. And teacher will teach the students using technology online and other classes offline. It will be effective for the teacher and also the students".

Informant 2

"Yes, I do. Because of the pandemic situation, the students are required to learn by themselves in their homes. To help them enhance their writing performance, blended learning is effective to support their own learning not only inside but also outside the classroom".

- 2) How do you relate online and offline learning in teaching (skill), especially during the Pandemic?

Informant 1

"How do you relate online and offline learning in teaching speaking, especially during the Pandemic? Exactly I make or design RPS or syllabus; it is applied online and also offline. It means they have related to each other online and offline, so there is different material or practice in speaking online, and also offline, they have similar materials. Absolutely relate".

Informant 2

"Teaching writing, both online and offline learning, is still the same in the way how to teach. On the other side, focusing on online learning, the time is more flexible".

- 3) Is there any teaching media that you apply in blended learning between online or offline classrooms? Explain!

Informant 1

"Okay, I will tell you first offline. For media, offline, I only use PowerPoint and also videos on YouTube. And for online, I use. First, I use social media, and then second, is YouTube. Because in social media they have to log, they have to take attendance, and I can give the material and instruction online by using social media".

Informant 2

"Yes, there are. Several teaching media that I apply to help my teaching writing skills are an LCD projector to share PPT slides and Microsoft Words, as well as YouTube videos".

- 4) Do you have a specific syllabus, RPP, or new teaching-learning activities for blended learning? *Any different activities between online and offline classrooms?

Informant 1

"Personally, I design it for blended learning, so I don't have any different online RPP, offline RPP they are similar, same."

Informant 2

"In teaching writing, both online and offline learning, I don't have a specific syllabus, lesson plans, or teaching activities. In terms of the teaching activities, while doing online learning, I heavily focused on discussing the learning materials shared before the meeting. I invite the students to share what they have understood or not from the materials".

- 5) Do you have a problem designing the syllabus or teaching guidelines for blended learning? Explain!

Informant 1

"Not, really."

Informant 2

"In designing the syllabus to teach writing skills, I don't have any significant problems. In my opinion, the syllabus is still the same, although it should be taught offline or online learning. The real problem is the unstable network while doing online learning".

- 6) How do you deal with “Time” in practicing in the online and offline classroom?

Informant 1

"At the time, I don't have maybe any problems online and offline. We have extra time online; we will discuss the material and then keep more place. If we lack time in a real class, because in the real class usually the time is really limited time so I give the discus in the group. So the time should be completed".

Informant 2

"In this classroom, I heavily focus on offline learning, and the time for each meeting follows the schedule shared at the beginning of the semester. If I cannot attend the offline learning, I will ask the students to have a meeting online, and the time is flexible based on the students' and teacher's agreement".

- 7) Will blended learning take over time to be real? Explain the reason!

Informant 1

"Not, really."

Informant 2

"Yes, it will be. Combining offline and online learning cannot be inseparable. Teaching in the classroom has a limited time; therefore, online learning needs to support EFL students in improving their own learning".

- 8) How do you do the Pre-activity as the first step of teaching in blended learning between online and offline classrooms? *(Greeting, checking the attendance list, telling what students are going to learn, and explaining the objectives of the study).

Informant 1

"It should be the same every activity I give them greeting, assalamualaikum, good morning, good afternoon. And then, I ask them to pray together online and then also offline. And then I check the attendance, and also I ask about what they did yesterday or last week. Just like that".

Informant 2

"In the pre-activity, both online and offline learning, I greet my students, check their attendance lists, mention what they discussed last week, and explain what they are going to learn during the meeting."

- 9) How is your activity in the exploration step between online and offline classrooms?

Informant 1

"In exploring the materials, usually I give them questions. And then I give them feedback about the material, I explore the material into a real life".

Informant 2

"I have the same activity in both the online and offline classroom. In the exploration step, first of all, I provide several guiding questions related to the learning material, for example, making a descriptive paragraph. I invite my students to read a sample text entitled 'My best friend' and 'My banana garden.' After that, I attract them to imagine and share what they have known about the topics".

10) How is your activity in the elaboration step between online and offline classrooms?

Informant 1

"When I elaborate the material exactly because it is in blended learning. Online in elaborate, I make them individually, but offline, I make them into groups. Because the problem is about time and online, why do they have to individual because the location is only one on one person, so they don't need to be in a group to elaborate on the material, and also I think I can use take others' materials online; and also in offline and also the speaking we don't have really many materials... but also in practice. So we have to take practice more".

Informant 2

"In the elaboration step, I discuss the learning materials and ask the students to elaborate on the topics and check the generic structure and linguistic features of the texts. Then, I invite them to find out an interesting topic to organize and develop it to become a good descriptive paragraph".

11) How is your activity in the confirmation step between online and offline classrooms?

Informant 1

"Usually, in speaking online and also offline, I use the same activity in the last meeting. I even when the student in question, "do you have a question? And if it does not work, just ask or just explain. I will answer, and then after they answer, "no, don't have," I will give them a question about the material before."

Informant 2

"In the confirmation step, I provide several questions related to the learning materials to confirm whether they have understood or not and then invite them to share whether they have faced several problems during the learning. I also provide opportunities for the students to ask if they have several questions related to the topics".

12) How is your activity in Post-activity in the last time of class between online and offline classroom?

Informant 1

"In post activity, I just always give them practice. I ask them to practice, and then it should be summit into the video on YouTube. That's why I use YouTube, right? And then I will give you the homework for next week".

Informant 2

"In post-activity, I summarize the learning material discussed during the meeting and then motivate them to enhance their writing performance in making a good paragraph, for example, a descriptive paragraph. Finally, I closed my class by saying 'thank you very much for your attention, and I am really sorry if I have made many mistakes.'"

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research described in the findings of the instruments, it can be interpreted that there were some challenges they faced when implementing teaching and learning activities in blended learning both in the online and offline classroom. These are evidenced by the answers of the informants in the Instruments used by researchers, both questionnaires and interviews, and also from the additional interview that can be seen in the appendices that have been conducted by the researcher.

From the result of three indicators, both the answers in the questionnaire and interview above and also the results of additional interviews, the researcher can conclude that the challenges faced by a lecturer in the pandemic situation at PGRI Silampari University were:

1) Lack of Student Controlling and Monitoring

This challenge is encountered by lecturers in online learning. Lecturers find it difficult to control learning conditions during class. This was because the environmental conditions of each student were different.

Blended learning is a learning innovation that adapts to shifting patterns of human interaction and the advancement of information, communication, and technology (ICT) (Abdullah, 2018). Lecturers find it difficult to control student discipline because they do not meet directly. Lecturers can find out student attendance from the attendance list but cannot find out which students focus on paying attention to explaining the material. This, of course, hindered lecturers from monitoring which students were active or not, which students were staying tuned on the material, or going around participating in online teaching and learning activities. It was like the students turned off the camera when joining the meeting application, and they did not follow all activities in the online classroom. The problems above resulted in not achieving the goals and

objectives of the material. It is still in line with the research result of Ahmad, Parihin, Hidayat, Halimatuzzahra (2021). They found that lack of technology became one of the challenges in applying blended learning.

2) The problem in applying technology

Online learning, as people know, is a technology-based or mobile-app-based activity. Therefore, understanding it is used a must for all lecturers. However, this requirement became a new problem for lecturers because they were required to study hard in the use of various applications. Because it was a must for the lecturer to adapt the technology for teaching activities during the pandemic situation.

In blended learning, lecturers combined two fields of study: education and the application of educational technologies (Zhang, 2020). Additionally, it is also known as a type of education that involves merging, mixing, and integrating traditional and digital-based education systems. Thus, blended learning is defined as a combination of face-to-face learning and online learning that utilizes technology, for instance, Google Classroom, Zoom, Moodle, or Spada (Ma'rifatulloh, 2020). Thus, the use of the application is closely related to the Internet Connection. Ahmad, Parihin, Hidayat, and Halimatuzzahra (2021) stated that internet connection was always the basic challenge in applying blended learning, especially for online meetings. However, this also became a challenge in online learning because the stability of the internet connection in each area or environment for each student was different. This interfered with students' participation in learning and interfered with the course of teaching and learning activities. Also, teachers must be able to quickly adapt and innovate to design simple and effective materials by using some new application that remains relevant to the subjects being taught, and the government must free up exclusive and affordable learning resources that can work across platforms so lecturers did not have trouble in using them.

3) The problems in time allocation Due to the Pandemic situation

Teaching and learning times have changed, and these changes were the results determined by various considerations of each school. The PGRI Silampari University gave time for offline learning, about 50 minutes per course. However, the allocation was relatively short, so the process of delivering material in offline classes was minimized even though the lecturer did not achieve the learning goals with maximum.

However, the lecturer had a lot of paperwork to manage, and it was taken a lot of time for the lecturer to check their paperwork. As a result, lecturers have few times to transfer materials and spend an awful lot of time checking students' work.

Based on the findings from the questionnaire and interview between challenges and activities. The researcher summarized that they researcher found that were challenges in applying Blended learning. The first is the lack of student control and monitoring which consists of 5 kinds of problems. Second, the problem in applying technology consists of 3 kinds of problems. Finally, the problem in time allocation consists of 2 kinds of problems.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the research that have been found and discussed in the previous chapter, the researchers conclude that there are several challenges both in the online and offline classroom; they were lack of student controlling and monitoring. This first challenge was caused by the meeting that was held online, not face-to-face. The second challenge was the problem in applying technology, such as signal or internet connection, the lack of maturing online applications, etc. The last was the problems with time allocation due to the pandemic situation. Lecturers have few times to transfer materials and spend an awful lot of time checking students' work.

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