
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teachers' Strategy in Teaching English Using Virtual Learning Platform during the Covid-19 Pandemic in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at figuring out strategies that the teachers use at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo in teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic and obstacles in the teaching process during the COVID-19 pandemic at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. The method used was a mixed method in a convergent parallel design. Through an online questionnaire, the researchers administered a closed-ended questionnaire to the eight grade students, and an open-ended questionnaire was administered to the English teachers of SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. The data were analyzed using description qualitative and statistical analysis. The result of this research indicates that the teachers used different strategies in teaching English as they were adjusted to the pandemic situation and the students' needs. Several obstacles were faced during distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the unstable internet connection, students' different economic backgrounds, the distractions of learning at home, and the difficulty of achieving learning objectives as both the students and teachers were required to adjust with the new situation in a short period of time.

KEYWORDS

Teacher's strategy, problems of distance learning, virtual learning platform, COVID-19 pandemic

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1. Introduction

A million numbers of death cases caused by Coronavirus Disease 2019, which is also well known as COVID-19, have been recorded, and it has been more than a year since the first spread of the virus happened, infecting humans all over the world (Khan et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2020). The virus attacks the human respiratory system which is caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-Coronavirus 2 or SARS-CoV-2 and was first discovered in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in November 2019 (Khan et al., 2020; C. Li et al., 2020; T. Li et al., 2020; Su et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). As the number of infected and death cases by COVID-19 kept increasing, the World Health Organization (WHO) then announced the COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic. This announcement was delivered directly by the Director General of WHO, Tedros Ghebreyesus, in Geneva, Switzerland, in March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020; Lloyd-Sherlock et al., 2020; Mahase, 2020; Sohrabi et al., 2020; Watkins, 2020).

The announcement of COVID-19 as a global pandemic and the increasing number of infected and death cases caused by the virus itself has been causing the shifting of the systems in various sectors in life, including education. Education, which is one of the most crucial aspects of human life, needs to continue even during a pandemic by using a modified implementation system that could adapt to the existing situation. Most countries in the world have eliminated face-to-face teaching and learning activities in order to break the chain of the COVID-19 spread where both the students and teachers could act as a carrier and spreaders of the virus. Since April 2020, more than 400 million students all over the world have been required to study from home (Domenico et al., 2020; Gee, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

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In accordance with government policies on the physical closure of educational institutions and the replacement of face-to-face learning activities with learning from home, all parties, including teachers, students, and parents, need to work together and adjust to the new system, which is online-based or well known as e-learning (Aderholt, 2020; Karp & McGowan, 2020). In Indonesia itself, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has strictly enforced online learning policies (Irawan, 2020; Kemendikbud, 2020). The establishment of the online learning process is implemented at all levels of education. The changes in the system that happened have stumbled upon some obstacles which are caused by the students' background differences and the uneven internet access in the different areas of Indonesia, especially for the remote areas where people struggle to get the proper internet connection.

Consequently, one party that has been hugely affected by the shifting of the educational system caused by the coronavirus outbreak is the teacher. Teacher, who plays such a big role in the teaching and learning process, needs to adjust in order to deliver lessons to the students at their maximum level, despite the learning from home situation. Teachers were forced to adjust the lesson plan, which was originally based on face-to-face learning, to online learning in such a rush way. Based on observations and experiences of the researchers, the implementation of the online teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic is far from effective compared to the conventional learning process in class. This is mainly caused by the lack of face-to-face interaction between the teacher and student, giving the students a harder time understanding the lessons delivered.

It has been three semesters since the online learning process was implemented, and over time teachers have begun to adjust and design various methods and strategies that are suitable for the targeted students, including the teachers at SMPN 3 Palopo. The adjustment includes the use of available media and applications in order to deliver the learning materials from the teacher to the students while still facing online learning problems such as unstable internet connection and the price of the internet data that is required to access the internet. A previous study conducted by Kiat-Hiong & Ying-Leh (2020) found that students' learning styles are associated with the usage towards course components in the online technology learning platform. This research is expected to give more understanding in that area of discussion. Based on the previous explanation, the researchers take an interest in conducting this research to know about what strategies teachers use in teaching English during a pandemic by using virtual learning platforms and what obstacles could be found in teaching and learning English using virtual learning platforms during this coronavirus outbreak.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Strategy

In education, strategy is defined as a plan, method, or sequence of activities aimed at achieving specific educational goals (Sanjaya, 2011). Saripah (2019) defined a teaching strategy as a plan that consists of a series of activities, including the use of a method and various resources designed to achieve a certain learning objective. In the teaching process, strategies need to be adopted to achieve learning goals. It is inseparable from the entire educational process because it contains design arrangements designed to achieve educational purposes. In addition, teaching strategy refers to the approach, method, and media in the teaching and learning process (Aini & Azizah, 2019). Thus, strategy is one of the main factors that decide whether the purpose of the teaching and learning process can be achieved. By using the right teaching strategy, students can have space to be able to think independently and creatively and be more adaptive to the existing situation in the present or in the future (Asrori, 2013). Regardless of how important strategy is during the teaching and learning process, deciding the most accurate and appropriate strategy to use is dependent on the teachers. The reason for this is that every learning situation requires different needs depending on what lessons are being taught and what kind of experiences the students must have to achieve an effective teaching and learning process for the students. Effective teaching itself requires flexibility, creativity, and responsibility in order to provide an instructional environment able to respond to the learner's individual needs, and it becomes one of the challenges in the teaching-learning process is knowing the most effective teaching approach that is also in line with the learning styles of the students (Cardino & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2020). Thus, in constructing and determining the most suitable teaching strategy for the teaching process, there are many factors that need to be considered. Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that a teaching strategy is a set of plans that consists of approach, method, learning material, and media designed by the teacher for effective learning in order to achieve the learning objectives.

Saripah (2019) proposed several teaching strategies that teachers can use. These strategies are:

(1) Expository teaching strategy, which emphasizes the teacher's verbal lesson delivery process to the students aiming at increasing the students' understanding optimally. Some principles in implementing this strategy are goal-oriented, communication, readiness, and sustainability. The steps for this strategy are preparation (such as giving positive suggestions and explaining the learning objectives), correlation, generalization, and application.

(2) Inquiry teaching strategy emphasizes students' activity in searching and finding, meaning that the student is the subject of the process. Besides receiving a verbal explanation from the teacher, students are directed to find the core of the lesson and the answer to the question by themselves. Instead of being the lesson source, the teacher becomes the facilitator and motivator for the students. The principles of implementing this strategy are intellectual development-oriented, interaction, asking, learning to think, and openness. The steps to do this strategy are orientation, problem formulation, hypothesis making, data collecting, hypothesis testing, and conclusion making.

(3) Contextual teaching and learning strategy which aims to motivate students to understand the meaning of the lesson by linking the subject with the context of students' daily life (personal, social, and cultural context) in order to gain understanding/skill which flexibly can be applied from one context to one another. The teacher works to help the students in achieving their learning objectives. In relation to students' real life, students are directed to link the subject being taught with the real-life situation and make connections between the knowledge they have with the implementation of it in their daily life. This strategy involves seven main components of effective learning, which are: constructivism, questioning, inquiry, learning community, modeling, and authentic assessment.

2.2 Strategies in Teaching English

English skills are mainly divided into four categories, namely speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

a. Speaking

Mainly in speaking, there are several categories used by the teacher in classroom activities and assignments in order to practice the speaking skill, which is in accordance with the speaking activities in the textbook. Through research, Wijayanti (2018) found that in teaching speaking to the students, teachers mainly use strategies such as the utilization of group work, the use of daily language English, training on the discussion skill, and keeping the students speaking in English. These strategies are implemented through some methods as follows:

- 1) Role-play
- 2) Dialogue
- 3) Question and Answer in English
- 4) Singing English songs
- 5) Watching video or movie
- 6) Group discussion

b. Listening

In teaching listening, the teacher mainly focuses on making the students familiar with the target language. The reason for this is that in order for students to understand the meaning of a language, firstly, the students need to see the language that is being learned as a whole and then continue to the meaning-making of the targeted language. Several media that can be used in teaching listening includes song, podcast, video, or movie in the target language and even online communication platforms such as WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, and Google Meet.

c. Reading

There are three main strategies in reading, namely summarizing, skimming, and scanning (B, 2021).

1) Summarizing

In summarizing, students reduce a large selection of text into several main points in order to achieve a concise understanding. Essential ideas can also be determined through the summarizing process. This strategy enables students to focus on keywords and phrases of an assigned text that are worth noting and allows students to be more creative in making the summary of the passage by using their own version of the language.

2) Skimming

During skimming, students are allowed to get a quick idea or general overview of the text content by looking at a text in a rapid eye movement.

3) Scanning

Scanning is the strategy in which the students can find specific information or facts such as names or dates without having to read the entire text and understand the whole meaning of the text.

d. Writing

In teaching writing, the teacher can use several strategies that are commonly used and well accepted by the teachers (Irikawati, 2017). These strategies are:

- 1) Strategy by using image media
- 2) Strategy by using the environment as a learning resource
- 3) Roundtable strategy
- 4) Strategy by using games
- 5) Self-editing and self-correcting strategy

2.3 Problems in Teaching English during Pandemic

Amidst the outbreak of the coronavirus or well known as the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching and learning process has shifted and adjusted with the use of technology and the internet as learning support as the face-to-face learning process in class needs to be shifted into the online learning system. This adjustment happens as one of the efforts done by the government of Indonesia and most other countries all over the world in order to break the chain of COVID-19 virus spread. Depending hugely on technology and the internet, teachers are required to have skills in using technology and teaching critical thinking to the students at the same time. With the existing condition, there are two options offered: doing nothing at all or trying something new, meaning that the pandemic situation is the time to adjust and make innovative efforts (Yulitriana et al., 2020). Teachers are required to adjust and redesign the teaching strategy in order to achieve the learning objectives.

Moreover, the implementation of online learning during the pandemic requires several different levels of adaptation and differentiation within the approach. In the practice of online learning, the shift from the face-to-face contact mode into the online context is not simply a "one size fits all approach" (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Seemingly, the content or delivery used in a face-to-face context can be adapted to a compatible online format. However, scales of adaptation and differentiation within the approach should be used to better differentiate between different learners as well as different contexts of teaching via online and live modes. Orlando and Attard (2015, in Gillett-Swan, 2017) stated that teaching with technology is not a one size fits all approach as it depends on the types of technology in use at the time and also the curriculum content being taught, meaning that the incorporation of technology provides additional factors for consideration in terms of teaching pedagogy and construction of learning experiences.

As in teaching language, which in this case is English, the teacher, however, needs to insert the value of four basic English skills into the teaching strategy and method used during the teaching and learning process, which have already been mentioned before are speaking, listening, reading and writing. This act also includes students' development in vocabulary and grammar that also become the core of the spoken language. Furthermore, Yulitriana et al. (2020) emphasize that teachers as facilitators in class are required to facilitate students' needs as millennials to learn, directing students to think critically and to have discerning minds in order to filter the unlimited information that they get through the virtual world. Moreover, the adjustment in the teaching and learning process demands a more advanced use of the technology. This includes the use of virtual applications or platforms, such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Meet, etc., which can be utilized in the teaching-learning process.

However, the implementation of online learning commonly faces problems such as students' individual differences, which become a big problem if the teacher uses the same approach for all students. For example, in the implementation of collaborative learning, the teacher usually focuses more on the task/content instead of on the delivery of the lesson. This mode can work for some students, but other students might need more attention to the delivery of the lesson to understand. Gillett-Swan (2017) proposed some issues that the students face in collaborative learning tasks through group work, which can be personal, such as: anxiety associated with using technology; being out of one's comfort zone; perception of inequity in assessment, particularly in group assignments; and the perceived inability of difficulty in peer interaction, particularly in presentation. These are just some of the issues that the teacher and students need to work on collaboratively in order to avoid students' lack of competency and proficiency so that effective teaching and learning can be achieved.

In becoming the facilitator for the students in online learning, the teacher might also face some issues such as the adjustment in the material designing process, problems in managing/operating the different kinds of virtual learning platforms, problems in evaluating and assessing during class, and most importantly the problem in determining the learning objectives which is not just a "copy and paste" process from the face-to-face class situation. A lot of adjustments and improvements need to be made for the whole online teaching and learning process. These adjustments do not mean that a teacher with less proficiency or confidence in navigating digital technologies will not be able to provide suitable and beneficial learning experiences for the students through online classes using the virtual learning platform. Consequently, it is important for the teacher to have the ability to facilitate and develop student higher-order thinking skills in both online and face-to-face delivery when seeking to engage students in group

activities; even if the outcomes might be slightly different, the flexibility inherent within the online learning process provides more opportunities for assessment that can incorporate a range of technologies that are not limited to just a conventional presentation mode.

2.4 Virtual Learning Platform

The distance or online education process requires appropriate learning media so that it can maximize the learning process, which can be through online learning media by using computers, smartphones, the internet, application, and tools. Puspitarini & Hanif (2019) defines learning media as a tool in the form of physical and non-physical used by the teachers in conveying material to the students to be more effective and efficient in achieving the learning objectives. By that means, it can be interpreted as a tool of hardware or software used in the delivery of materials by the teacher to students. This includes the use of virtual learning platforms. Virtual learning platform can be called in several different expressions used to describe educational computer applications, such as e-learning platform, e-learning system, Learning Management Systems (LMS), Course Management System (CMS), and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in which students can access courses' content in different formats (text, image, sound, and video), as well as interacting with the teachers and other students through message boards, forums, chats, video-conference or other type communication tools (Sanchez & Hueroz in Costa et al., 2012). Furthermore, Piotrowski (2010) in (Costa et al., 2012) proposes that an e-learning platform represents a system that provides integrated support for six different activities: creation, organization, delivery, communication, collaboration, and assessment. The platforms used during the teaching and learning process, especially in the pandemics, have become a necessity and inseparable from the online or e-learning process.

Barbosa (Kusumadewi et al., 2021) states that with the continued development of online learning application technologies such as Adobe Connect, Skype, Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and others, where it is possible to use anywhere and anytime on a mobile phone or computer device. Moreover, in the utilization of any virtual platform for the teaching and learning process, there need to be specific qualifications for the platform to be used. These qualifications include the effectiveness of the message recipients, contents, communication media, format, source, and timing (Hardjana, 2003 in Okmawati, 2020).

- 1) Effectiveness of the message recipient, meaning that when the teacher wants to post material or provide a task, it can be directly posted to the accounts of students who are bound by the learning process so that the students can immediately see the post.
- 2) Effectiveness of content, meaning the message or information delivered by the teacher through the platform should be clear and structured.
- 3) Effectiveness of communication media, meaning that through the platform, it can deliver a clear message, and communication can flow smoothly between the teacher and the students, whether through direct communication, text, video, or any other forms.
- 4) Effectiveness of message format, meaning that the format of the lesson that the teacher tries to deliver to the students needs to be presented in a clear format that will not cause any misinterpretation.
- 5) Effectiveness of source, meaning that the sources used in the teaching and learning process can be presented on the platform.
- 6) Effectiveness of timing, meaning that there should not be any limit on when the materials can be posted or learned by the students. This can also mean that the student can learn through a real-live meeting so that the teaching and learning process can be counted as effective.

Furthermore, Yulitriana et al. (2020) found in their research that there are several reasons why teachers use a certain application or any virtual platform in the teaching and learning process, which include:

- 1) Recommendation by the institution
- 2) Recommendation by colleagues
- 3) Easiness to use
- 4) Economical as it is data saving
- 5) Complete features
- 6) No limitations
- 7) The application provides students' need

Based on the previous explanation, virtual learning platforms used in the teaching and learning process can be described as spaces, portals, or systems filled with educational content on a particular subject or many different topics that become the point of discussion in the learning process. In the utilization of the virtual learning platform, several qualifications also need to be considered in order to achieve the learning objectives effectively, such as reliability, accessibility, and economic values of the platform itself.

3. Methodology

In conducting this research, the researcher applied a mixed method in a convergent parallel design. The description of the design can be seen in the diagram as follows:

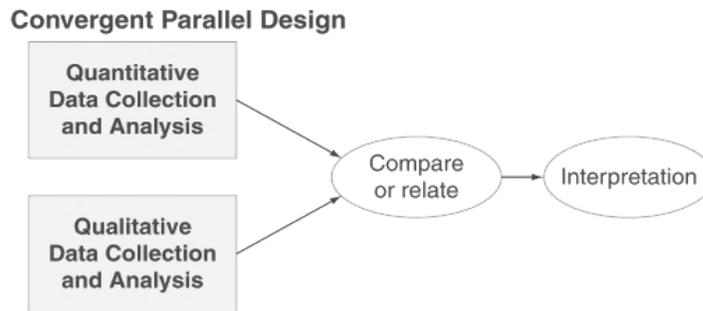


Figure 1. Convergent parallel design diagram
Source: Cresswell (2012)

By applying a mixed method, the researcher combined the quantitative and qualitative methods in order to obtain data that is more comprehensive, valid, reliable, and objective. Cresswell (2012) explained that in the convergent parallel design, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously. The data are then merged, and the results are used to understand a research problem. By using this design, the researcher gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, analyzed both datasets separately, compared the results from the analysis of both datasets, and made an interpretation as to whether the results support or contradict each other. The direct comparison of the two datasets by the researcher provides a convergence of data sources.

3.1 Time and Location

The researcher conducted the research in August 2021 online by using Google Form. In conducting this research, the researcher gave the questionnaire in the form of open-ended questions for the teachers and close-ended questions for SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. The aim for that was to gain and collect a more general overview of the implementation and the use of virtual learning platforms in the process of teaching English in Palopo City.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this research was the students of SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. As for the teachers, the population was the English teachers who teach the second-grade students in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. In determining the sample, the researchers used the cluster random sampling technique. For the teachers' sample, English teachers who teach second-grade students were picked through random sampling. While for the students, one class was picked as the sample.

3.3 Research Instrument

Related to the objectives of the research, the researchers used the online questionnaire using Google Form. The questionnaire contained close-ended and open-ended questions intended for teachers and students. The open-ended question contained questions in the form of an essay, in which the respondents gave answers freely while expressing their own ideas. This type of questionnaire helped the researcher to obtain information regarding teachers' strategies in teaching English by using virtual learning platforms during the pandemic. The questionnaire was prepared for the teachers to get information about the strategies used in teaching English by using virtual learning platforms during the pandemic in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo.

The data obtained were analyzed using the qualitative method. By using the qualitative method, the data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire was analyzed using the theory by Cresswell (2012) that consists of three steps. The first step was developing and applying codes. The coding can be described as categorizing the data obtained from the questionnaire. The second step was identifying themes, patterns, and relationships. In this step, the researcher identified and compared the findings of the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended question and the quantitative data from the close-ended question that had been analyzed with the literature review, searched for missing information, compared primary research findings, and discussed similarities and differences, and then summarizing the all the data. Last step, the researcher correlated the research findings with the purpose and objectives of the research.

4. Results and Discussion

Referring to the answers to the questionnaire that was distributed by the researchers and filled by two teachers from SMP Negeri 3 Palopo (Teacher 1 and Teacher 2) on the 12th of August 2021 in order to obtain information regarding methods/strategies that the teacher use and the problems or obstacles faced by the teacher in teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were 18 questions with the result as follow:

Question number 1

«Do you implement the distance learning system during this COVID-19 pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "Yes."

Teacher 2: "Yes, based on the regulation of the government of Palopo City."

The responses show that the English teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo have implemented the distance learning system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question number 2

«What do you think about the virtual learning platforms on this distance learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "It really helps the teaching process. Teachers can still communicate with the students even when they are not under the same roof."

Teacher 2: "It helps the teaching and learning process even though there are still some problems that need to be fixed."

Refers to the data above, teachers from SMP Negeri 3 Palopo both responded that virtual learning platforms help the teaching and learning process even if it still lacks in some parts and needs to be fixed,

Question number 3

«How do you determine the learning objective in online learning? Is it the same as before the pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "The learning objective is simplified during the pandemic. Teacher sorts which competency is more urgent and important to be delivered in the learning process in which the materials that are selected are considered hard for the students to learn by themselves at home and will be emphasized during the virtual learning process. The reason for this is because the duration of the teaching and learning process is shorter compared to the time before the pandemic happened."

Teacher 2: "There are some differences. However, the learning objectives during distance learning are more on how to facilitate communication of the teaching material delivery and the media being used. Automatically, the materials that are taught are simplified so that it does not burden the students, making the students learn independently by utilizing the limited time available."

Question number 4

«Were the learning objectives stated on the lesson plan achieved during this distance learning?»

Teacher 1: "Only a limited number of students can master the presented learning material. The rest of the students are passive in the process of virtual learning, causing the learning objectives to not be fully achieved."

Teacher 2: "The lesson plan during the pandemic is different from the one that was used before the pandemic happened as it is simplified. Because of that, the chance to achieve learning objectives which are included in the lesson plan during the distance learning depends on the students with all of their situation and constraints, which is more likely to be not fully achieved."

It can be seen from the data above that all three teachers face difficulty in achieving the learning objectives during distance learning. Teacher 1 states that only a partial number of students can get the understanding during the learning process, while teacher 2 states that because of students' different situations and constraints, the learning objective is more likely to be not fully achieved.

Question number 5

«What are the outcomes that have been achieved using the strategies you used on this distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "Students are able to understand and use some of the expressions provided by the teacher. They also are able to identify those expressions in the dialog form."

Teacher 2: "Learning and understanding expressions used in daily activity."

From the data above, teachers 1 and 2 are able to achieve some learning objectives and basic competencies provided that needed to be achieved. Teachers 1 and teacher 2 gave using and understanding expressions as examples.

Question number 6

«Is the material that you teach during this pandemic the same as the one that you taught before the COVID-19 pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "The material is the same. However, not all subjects are taught. For the easier material, the presentation will be accelerated more, and for the harder ones, it will be explained thoroughly."

Teacher 2: "The materials are the same but in a simpler form so that not all are taught during the learning process. This is based on the establishment of competency achievement indicators which have been built upon the COVID-19 learning set."

Referring to the data above, teacher 1 stated that the teaching materials are the same, but the way to deliver the materials is not all the same for different subjects of discussion. Similar to teacher 1, teacher 2 stated that the materials being taught are the same, but more in a simpler form, and not all of them were taught in class during the learning process.

Question number 7

«How do you choose your learning material to be adapted well to this distance learning?»

Teacher 1: "Students have been provided with textbooks which consist of the learning materials needed. Learning media are also provided through many sources, such as YouTube. However, it still becomes an obstacle for the students to access some of the materials on YouTube and other learning sources because of the limited internet data that the students have."

Teacher 2: "The establishment of Emergency Curriculum through Analysis of Graduate Competency Standard which includes main competency, basic competency, indicators, learning materials, learning activities, and assessment plan."

As seen from the data above, teacher 1 states that choosing learning materials is suited to the materials from the textbook and other different sources such as YouTube. Teacher 2 chooses the learning materials based on the emergency curriculum, which consists of main competence, basic competence, indicators, learning materials, learning activity, and assessment plan.

Question number 8

«What chapters or material have you taught this semester?»

Teacher 1: "Getting attention, checking to understand, appreciation to others, giving and asking opinion, transactional text, ability, and will."

Teacher 2: "Expressing and responding to greeting, saying goodbye, saying thank you, and apologizing; Asking and giving information related to identity; Expressions that are relevant with hope and prayers for happiness and achievement, declarative and interrogative sentence using the will, be going to in a context of expressing intention, purpose, and agreement to do something."

Based on the data above, it can be seen that all the teachers had taught different materials. Teacher 1 had taught several different materials for the ongoing semester, such as getting attention, checking understanding, appreciation to others, giving and asking for opinion, transactional text, ability, and will. Teacher 2 taught materials such as expressing and responding to greetings, saying goodbye, saying thank you, apologizing, asking and giving information related to identity, expressions that are relevant to hope, etc.

Question number 9

«What skills are integrated with the material in that chapter?»

Teacher 1: "Speaking, writing, reading, listening."

Teacher 2: "Writing, reading, speaking, and listening."

Referring to the data above, it can be seen that the skills integrated with the materials taught by teacher 1 and teacher 2 in which are the four basic skills in English; speaking, writing, reading, and listening. However, for teacher 3 from MTs Negeri Palopo, the listening skill is not included on the list.

Referring to the data above, it can be seen that the skills integrated with the materials taught by teacher 1 and teacher 2 are similar, which are the four basic skills in English; speaking, writing, reading, and listening.

Question number 10

«How do you design your material to be adapted well to the online/distance learning situation?»

Teacher 1: "Examples that are provided are not far different from students' daily lives so that the students can understand better. We also don't overly give students learning activities and assignments as it is customized to meet the level of material difficulty."

Teacher 2: "The material being delivered to the students are expressions or sentences that are used daily but in the English forms."

From the data above, teacher 1 adjusted the learning materials to be adapted well to the distance learning situation by providing examples that are close to students' daily lives in order for the students to understand them better. Students are also given learning activities and assignments that would not overly consume students' time and attention. As for teacher 2, the students are given English expressions that the students use in daily life.

Question number 11

«What strategies did you implement in teaching English in that chapter?»

Teacher 1: "Expository and contextual."

Teacher 2: "Using all three: expository, inquiry, and CTL or Contextual Teaching and Learning."

As stated in the data above, it can be seen that the teachers have different strategies for teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic using virtual learning platforms. Teacher 1 used expository and contextual strategy in teaching, while teacher 2 used expository, inquiry, and contextual teaching and learning.

Question number 12

«What method do you use in associating the skill that is integrated with the material in that chapter?»

Teacher 1: "Lecture, discussion, and demonstration."

Teacher 2: "1. Online method doing all teaching and learning proves through the online system. 2. Face-to-face method used for the students who lack facilities and infrastructures for the online system."

It can be seen from the data above that teacher 1 from SMP Negeri 3 Palopo simply put the methods used into three methods, lecture, discussion, and demonstration. Teacher 2 divided the method into two parts, which are an online method and a face-to-face method, depending on the situation.

Question number 13

«What media did you use in teaching during this COVID-19 pandemic? (It could be the name of the virtual learning platform you use and how you use it).»

Teacher 1: "Google Meet, WhatsApp, Xrecorder, Zoom (Zoom is rarely used)."

Teacher 2: WhatsApp (in the form of a class group), Google Classroom, Google Meet."

Based on the data above, teachers from SMP Negeri 3 Palopo used different virtual learning platforms with different intensities in teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teacher 1 used Google Meet, WhatsApp, Xrecorder, and Zoom. Teacher 2 used WhatsApp, Google Classroom, and Google Meet.

Question number 14

« What problem/issue did you face in managing/operating the virtual learning platforms during the online learning?»

Teacher 1: "The problem with bad/unstable connection."

Teacher 2: "1. Applications that are used during distance learning are sometimes too hard for the students to use, 2. Teachers and students need learning media such as mobile phones, laptops, or computers, and one which is the most important is the stability of internet connection."

Refers to the data above, internet connection is one main problem during the implementation of distance teaching and learning. As stated by teacher 1, bad/unstable connection is the main problem. Teacher 2 added the operating difficulty of the application and the student's lack of facility also became the main problem in the distance learning situation.

Question number 15

«What learning evaluation form do you use in teaching English during this COVID-19 pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "When using virtual meetings such as Google Meet, the evaluation can be in the form of affective assessment and psychomotor."

Teacher 2: "1. Specific for the evaluation while using applications during distance learning (Google Meet, WhatsApp, and Google Classroom), students are evaluated through their knowledge, skills, and also spiritual and social attitudes (observing student attitudes during the distance learning). 2. Evaluation for mid-semester and finals using Google Form."

From the data above, it can be seen that the teachers from SMP Negeri 3 Palopo used different forms of evaluation in the distance learning implementation. Teacher 1 used affective assessment and psychomotor when using virtual meetings such as Google Meet. Teacher 2 observed students' knowledge, skills, and also spiritual and social attitudes during the online class using virtual learning platforms such as Google Meet, WhatsApp, and Google Classroom.

Question number 16

«How do you make sure that the students take part in this distance learning during this COVID-19 pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "When using Google Meet, the students will be asked to use their own personal names in order to check their attendance. When using WhatsApp, students will be asked to fill up the attendance list while the class discussion is in progress. However, both Google Meet and WhatsApp cannot make students 100% take part in the learning process. More students are more active while using WhatsApp compared to virtual meeting applications."

Teacher 2: "Through the attendance list that is sent to the class group during the learning process."

As stated in the data above, teacher 1 from SMP Negeri 3 Palopo used the attendance list in order to make sure students took part during the distance learning. Similar to teacher 1, teacher 2 also used the attendance list as a form of assessment.

Question number 17

«Do you think that the strategies you used in teaching English were appropriate for teaching English on distance learning during this COVID-19 pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "It still needs to be elevated, and more learning strategies are needed."

Teacher 2: "The emergency curriculum during the pandemic has its problems and obstacles. However, distance learning is inevitable during this pandemic and still needs to be implemented by always making improvement and enhancement and also innovation for the distance learning implementation."

Based on the data above, it can be seen that the teachers struggled during the implementation of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in deciding the strategy used during the learning process. Teacher 1 stated that the strategy needs to be elevated and improved, while teacher 2 said that because of the inevitable state of distance learning, the existing strategy needs to be improved and enhanced, and also more innovation is needed.

Question number 18

«What difficulties or obstacles did you face with distance learning during this COVID-19 pandemic?»

Teacher 1: "Students' state/facility is the number one problem. There are students who do not have mobile phones in order to learn. Some who own android phones also do not have internet data to access internet learning all the time. Bad internet connection also becomes the main problem to occur during this distance learning."

Teacher 2: "Difficulty in accessing the internet, unstable electricity, and limited internet data that the parents provide become the main problem during the distance learning, making the implementation of the learning process to be not optimal."

After the data were completed, several information can be described in detail as follows:

4.1 Teacher's Strategy in Teaching

Based on the result of the questionnaire for the teacher, it is shown that the teachers in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo used similar strategies, which are the expository, inquiry, and contextual teaching and learning strategies in teaching English. These strategies have been mentioned previously by Saripah (2019) as the teaching strategies that the teacher can use. The expository strategy emphasizes the teacher's verbal lesson delivery process to the students aiming at increasing the students' understanding optimally, while the inquiry teaching strategy emphasizes students' activity in searching and finding, meaning that students are the subject of the process. In addition, the contextual strategy aims to motivate students to understand the meaning of the lesson by linking the subject with the context of students' daily life (personal, social, and cultural context) in order to gain understanding/skills which flexibly can be applied from one context to one another.

Based on question number 12's answer, the methods that were used by teacher 1 are the lecture, discussion, and demonstration method, while teacher 2 demonstrated the methods as an online and face-to-face method which was used for the students who lack facilities and infrastructures for the online system. This statement links to the students' preference regarding the teaching method that the teacher used. It was stated that even though the students like the lecturing method, the percentage of students who like it when the teacher uses the discussion method as a way of teaching English is almost two times higher (it can be seen in table 11 and table 13). This means that the students of SMP Negeri 3 Palopo prefer the discussion method over the lecturing one. Based on the statement of Saripah (2019), the students can participate actively and talk freely to the teacher or other students and create thinking together process during the discussion method. Moreover, an exchange of opinions between the members of the discussion about a topic, problem, or issue becomes the main point of the method. The students can solve a problem, find an answer, increase and understand their ability and learn to make a decision. This can also imply that students are more likely to have the expectation for the teacher to create a more open teaching method in which the students can express themselves and explore more during the teaching and learning process.

4.2 Learning Objective and Learning Material

The teachers stated that there are some differences in determining the learning objective before and during the pandemic. Thus, it affected the materials that were taught during the pandemic. Teacher 1 stated that the learning objective was simplified during the pandemic. The teacher sorted which competency was more urgent and important to be delivered in the learning process, which the materials that were selected were considered hard for the students to learn by themselves at home and were emphasized and explained thoroughly during the virtual learning process. Teacher 2 stated that the learning objectives during the distance learning were more on how to facilitate communication of the teaching material delivery and the media being used.

Because of the transition and adaption, the learning objectives could not be fully achieved during distance learning. Based on question number 4, teacher 1 stated that only a limited number of students could master the learning materials while the other students were passive, causing the learning objective could not be fully achieved. As for teacher 2, the adaptation of the more simplified lesson plan caused the students hard to achieve the learning objectives because of the student situation. Students' different backgrounds and the constraints that the students faced during online/distance learning played a big part in determining whether the learning objective could be achieved.

From question number 6 answers, it was stated that although the materials that were taught to the students were still the same, it was simplified so that it did not burden the students, making the students learn independently by utilizing the limited time available. In addition, the teachers divided the materials so that the harder ones could be explained more during the virtual learning, while the others could be learned independently. The indicators were also suited to the establishment of a competency learning indicator which was built upon the COVID-19 learning set. The learning materials were also adapted to the pandemic situation as besides being provided with textbooks; learning media are also provided through many sources, such as YouTube. The examples that were provided were not far different from students' daily lives so that the students could understand better. English skills such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening were also integrated into the teaching and learning process as these skills are the four main skills that the students need to have to master English.

4.3 Form of Assessment

In the teaching and learning process, assessment plays a big part in understanding students' level of ability. Based on the answer to open-ended question number 15, teacher 1 evaluated the students by doing affective and psychomotor assessments during

the virtual learning process using the virtual learning platform, while teacher 2 evaluated the knowledge, skills, spiritual and social attitudes by observing the behavior of the students and used Google Form as a set to evaluate students during mid-semester and finals. In addition, to make sure the students take part in the learning process, teachers took the attendance list as a tool. However, this method was not efficient in measuring the students' activeness in the learning process.

4.4 The Utilization of Virtual Learning Platform

Based on the data, it can be seen that the English teachers of SMP Negeri 3 Palopo thought the virtual learning platforms helped the teaching and learning process as the teacher could still communicate with the students even during distance learning, even though there are still some problems that need to be fixed. As for the virtual learning platforms that were used during the distance learning, teacher 1 mentioned Google Meet, WhatsApp, Xrecorder, and Zoom. In addition, teacher 2 mentioned WhatsApp, Google Classroom, and Google Meet as media in teaching. The selection of these virtual learning platforms was also based on the theory of Hardjana (2003, in Okmawati, 2020) that there need to be specific qualifications for the platform to be used. These qualifications include the effectiveness of the message recipients, contents, communication media, format, source, and timing. From the data, it can be seen that the platform that the teachers used in teaching English are platforms that were more accessible, both for the teachers and the students. As stated in the findings, there were some students who struggled with distance learning, especially because of the gadgets. More than that, those platforms mentioned above are easier to use compared to other learning platforms. Because the platforms are more accessible, the students could also use them for learning other subjects as other teachers who teach different subjects also use the same platforms to teach, making the students have more space and time to do the assignments and learn and also store more things on their gadget.

4.5 Problems/Obstacles in Teaching and Learning during Pandemic

Regarding the problems/obstacles, the teachers faced during the implementation of distance learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic using virtual learning platforms. From the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, teacher 1 stated that students' state/facility and bad internet connection are the problems. Teacher 2 stated difficulty in accessing the internet, unstable electricity, and limited internet data that the parents provide become the main problem during distance learning, making the learning process not optimal. Moreover, there are also problems in operating the virtual learning platforms, which are stated by teacher 2 that the applications are sometimes too confusing and hard to use. More problems arose, as stated by teacher 1 and teacher 2, on question number 4's answer as the learning objectives could not be fully achieved because the lesson plan that was used during the pandemic was different from the one that was used before pandemic happened as it is simplified. Considering the students' different situations and constraints, only a limited number of students could master the presented learning materials, while the rest of the students were passive in the process of virtual learning, causing the learning objectives to not be fully achieved. This proves the theory of Yulitriana et al. (2020) that states teachers are required to have skills in using technology and teaching critical thinking to the students at the same time as distance learning depends hugely on technology and the internet. Such rush change in the learning system was caused by the COVID-19 outbreak; however required teachers to quickly adapt to the new existing situation. In addition, the implementation of online learning during a pandemic requires several different levels of adaptation and differentiation within the approach. In the practice of online learning, the shift from the face-to-face contact mode into the online context is not simply a "one size fits all approach" (Gillett-Swan, 2017). This process requires some steps of adaptation and some time to be optimally implemented.

5. Conclusion

Based on the result of the close-ended and open-ended questionnaires, the result of this research indicates that in the implementation of distance teaching and learning, the materials taught by the teacher in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo were the same, but in a more simplified form. The materials were delivered to the students by utilizing virtual learning platforms such as WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom as learning media. Even though the utilization of the virtual learning platform as learning media still encounters several obstacles and is not optimal, the use of the virtual learning platform itself is a huge help for the teacher to keep delivering the learning materials to the students amidst the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of the students also happened to choose «agree» as the highest frequency. Moreover, the students at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo got advantages in the form of skills improvement during the implementation of distance learning. However, the students of SMP Negeri 3 Palopo prefer learning English at school to learning English at home. In addition, based on the data regarding the teaching method that the teachers used, the students prefer more discussion in the teaching and learning process compared to the teacher's lecturing. In addition, teachers used different strategies in teaching during distance learning. Teachers, as the facilitator during the teaching and learning process, are required to help the students and facilitate so that the students can achieve their learning objectives. Teachers are required to use the most suitable learning strategy regarding the materials being taught. In determining which learning strategy or method to use, students' perception is also one big part that needs to be considered as students' state of mind and perception towards the learning process can hugely affect the result of the learning process itself. Moreover, virtual learning platforms play a big part in distance learning implementation and become one of the most important

parts of achieving learning objectives that have been planned beforehand by the teachers and become the aim of the education itself in the first place.

Based on the data findings, it was also found that in the implementation of distance learning, the learning objectives at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo were basically the same. The difference was the fact that it was simplified by sorting which competency is more urgent and important. It was based on the fact that the students' need was different between distance learning and learning in class. In addition, because of so many adaptations that needed to be made in the process of distance teaching and learning, several obstacles were also encountered by both the teachers and students. In conclusion, the problems or obstacles were regarding improper internet connection. The second problem is about the students who all have different economic backgrounds in facing online-based learning. The next problem is the distraction that both the students and the teachers face during online learning. The fourth problem is the virtual learning platform that is still ineffective for teaching and learning at a distance. Fifth is the fact that the teacher needed to adjust so many things, including the learning objectives, learning materials, and teaching strategy, in such a short time and with no preparation. The sixth problem is the fact that the learning objectives could not be fully achieved during distance learning.

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