

The Use of E-Learning to Teach English in the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Henny Mardiah¹

¹English Department, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Bahasa Asing ITMI
mardiahheny@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Received
19/05/2020
Revised
19/06/2020
Accepted
16/07/2020

Keywords:

Covid-19, E-Learning, ELT, Online Learning, Pandemic.

ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic that was claimed from Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 has transferred to countries over the world at the beginning of 2020. This pandemic has brought significant changes in every aspect of human life, economy or commerce, social, health, and education as well. The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Joko Widodo declared all Indonesian citizenships to practice social/physical distancing. Indonesian government took some preventive strategies to minimize the outbreak of COVID-19. In education sector, Indonesian Education and Culture Minister, Mr. Nadiem Anwar Makarim ordered all students including university students to study from home. This study aims to investigate the use of the E-learning as the current phenomenon in teaching English in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. This research was conducted with a descriptive qualitative research. The result of the study suggests that E-learning system is considered as the one and only relevant teaching-learning method in the time of pandemic. Teachers and students just accessed the internet from homes and they would be connected to the E-learning application that has been approved by the institutions or the lecturers. However, challenges in applying E-learning were also undeniable, for instances: the unavailability of internet access/ WIFI, learners feel unmotivated, poor levels of student engagement. The lack of actual social and psychological interactions between teachers and students in E-learning system seemed to minimize affective domains. The interactive teacher-student talk is not as effective as in normal classroom. Supports from institutions (colleges or universities) and government are needed for the success of E-learning, particularly in the time of COVID-19 pandemic.

How to cite: Mardiah, H. (2020). The Use of E-Learning to Teach English in the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic. *English Teaching and Linguistics Journal*, 1(2), 49-55.

I. INTRODUCTION

On 31 December 2019, a pneumonia of unknown cause was first reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) country office in China. This outbreak soon has been recognized as a Public Health Emergency of International concern by WHO on 30 January, 2020. WHO analyzed data, provide advice and manage expert networks to identify the type of virus which resulted the deaths in Wuhan. On 11 February 2020, WHO announced a name of the new coronavirus disease: COVID-19. Many countries have confirmed this corona virus infected their people such as Asian countries like South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and so on, European countries, for instance England, Spain, Germany and many more. America as super power country has also been affected by this outbreak. This Coronavirus has caused many changes to people lives. It hit most aspects of life; economy and commerce, health, tourism, education and many more.

Indonesia, as one of big countries in South East Asia has got the impacts of this global pandemic. When the first two COVID-19 cases were announced in Indonesia in early March, the country was in a panic. In respond to that, Indonesian government took several strategies to minimize the impacts for examples Physical Distancing now it is known as Social Distancing,

health and sanitary campaign (washing hands frequently, wearing face mask while going out), closing public access such as airport, terminal, malls and offices. In economy sector, shops which didn't not provide daily needs were requested to be closed, café and restaurants were suggested to provide take-away service only. People started to Work from Home (WFH) to avoid gathering and crowds. In education sector, Indonesian Education and Culture Minister, Mr. Nadiem Anwar Makarim, has issued Minister circular letter Number 302/E.E2/KR/2020. It requested students to study from home (SFH), the classes would be held virtually. The shift real teaching-learning process in the classroom context into virtual classroom is the culmination of the government's efforts to prevent COVID-19 from entering university populations and spreading to local communities. However, schools (teachers) and universities (lecturers) are obliged to teach and monitor the learning process using online/digital platforms or what is widely known as online learning or E-learning. This study is aimed to investigate the use of the E-learning in Indonesia in the time of Covid-19 pandemic. This research was conducted with a descriptive qualitative research in which the researcher does not control or manipulate any of the variables, but only observe the situation and phenomenon and measures them.

Corona Virus (COVID-19)

Corona virus is a large family of viruses that can cause infections ranging from the common cold and the most severe respiratory illness such as Middle Aged Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Acute Severe Syndrome (SARS). World Health Organization called this Covid-19 as a global pandemic. Before it was officially called COVID-19, scientists named this virus as Corona Virus 2019-nCoV which refers to the corona virus novel. A new type of Corona Virus called ARS CoV-2, previously called 2019-nCoV is a new type of virus that has not been identified in human before. This new type of virus is finally known as corona Covid-19. The term Covid-19 is an abbreviation of Corona (CO), Virus (VI), Disease (D) and 2019 (19) which marks the first time the virus appeared in 2019 in Wuhan, China. The typical symptoms of Corona Covid-19 such as cough, fever, difficulty in breathing, muscle aches, until fatigue. In more severe cases, this can cause severe pneumonia, respiratory distress syndrome, sepsis and septic shock. This virus transmits quickly through droplets or the hand and a solid surface. At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating treatments (www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1)

E-learning

The term of E-learning has started to be used in the 21st century as Seok (2008:725), states that “*e-learning is a new form of pedagogy for learning in the 21st century. E-Teacher are e-learning instructional designer, facilitator of interaction, and subject matter experts*”. E-learning (Electronic Learning) has become a new trend of learning method and considered as the most relevant learning method today especially in the covid-19 outbreak where people are suggested to practice social distancing and avoid the crowds as national pandemic preventive strategies. Many organizations and institutions are using e-learning because it can be as effective as traditional training at a lower cost. Developing e-learning is more expensive than preparing classroom materials and training the trainers, especially if multimedia or highly interactive methods are used. However, delivery costs for e-learning (including costs of web servers and technical support) are considerably lower than those for classroom facilities, instructor time, participants' travel and job time lost to attend classroom sessions.

According to Ghirardini (2011:10), there are some factors why E-learning is appropriate to use: 1) there is a significant amount of content to be delivered to a large number of learners; 2) learners come from geographically dispersed locations; 3) learners have limited mobility; 4) learners have limited daily time to devote to learning; 5) learners do not have effective listening and reading skills; 6) learners do not have effective speaking skills or shy types students; 7) learners have at least basic computer and Internet skills; 8) learners are required to develop homogeneous background knowledge on the topic; 10) learners are highly motivated to learn

and appreciate proceeding at their own pace; 11) content must be reused for different learners' groups in the future; 12) training aims to build cognitive skills rather than psychomotor skills; 13) the course addresses long-term rather than short-term training needs; 14) there is a need to collect and track data.

In Indonesian context, this method is not new. This learning mode has already been applied in several colleges, especially those institutions which have complete facilities to support online learning. Lately, the use of E-learning/online learning is increasingly needed and relevant to the current situation to slow the spread of Covid-19 virus. This is also in line with the circular letter issued by of Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia Number 302/E.E2/KR/2020 related to the covid-19 outbreak, so that schools or colleges organize education programs from home (study from home).

E-learning is an internet-based online learning that can be accessed wherever students are located, including from home. This E-learning model can also be used in educational course or distance learning. The term of E-learning is more precisely intended as an effort to make a transformation of the learning process in schools or colleges into a digital form that is bridged by internet technology (Munir, 2009:169).

According to Clark & Mayer (2008:10), E-learning has some characteristics; 1) having content that is relevant to the purpose of learning; 2) using instructional methods such as presenting examples and exercises to improve learning; 3) using media elements such as words and pictures to deliver learning material; 4) enable direct learning centered on the teacher (synchronous e-learning) or designed for an independent learning (asynchronous e-learning); 5) build understanding and skills related to learning objectives either individually or improve group works. E-learning is also characterized by a) interactivity (b) independency (c) accessibility; (d) enrichment (Rusman et al., 2011: 264).

According to Nursalam (2008: 135), E-learning has some following features:

1. Utilizing electronic technology services;
2. Utilizing the advantages of computers (digital media and computer networks);
3. Using autonomous materials (self-learning materials), then stored on a computer so it can be accessed by lecturers and students anytime and anywhere;
4. Utilizing the learning schedule, curriculum, learning progress results and things relate to educational administrations that can be seen anytime on the computer.

There are three internet-based learning in E-learning (Faridi, 2009):

- a. *Web Course* is the use of internet for learning purposes where teaching material, discussion, consultation, assignment and examinations are accessed via internet or no face-to-face in the learning process like the process of distance education; virtual university;
- b. *Web Centric Course* compared to Web Course, Web Centric emphasizes learning via internet where some consultations, discussions and assignments are held in face-to-face presentations and it is conducted in a smaller learning process like *university off campus*;
- c. *Web Enhanced Course* the use of the internet for learning purposes where the role of internet is only to support face-to-face learning activities or presentations carried out in a greater learning process.

E-learning Components

E-learning approaches can combine different types of e-learning components, including:

- a. *E-learning content*
E-learning content can include; simple learning resources, interactive e-lessons, electronic simulations, and job aids.
- b. *E-tutoring, e-coaching, e-mentoring* provide individual support and feedback to learners through online tools and facilitation techniques

- c. *Collaborative Learning/Collaborative activities* range from discussions and knowledge-sharing to working together on a common project. Social software, such as chats, discussion forums and blogs, are used for online collaboration among learners.
- d. *Synchronous and asynchronous online discussions* are designed to facilitate communication and knowledge-sharing among learners. Learners can comment and exchange ideas about course activities or contribute to group learning by sharing their knowledge. *Collaborative project work* implies collaboration among learners to perform a task. *Collaborative activities* can include project work and scenario-based assignments.
- e. *Virtual Classroom*, a virtual classroom is an e-learning event where an instructor teaches remotely and in real time to a group of learners using a combination of materials (e.g. PowerPoint slides, audio or video materials). It is also called synchronous learning.

This method requires the least amount of effort to convert materials (but instructors still have to prepare them). Appropriate technology must be in place for both the learners and providers (e.g. software for the virtual classroom and good connectivity).

E-learning Activities

Generally, there are two modes of E-learning activities:

1. *Synchronous* events take place in real time. Synchronous communication between two people requires them to both be present at a given time. Examples of synchronous activities are chat conversations and audio/video conferencing, live webcasting, application sharing, whiteboard presentation, and polling.
2. *Asynchronous* events are time-independent. A self-paced course is an example of asynchronous e-learning because online learning takes place at any time. E-mail, discussion forums, Wiki, Blog, Webcasting are examples of asynchronous communication tools.

The Benefits of E-learning

According to Pranoto et al. (2009:309) E-learning is useful to:

1. The use of E-learning to support the learning process can increase students' comprehension of material taught,
2. Increase the active participation of students,
3. Develop the ability of students to learn independently,
4. Improve the quality of teaching material and training,
5. Develop the ability to display information with information technology devices where ordinary devices are difficult to do that.

In applying E-learning, lecturers as educators are expected to be able to understand several competencies to produce a good quality of E-learning course. The quality of an e-learning course is enhanced by:

- a. *learner-centered content*: E-learning curricula should be relevant and specific to learners' needs, roles and responsibilities in professional life. Skills, knowledge and information should be provided to this end.
- b. *granularity*: E-learning content should be segmented to facilitate assimilation of new knowledge and to allow flexible scheduling of time for learning.
- c. *engaging content*: instructional methods and techniques should be used creatively to develop an engaging and motivating learning experience.
- d. *interactivity*: frequent learner interaction is needed to sustain attention and promote learning.
- e. *personalization*: self-paced courses should be customizable to reflect learners' interests and needs; in instructor-led courses, tutors and facilitators should be able to follow the learners' progress and performance individually.

In addition, to produce an effective E-learning program, an educator is also required to have some basic competencies, namely (1) The ability to make instructional designs that are suitable with the pedagogical methods as outlined in the learning plan (2) Mastery of technology

in learning namely internet design as instructional source to get up-to-date and useful teaching materials. (3) Mastery of subject matter in accordance with the area of expertise.

Strategies for implementing E-learning

E-learning strategy involves four stages namely analysis, implementation, planning and evaluation. *Analysis*, factors that need to be analyzed include the needs of the organization in looking at the present situation and the existence of E-learning in providing a positive impact. *Planning*, the planning aspects that need to be considered are network, learning management system, material and knowledge of management. *Implementation*, this stage requires good project management skills to ensure coordination and implementation of work in line with plan and not deviate from the objectives and strategies *Evaluation*, after implementing the E-learning plan, last stage is to evaluate the success of the program.

E-learning as a medium for teaching English

E-learning as a model for almost all subject can also be applied in language learning including English. Web pages as one of menus offered in E-learning can help lecturers to teach English. Web pages have been grouped according to their domains such as vocabulary, grammar, phonetics and four language skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Through this menu, lecturers can download textbook or teaching modules either free or with cost. Lecturers can also share link or information to students about English. They can access English video as well and both teachers and students will discuss about it. In addition, the use of Web Centric Pages also helps teachers to communicate about learning materials and assess students' speaking directly via virtual conference applications that can be downloaded such as *Zoom*, *Cloud Meetings*, *Cisco Webex Meetings*, *Google Classroom* and other similar applications. Lecturers can invite dozens of students to have face-to face lectures online even examination can be carried out online these days. While the Web Enhanced Course can be used for presentations with more participants. After the presentation is done, lecturers can engage students in interactive dialogue relates to the topic.

Challenges in using E-learning in the time of Pandemic

Despite the advantages of E-learning mode to facilitate English learning, in the time of pandemic, E-learning also has some challenges such as:

- a. The unavailability of internet access/ WIFI, electricity, computer, PC, and other infrastructures that support the E-learning process;
- b. The lack of cheaper software;
- c. Learners don't feel motivated enough because the students may end up feeling isolated and emotionally disconnect;
- d. Poor levels of student engagement, it is difficult to focus on a pixelated video screen when they hear some distractions such as noise and feedback; rustling papers, motorcycles, cars, horns, kettles, wind and so forth;
- e. Lack of classroom-like teacher presence;
- f. The problem of skill and knowledge, some lecturers and students are unskillful and illiterate in using digital technology;
- g. Attitude towards ICT (Information, communication and technology), understanding of the importance of ICT in learning including E-learning needs to be encouraged persistently.

Scope and Aim of the Study

This study focuses on discussing the current phenomenon of using online/E-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic in the learning process. Previous studies prove that E-learning is an alternative method of learning to support the actual teaching-learning practices in the classroom. It can be mixed with face-to-face conventional teaching to promote independent learning. However, in the time of pandemic that results students to study from home, E-learning method seems to be the most relevant learning system to replace the conventional classroom. This research investigates how E-learning method can help teachers in teaching English with its

strength and weaknesses in actual practices. It also encompasses the challenges of using E-learning especially in the time of COVID-19 outbreak.

II. METHODS

Descriptive qualitative design was implemented in this study. The phenomenological study was conducted to collect the data. Phenomenological study is a qualitative method to describe an event, activity or phenomenon. A combination of methods such collecting primary research method (by interviews) and secondary research method (by literature research and online sources) were undergone to provide insight into this research. In interview technique, the researcher interviewed some lecturers from different institutions to find out their reactions to E-learning system. The interview was carried on via social media (WhatsApp group chat). Meanwhile, in literature research, the researcher read some documents such books, ELT journals/articles that relate to the topic. Last but not least, the researcher also gathered the information from online sources such as downloading and watching video, reading blogs and websites.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After interviewing the lecturers, it was suggested that E-learning is still ineffective in actual practices. From the lecturers' perspectives, the striking challenges are the lack support from the institutions such as some institutions did not provide fund for lecturers to conduct E-learning process (no financial support to purchase internet data), no exact online learning application which is provided by institution, so the lecturers sometimes mixed the applications; *WhatsApp* group chat with *Zoom* application, or *WhatsApp* group chat only or *Google Classroom* only. In addition to that, lecturers may use the low-data consuming learning application due to not all students can afford for high-speed internet data package or even a few students do not have internet access at all in their remote areas. Finally, it seems some students have lack of motivations in learning because they do not interact directly with their lecturers who can motivate them, guide them and provide clearer instructions like in face to face conventional classroom.

IV. SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

Learning through E-learning provides an interesting experience for students. In learning English, students can learn English specifically; listening, speaking, reading and writing through real world situations. Students feel a totally different learning sensation than conventional classes. Their access to information also drastically increase. E-learning offers interesting learning sources to students. Unfortunately, in this global pandemic, this online platform for virtual learning are still not working properly, students and teachers have some technical difficulties with internet access, the internet service was so slow or the students can't afford to make video calls on program such as *Zoom* because it consumes more internet data.

E-learning will run effectively if there are supports from institutions (colleges or universities) and government. Both of them must work together to realize the importance of technology-based education like E-learning. Internet networks, computers, and other facilities and infrastructures must be provided. If it is E-learning based on the web, it is necessary to have a student activity center, interactions between groups, system supporting administration, sharpening of materials, examinations and online materials. In order to success E-learning in education, the competencies of lecturers/ teachers in the use of information and technology must be continuously improved. Besides, it also requires expertise and creativity of lecturers/teachers in providing and updating interesting learning materials to be used through E-learning system to achieve higher levels of student engagement. Teachers/lecturers and students should be able to operate the E-learning features optimally and efficiently. Institutions are also responsible for conducting training for the teaching staff, guide students who are experiencing difficulties to log in to the online system, ensure that the facilities and infrastructures are available and can function well to support the implementation of E-learning system.

In conclusion, E-learning seems to be the one and only platform of teaching-learning process in this COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, it cannot replace actual classroom interactions as in conventional classes. The affective domain (attitudes) in education is also an important aspect need to be encouraged in the success of a learning. Students' attitude and motivation can be easily monitored and guided in conventional classes. The affective domains of education should be developed side by side with the cognitive and psychomotor domains. E-learning can continue to be developed as an active, innovative, and creative learning to complement face-to-face meetings in conventional classes. Lastly, the use and of technology and information in E-learning should be able to create students to be more competitive students who can compete in the globalization era, active, creative but also have good characters.

REFERENCES

- Clark, R.C. & Mayer, R.E. (2008). *E-learning and the science of instruction: proven guidelines for consumers and designers of multimedia learning*, second edition. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Faridi, Abdurrachman. (2009). Inovasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berbasis ICT Dalam Rangka Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan. *Lembaran Ilmu Pendidikan*. 38(1), 63.
- Ghirardini, Beatrice. (2011). Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations. *E-learning methodologies. A guide for designing and developing E-learning courses: A handbook*. Italy: FAO (non-commercial use).
- Munir. (2009). *Pembelajaran jarak jauh berbasis teknologi informasi dan komunikasi*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Nursalam., Ferry, A. (2008). *Pendidikan Dalam Keperawatan*. Jakarta: Salemba Medika.
- Pranoto, A. et al. (2009). *Sains dan Teknologi*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Rusman, et al. (2011). *Pembelajaran berbasis teknologi informasi dan komunikasi, mengembangkan profesionalitas guru*. Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo.
- Seok, S. (2008). The Aspect of E-learning. *International Journal on E-learning, Proquest*, 7(4), 725-741.
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/>. Accessed on May, 16, 2020 at 10.35 a.m.
- www.scribbr.com. Accessed on June 14, 2020 at 2.48 p.m.