

The Experiences of EFL Teachers Teaching English Skills and Contents in the Midst of Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this research was to obtain the voices of EFL senior teachers toward the use of WhatsApp- group tool. The researchers applied a qualitative method design by practicing two instruments: semi structured interview and indirect observation. Case study design was undertaken by engaging two EFL senior teachers who actively implemented WhatsApp-group tool in the learning process in the midst the outbreak of COVID-19. Four designs of qualitative frameworks were convenience aspect (ease of use) and usefulness aspect (Interaction and motivation), educational aspect, and technical aspect were simultaneously utilized to draw their experience in teaching English skills and content course. The result of research discussions declared that the EFL teachers claimed the different voices toward the utilizing WhatsApp-group tool. Grammar lecturer claimed that this digital tool as a learning management system, integrating the tools for educational aims, and perceiving advantages in boosting the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and learning process. In addition, Grammar lecturer as educator emphasized to his learners that young generation does not only learn the academical aspects but also build a good attitude, critically thinking, social-caring, and high tolerance with the society. The learning strategies is well-known as maternity reflective method. In contrast, the Prose lecturer claimed several obstacles; junk notifications, flooding irrelevant chats in the WhatsApp forum, poor signal, and consuming extra time. Furthermore, he added that interactions in WhatsApp-group tool as supportive learning cannot boost learners to be an active due to some factors. These evidences became significant challenges in applying WhatsApp as a management teaching media. Thus, pedagogical implication of utilizing WhatsApp- group

tool in EFL classroom should be carefully tackled to minimize the overuse of this mobile application.

Keywords: efl classroom, efl senior teachers, and whatsapp-group tool.

INTRODUCTION

The home learning policy has received mixed reactions from school, educators, parents and learners. The discrepancies of EFL teachers' perspective and the unreadiness of schools in applying distance learning from home showed that the educational government still survive to solve several obstacles. Educators can be said as the frontline in implementing distance-learning or online learning, they are emphasized to prepare various strategies related to the effectiveness of learning techniques and learning agenda midst COVID-19. Today, the most crucial role in the education sector is teachers because they should adapt to the shifting from face-to-face meeting in the classroom to distance-learning (Bao, 2020). Distance learning is efficiently designed to apply from practically anywhere. It arranged by involving several types of learning resources such as documents, pictures, audios, and videos that can be learned by learners in WhatsApp- group tool. Learning materials is one of the major aspects of developing digital learning. Learning outcomes can be well-accomplished if the teachers can design the learning materials as interactive as possible and in accordance with the learners' characteristics even it is in digital classroom.

Nowadays, the unexpected pandemic of a deadly disease caused by Coronavirus was starting to impact to Indonesia educational aspect. This shifting regulation was unpredictable and caused teachers' learning agendas messed up (Cruikshank, 2021). Of these phenomenon, online-based learning is considered an option. It occurred because face-to-face learning cannot be conducted. Therefore, the only option is a mobile application that requires an internet connection. Maintaining the learning activities of schools and universities became an important aspect in the midst of the outbreak of Covid-19 (El-Seoud, 2020). Although, this paradigm shift could generate changes in teachers' perspective of this way of teaching and arise some challenges. For instance, the transition from traditional learning systems to online learning system happened suddenly because the Coronavirus pandemic was not preceded by mature preparation (Efriana, 2021). Thus, the teachers should find the familiar tool that they used in daily basic.

APJII (2020) is well-known as Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association was conducted a survey, it demonstrated that 196,7 million Indonesian users used the internet to aid them in daily life. This result also showed that a 73,7% increase rapidly compared to the number of internet penetration in 2019 ago. Indonesian users applied a specific tool, it demonstrated on another finding; the top online tool for Indonesian people

is WhatsApp tool (Population Review and Census, 2019). College learners who applied WhatsApp in daily basic can reflect the popularity of WhatsApp (Dahlstrom & Bichsel, 2014; Tahat, Al-Dabesi, & Al-Qta, 2014). This digital tool can fulfil teachers' need as a familiar tool in this unreadiness situation due to Covid-19. In addition, the use of WhatsApp can be addressed in educational purposes. Especially, college learners to deliver the learning materials, post the links, share iamges, videos, audios, attach the current location regarding with maps, organize the schedule and meeting related to courses (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). In addition, the social aims were included the features of WhatsApp-group tool (Devi & Tevera, 2014). The findings concerning to the learners' positive voices of WhatsApp-group tool to create socialization, ease of implement for educational aims, intensive training for learners, leaners' enjoyment, and assist to solve the current issues (Ahad & Lim, 2014; Davis, Umar, Ema, & Dian, 2020).

WhatsApp-group tools as a communicative tool for distance learning has been applied by several classes in the state of Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Survey report revealed the findings about distance learning in the midst COVID-19 (UIN Malang, 2020). College learners claimed about their online learning tool they used, their challenges, and constructive feedbacks. However, among majors in the state of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, English Education Department did not do this survey report.

Several present studies investigated the perspective of the WhatsApp-group tool on teaching and learning. One of them was Mistar & Embi (2016) who led the qualitative study and collected the data from 20 respondents of Pilah Pre-University by applying a questionnaire form. The findings showed that WhatsApp-group tool in supporting the L2 learning, engages learners' proficiency in practicing the English language, and teaches increasingly better. In addition, the subject of informants shown the positive statements of the utilization of WhatsApp-group tool in EFL teaching were significant in dealing with the process of learning English and stimulating L2 learning would be easy, interactive, and valuable (Gasaymeh, 2017). However, Fatimah's study (2019) revealed different findings. They found some technical issues when learners applied WhatsApp-group tool such as flooding the irrelevant texts, error signal, and junks notification.

Previous studies had focused on investigating the perspective of leaners. However, a lack of studies addressed the lecturer's voices in the terms of utilizing WhatsApp-group tool assistance in the context of EFL classroom. Thus, this current study focused to analyze the voices of EFL teachers in implementing WhatsApp-group tool in the midst of Coronavirus pandemic. The researchers expect the findings would give an evaluable evaluation of utilizing of WhatsApp-group tool from teachers' side.

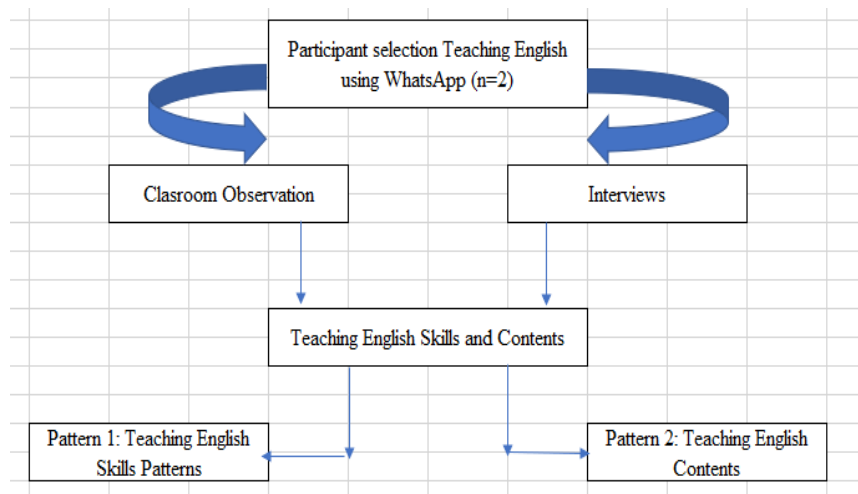
Based on the phenomenon above, the researchers designed the research problems; “How do the voice of EFL senior lecturers towards the utilize of WhatsApp-group tool in the EFL classroom?” The scope of the study was only done to figure out and analyze the perspective of EFL senior lecturers toward the use of WhatsApp tool, especially in English language competency and content courses classroom management who actively implement WhatsApp tool in the online learning.

The contribution of this qualitative study would be expected for the theoretical and practical contribution. Theoretically, it contributes to supply an insightful in the term of educators’ view of implementing WhatsApp-group tool as alternative media in the midst of Coronavirus outbreak. Practically, the researchers expect to give the constructive feedback for evaluating learning strategies, optimizing the features of educational learning apps, facilitating the EFL educators to evaluate the learning pedagogic for designing the further lesson plan, and handling the current issues while practicing WhatsApp-group tool.

METHOD

The aims of the study were to addressed to figure out the perspective of the senior lecturers during utilizing of WhatsApp tool in the midst of COVID-19. A qualitative design applied to obtain focuses on the analyzing phenomenon appeared (Creswell, 2013).

Graphic 1:
Design of the research



In this case study approach, the researchers applied Constructivist learning theory as theoretical framework (Izani & Embi, 2016). This study shows that learners boosted the learning process when they are interacted

with their peers and English teachers during teaching prose and grammar classes and content knowledge. Similarly, using WhatsApp-group tool, the researchers also observed how this digital tool facilitate learners' learning process. His theory consisted of four theoretical key frames; educational aspect, technical aspect, usefulness aspect (interactions and motivation) and convenience aspect (ease of use). The findings research of Fatimah (2019) added some aspects; technical and educational aspects. Miles & Huberman's (1994) perspective showed that qualitative approach consisted some steps. Firstly, data reduction (the researchers took the data based on the commonalities from the interview and observation such as advantages of What in teaching Prose and Grammar, so the researchers drawn the positive side of utilizing WhatsApp-group tool in the findings). Secondly, data display (The researchers classified the data based on the category like ease of use or other categories). The last step, drawing conclusion (The researchers drawn the interpretation regarding the classified data was done to find the meaning behind the emerging themes).

Two EFL senior lecturers were selected to be the participants of this study. They were English educators at the English Education Department of UIN Malang who actively utilized WhatsApp-group tool chat as a learning tool in the midst of Coronavirus pandemic, the lecturers were Grammar and Prose English lecturer. The research participants were selected using purposive sampling. The selection based on their teaching experiences, availability and length implement of WhatsApp-group tool in teaching English skills and content courses. The first lecturer was Mr. A (pseudonyms) aged 52 years old. He has been using WhatsApp-group tool for more than 3 years and his teaching experience was 23 years. The second participant was Mr. B (pseudonyms) aged 56 years old. He has been teaching grammar and content courses for 3 years and his teaching experiences was 25 years. Both of them were available for the research based on voluntary basis.

The researchers designed the form of interview guideline and observation sheet. The semi structured interview questions consist of six items, namely: (a) What do you think of successful practice using WhatsApp in teaching both English grammar and content courses; (b) What are the potential challenges of teaching the two subjects; (c) How do you use WhatsApp for teaching grammar; (d) How do you use WhatsApp for teaching content course? (e) What make you convenience with WhatsApp-based teaching? (f) Do you find any technical supports during teaching English skills and content using WhatsApp? Those are the examples of semi-structured interview questions. The guideline of the observation sheet has validated by expert validator. It consisted of the ease of content observation lists, consistency of item questions, and language used. All revisions and correction from the advisors are carefully addressed to meet their standard.

Semi structured interview was selected by researcher to collect the data. It is in lined with Corbit & Strauss' studu (2004), they claimed that this type

of interview was including on depth-interview. Furthermore, the researchers expected the subject of informants can truly deliver their original views while using this tool. Because of the unpredictable situation of pandemic, the interview has done by face-to-face interview and non-face-to-face interview using video call and chat at <http://bitly.ws/sm5X>

The researchers decided to observe indirectly by online. It can be applied because WhatsApp- group tool can record every text clearly. The study of Anguera et al. (2018) stated that “Indirect observation is kind of present concept of systematically observation, it involves the depth analyzing form textual data from group discussions”. The researchers monitored the learning process from a learners’ phone. It is addressed to avoid inconvenience situation, the bias data, and unnatural behavior.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Voices of EFL Senior Lecturers’ Towards the Utilize of WhatsApp-Group Tool During Pandemic.

The findings of this qualitative study noted that EFL senior lecturers’ view towards practicing WhatsApp-group tool as an alternative digital aid in the distance learning. The informants claimed the contradictory statements regarding WhatsApp-group tool based on the categories; usefulness, technical, educational, and convenience aspects. The findings are proved from interview and observation as follows.

Excerpt 1

Mr. : *“The implication of WhatsApp aid is very enthusiastic, the learners can boost their learning motivation, it can be proved by their activeness in the WhatsApp forum, learners can express their views and questions. In every class, I delivered 5 questions and the online discussion can clearly enough.”*

Mr. : *“I always give them opportunity to ask the difficult materials at 24 hours. Learners can freely to chat me on personal messages or in the online group discussion, I give them freedom to be expressive, thus teaching-learning in the grammar class feels alive and fun, learners can get materials and express their ideas related with their characteristic. So, WhatsApp aid is not confining them.”*
(Interview on February, 23th 2021)

Excerpt 2

Mr. : *“Certainly, because that's the only way we can communicate two ways in real-time. Especially for giving the information and post the link of virtual*

conferences and material has been provided in e-learning.”

Mr. : *“Perhaps, learners face hard situations, because one of the learners has already asked. Others learner feel their question have already presented. So, in the WhatsApp forum, not all the learners to be active. (Interview on February, 23th 2021)*

The interview extract showed that Mr. A had the positive reactions, WhatsApp-group tool could engage learners more enthusiastic and boost Grammar class to be alive. He also stated that real illustration by following statement “I delivered 5 questions and the online discussion can clearly enough.” It can be indicated that learners truly express their feelings and have done with the materials, they enjoyed the discussion process in Grammar online classroom. Mr. A divided the online meeting into two sections; question and discussion section to make sure that Grammar materials are well-understood.

The findings of observation results can be drawn that, Mr. A posted the welcoming letter which included of the rules of Grammar class, brief lecturers’ introduction, managing learners’ attitude, and ascertaining learners were alive and enjoy to express their ideas. The Grammar lecturer expected that the interactions can fun and alive. On the extract 2 Mr. B noted the usefulness aspects of WhatsApp-group tool, he said that this digital aid is the only way for them to communicate two ways in real-time. He presented the positive views while implementing WhatsApp-group tool; posting the information, attaching the links, informing the changes of agenda. Those views are similar with the findings Ida Sanjaya (2012) who noted that majority of learners are concerned in applying WhatsApp forum, because this alternative tool can facilitate to share the educational information related with the courses in several forms; videos, documents, images, and audios.

Convenience Aspect

WhatsApp-group tool as a media communication can facilitate the satisfaction and convenience aspects to have distance meeting. The research results can be drawn that the EFL senior lecturers’ attitudes towards the implementation of WhatsApp-group tool. They revealed the positive statements; WhatsApp forum is easy to use and post the educational documents. Furthermore, it can assist them while discussing section. The further extracts interview can be drawn as follows.

Excerpt 3

Mr. : *“In my view, this app is effortless aid to operate. However, before I begin the online meeting, I must set the extra preparation, such as PPT, quiz, etc. so, that’s my effort.”*

Mr. A : *“WhatsApp app can provide flexible time for learners to continue acting as children at home, such as help their mom and dad to do activities. They also do not fall behind with grammar lessons. Because I think, it is the right time to spend with their family. It is more important. So, WhatsApp -group tool is considered a suitable application that can bridge this.”*

Mr. A : *“I think the suitable method is offline meeting, but in this case, WhatsApp-group tool is the suitable alternative application that fulfilled my needs. Of course, I take some risks such as taking a long time till 3 hours to deliver the materials and preparing the materials before class.”*
(Interview on February 23th 2021).

Excerpt 4

Mr. B : *“Yes, I believe that”*

Mr. B : *“Yes, of course”*

Mr. B : *“Absolutely true! In term of informing something about the material that I have posted in the E-learning etc.”* (Interview on February 23th 2021).

Mr. B’s brief opinion can be shown on the extract 3 “Yes, I believe that”. It can indicate that learners’ positive views of the implication of WhatsApp tool in their experiences similar with the statements on the extract 4, Mr. A was reinforced with the following statement “This app is effortless to operate.” It can be concluded that implementing WhatsApp-group tool was not complicated app. Furthermore, users don’t need to prepare anything. So, it is easy to use. In relation with the result of observation, the convenience aspect could draw when learners used WhatsApp hence this aid did not need specific time and tools. This illustration can answer the indicator of “flexible to use”, “assist successfully every time” and “easy to operate”.

The findings declared that WhatsApp tool could be categorized as a flexible digital tool, it was boosted by the following argument “This app provides flexible time....” It indicated that EFL senior lecturers should not prepare the certain ICT tools, did not need specific time and place. Furthermore, it aided the learning process everywhere. Similar with the results of interview and observations, all of the subject informants deal to state that the WhatsApp forum is pleasant to use, effortless, and can be alternative aid during pandemic.

Educational Aspect

To facilitate distance-learning, the educators need the aspect of ease to use while using a learning application. The findings of interview posted the positive arguments towards the implementation of WhatsApp-group tool in the educational meeting. Precisely in this section, the researchers focused to analyze the enjoyments aspect while practicing WhatsApp-group tool.

Excerpt 5

Mr. : *“Absolutely! Almost all of the students every classes already knew my rules’ class. So, I think that the switching method from face-to-face meeting to online learning in WhatsApp-group tool does not bring big matters. We still enjoy and have fun.”*

Mr. : *“Certainly, I post links of learning videos or motivation quotes and videos for them, Furthermore, I deliver some documents such as PPT and the information related with Grammar course.”*

Mr. : *“Yes, I divided the meeting into two sections such as the asking section and discussion section.”*

Mr. : *“For this case is enough.”* (Interview on February 23th 2021).

Excerpt 6

Mr. : *“I post a link of virtual meeting, information and greetings. For feedback I used others' aid.”*

Mr. : *“Yes, I did. I posted the materials in the WhatsApp forum but recently I do not do that due to some obstacles.”* (Interview on February 23th 2021).

The extract above drew some positive views while utilizing WhatsApp-group such as posting greeting and educational documents related with the course. This excerpt revealed the positive experience by the following argument: “The switching method from face-to-face meeting to online learning in WhatsApp-group tool does not bring big matters.” It indicated that the learning activity is still alive, fun, and enjoyable either using WhatsApp forum or direct learning in the classroom. In the other hand, Mr. B claimed the different view, he faced some obstacles and sent the feedback and materials using another supportive tool.

Form the observation results, the behavior and interview results of Mr. A were totally presented by following statement “WhatsApp-group tool is enough” However, Mr. B as Prose lecturer has claimed different view. He utilized other supportive application. It was similar with Mr. B’s behavior, he only posted the conferences links in the WhatsApp forum. It caused by

several reasons; new media could assist learners to handle their boredom, sometimes online meeting should do to build the strong interactions between educator and learners.

Technical Aspect

Normally, conducting distance meeting has equal opportunities and risks. Controlling the agenda course and monitoring all of the learners at the same time using application is complicated situation. Thus, in this section, the researchers concerned on analyzing the issues survived by educators while practicing WhatsApp aid.

Excerpt 7

Mr. : *"It's very easy, there are no obstacles. Flooding chat is not my problem."*

A : *"I am not exhausted when waiting for learners' responses, as they are very active. I give feedback based on the schedule. Furthermore, preparing the materials, quizzes, etc makes me exhausted, and WhatsApp-group tool do not make my eyes stare."*

Mr. : *"Stable internet connection will never be my big matter, But I ever faced obstacle when sending videos because the data is big capacity."* (Interview on February 23th 2021).

Excerpt 8

Mr. B : *Yes, I do.*

Mr. B : *Certainly, I have to scroll up flooding texts, it takes time and exhausted.*

On the next session, Mr. A revealed the positive reactions towards the obstacles while implementing this alternative tool. It strengthened by following statements; "There's no obstacle", "I am not exhausted when waiting for students' respond", "Internet or stable connection will never be my big problem", and "Flooding chat is not my problem".

On the excerpt 8, Mr. B tended to state the negative experiences; "I have to scroll up flooding chats, it takes time and exhausted" it indicated that he faced the trouble of flooding chat in the WhatsApp forum. Moreover, Mr. B should survive the poor signal and waiting learners' reactions in the WhatsApp forum, he assumed that the learning process is consuming extra time and inefficient. All of those statements have strongly connected with the previous study of Sonia and Alka (2017) that noted several technical obstacles; consuming extra time, junk notification from others application, eye strain, and, and flooding of irrelevant chats.

Mr. A posed that WhatsApp aid could reach his needs during this unpredictable situation due to Covid-19. He added that shifting from conventional meeting to online meeting is not a big deal. Furthermore, he also always told his class that learning activity is board and general, learners do not always find the lesson from classroom but also from environment. As a young generation, Mr. A stated that learners should build their critical thinking, full of tolerance, be a good caring, and nice attitude. The researchers could indicate that Mr. A's behavior applied the theory of maternal reflective approach. It is similar with previous study which conducted by Putera (2017) and Prasetya et al (2015) that the learning strategies' mother to children. Educators have essential role, they give the direct stimulus, apply depth interactions, and motivate their children like a mother.

CONCLUSION

The findings can be concluded WhatsApp tool could assist the practice of English learning process in the midst of Coronavirus outbreak. Utilizing of WhatsApp-group tool as alternative aid are presented discrepancies views from the EFL senior in English Education Department at UIN Malang. They revealed several reactions; positive and negative side. WhatsApp can integrate the learning activity with digital media, optimize educational aims, learning management system, and never facing any troubles. In addition, senior lecturers emphasized to learners that young generation should build their critical thinking of environment, social-caring, and high tolerance. Those learning approaches can be well-known as maternity reflective method.

In contrast, Prose lecturer noted several obstacles such as junk notifications, flooding irrelevant texts, takes extra time, and poor internet connection. In addition, WhatsApp tool cannot engage learners to be active in discussion section due to some factors. By these explanations, WhatsApp might be included as supportive digital learning in the pandemic. The positive contribution of this study is analyzing the educators' view towards the use of WhatsApp. However, this current study is limited of subject informants. So, the findings might not be generalized.

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