DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH DISTANTLY USING GOOGLE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRAK

Diselenggarakan dengan tiga dosen Bahasa Inggris IAIN Salatiga sebagai subyeknya, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh pengajar Bahasa Inggris saat mengajar secara jarak jauh dengan menggunakan Google Classroom serta faktor penyebab dan strategi pengajar untuk mengatasi kesulitan-kesulitan tersebut. Studi kualitatif ini menggunakan e-kuesioner dan dokumentasi untuk mengumpulkan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para subyek menghadapi beberapa kesulitan saat mengajar bahasa Inggris secara jarak jauh menggunakan Google Classroom terutama dalam hal (1) kurangnya pengetahuan siswa dalam mengoperasikan Google Classroom, (2) menjaga siswa tetap aktif dalam sesi kelas Google Classroom, (3) mengelola siswa dalam penugasan-penugasan online dan pengumpulannya, (4) mengatasi masalah teknis seperti sinyal yang buruk dan akses internet yang terbatas terutama yang dialami oleh siswa. Untuk mengatasi kesulitan ini, strategi pengajar seperti memberikan petunjuk yang jelas tentang cara mengoperasikan Google Classroom, menyajikan materi dan pertanyaan yang menarik kepada siswa, dan menyarankan siswa untuk menemukan koneksi internet yang lebih baik sangat disarankan.

Kata kunci: kesulitan, Google Classroom, pengajaran jarak jauh

ABSTRACT

Conducted with three English lecturers at IAIN Salatiga as the subjects, this study has the purpose to identify the difficulties faced by the English teachers when teaching distantly using Google Classroom as well as its causing factors and the teachers' strategies to overcome those difficulties. The qualitative study makes use of an online questionnaires and documentation in order to collect data. The result of the study shows that teachers have confronted some difficulties while teaching English distantly using Google Classroom mainly in terms of (1) students' lack of knowledge in operating Google Classroom, (2) keeping students active in the Google Classroom class sessions, (3) managing students in the online tasks and submissions, (4) coping with technical problems such as bad signals and limited internet access especially experienced by students. To overcome these difficulties, teachers' strategies such as providing clear instructions on how to operate Google Classroom, presenting interesting material and engaging questions to students, and advising students to find a better internet connection are strongly recommended.

Keywords: Difficulties, distant teaching, Google Classroom

INTRODUCTION

Online learning is web-based learning that embodies phenomenal technological and communication innovations in the field of higher education. One of the benefits of doing an online learning is to improve the optimization of conventional learning processes ranging from learning methods, learning processes, and learning media in a more modern direction (Pande, 2016). Some of the other benefits of e-learning are that online learning can shorten learning time, facilitate interaction between students and material, and develop knowledge that does not only occur in the classroom but also virtually (Rohmah, 2016).

Online learning can happen through utilizing classroom platforms or online classes (e-classes), and one of the most popular ones is Google Classroom. Google Classroom was developed by Google for academic objectives that support mixed learning platforms. This application is very easy to use, can help teachers and students to do the learning process. Users can utilize it for virtual classes which can function like conventional classrooms, but it saves more time and space (Iftakhar, 2016). Therefore, it

is interesting to measure the extent of challenges and impacts of using this tool in language classes.

With the support of technology and internet access provided by the university or school or students and teachers own self-access, teaching online using Google Classroom might become an interesting and engaging ride with the class, but due to the distance learning atmosphere we have right now as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, things can go in opposition. Issues like unequal good accessibility to internet and the absence of teacher-student blended or hybrid interaction as in normal situation, and so forth can root for raising problems not only in the hands of the students but also the teachers themselves, moreover if this is their first time ever teaching fully online distantly. Based on this premise and in order to get the knowledge of what is going on in reality and also to look for examples of good practices of distance learning, researchers have been interested to conduct a study titled "*Difficulties In Teaching English Distantly Using Google Classroom*" which attempts to determine the following three questions:

1. What difficulties were faced by the teachers when teaching English distantly using Google Classroom?
2. What factors caused difficulties to the teachers when teaching English distantly using Google Classroom?
3. What strategies did the English teachers' strategies apply to overcome their distant teaching difficulties using Google Classroom?

Some studies related to teaching difficulties and Google Classroom based teaching have been conducted by other researchers. For example, Trisagita Oktavianti (2018) who investigated the difficulties faced by Indonesia teachers teaching English using a scientific approach found several difficulties in three areas of teaching namely in preparation stage (related to designing indicators, materials and activities that are in accordance with the scientific approach concept), in classroom management (happened when students are the source of problems), and in assessment (in designing the proper evaluation and doing the evaluation precisely). Another research by Annita Muslimah (2018) who gathered univeristy students' responses on the use of Google Classroom revealed that students found Google Classroom to be useful and satisfying as an online learning tool. Meanwhile, Aisyah (2017), in her study identified that teachers were faced with both internal factors (emotional, physical, and distracted concentration) and external factors (media unavailability, the lack of time unavailability).

All of the previous studies above have contributed some useful insights to the composition of this research as they have provided views on the varieties of teaching difficulties experienced by the teachers on the field as well as students' take on their experience of learning English using Google Classroom. This article, on the other hand, explores exclusively on the personal experiences of university teachers in conducting distant learning using the online tool with the primary highlight on difficulties they faced during the online learning practices. Thus, it is expected that this study result provides a different point of view which the previous ones haven't elaborated.

METHOD
The research was conducted in July 2020 virtually among English lecturers in the English Education Departement of IAIN Salatiga as the subject teachers. However, the scope of the study is much longer than that duration because it involves the subjects' online teaching practices (using Google Classroom) since around March 2020 when online learning at IAIN Salatiga first started as a response to COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers conducted this study qualitatively as it describes and interprets problems or phenomena systematically from an individuals' perspective, and to produce new concept and theories, with a choice of metodology questions to be asked (Viswambharan, 2016).

Online questionnaire and documentation were employed to gather data. As consisting of pre-coded questions with clear patterns following the sequence of questions, researchers here employed structured questionnaire where questions are focused on getting information about teacher's teaching profile and the difficulties faced by the teachers when conducting distant English courses using Google Classroom which was done through Google Form. Secondly, as information through printed or electronic materials (Corbin, 2008) were also collected in the forms of teachers' course syllabus and lesson plans,

documentation was also utilized to bring in secondary data to support for analysis whcih follows Miles's procedure (1994) namely: *data reduction* (selecting key information related to the research problems taken from online questionnaire and documentation), *data display* (some classification of data gain from both online questionnaire and documentation were done centred on teaching difficulties, there would be the exposes of the technical difficulties that the subject teachers experience which will be explained in detailed along with other related discoveries), and *conclusion and verification* (the researchers conclude the research findings into main points of conclusion which were in accordance with the research purposes and verification data that explains the meaning of actual data configuration.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
1. Data presentation

As stated above, the first kind of information investigated on the online questionnaire was about teachers' teaching profile. Its details including their courses, number of students, and Google Classroom usage are as follows:

Table 1. teacher's profile

Teachers	Course Being Taught (in code)	Number of students	Google Classroom implementation		
			weekly meetings	mid-term exam	Final-term exam
T1	SBW	24-34	-	√	√
T2	BI 1 & BI 2	31-40	√	-	-
T3	LiPC	21-30	√	√	√

From here, we get to know that not only the teachers taught different courses and had different number of students, but also they used the online class for different types of activities (T2 only used it for weekly meetings, T1 for exams only, meanwhile T3 for all kinds).

The second round of questions asked about how their practices of distance teaching using Google Classroom has been going on, and here are the results:

a. The difficulties faced by teachers when teaching English distantly using Google Classroom.

This first question is to find out what difficulties were faced by the English teachers when teaching using Google Classroom.

Q1 : What were the difficulties you encountered when teaching English online using Google Classroom?

Option 1 : To set up the Google classes (creating the class, adding students to the class, etc.)

Option 2 : To design effective concept of teaching your course using Google Classroom

Option 3 : To identify/use some features in Google Classroom effectively

Option 4 : To make students active in Google Classroom activities

Option 5 : Others

A1: Interestingly, T1, T2, T3 selected Option 4 so that it is obvious that making students active in learning activities using Google Classroom is the hardest. From here, we can also conclude that to set up the Google classes (creating the class, adding students to the class, etc.) (option 1), to design effective concept of teaching your course using Google Classroom(option 2), to identify/use some features in Google Classroom effectively (option 3) were not problematic for the three teachers.

Q2 : What were the difficulties you encountered when conducting student exams (mid-term/final-term exam) online using Google Classroom?

Option 1 : To create the exam questions

Option 2 : To make the students understand how to do the exam

Option 3 : To grade students' exam results

Option 4 : Others

A2: T1 went for Option 4 and wrote "To control students submitting the task before the due date ends". T2 also selected Option 4 and wrote "There is no difficulties because I use Google Form in conducting students' exams". Only T3 selected from one of the given answer options, i.e., to make the students understand how to do the exam.

b. The factors that caused difficulties for English teachers when teaching distantly using Google Classroom

Q3 : What factors caused those difficulties you faced when teaching online using Google Classroom?

A3 : T1 wrote "Actually I didn't conduct weekly class/meeting using Google Classroom. Probably some technical problems such as students' internet limited access and lack of knowledge in operating the Google Classroom makes the class less active". T2 noted "The signal and to make the students more active because we can't control the students' activeness". Meanwhile T3's answer was: "The features of Google Classroom especially on commenting and highlighting students' comments throught the discussion". Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the teachers answered that the factors that caused difficulties for teachers to teach online using Google Classroom were technical problems such as internet access or limited signal (T1 and T2), lack of student knowledge in operating Google Classroom (T1), teacher's inability in controlling student activeness (T2), and limited function of the discussion comment feature (T3).

Q4 : What factors caused those difficulties you faced when conducting mid-term/final-exam using Google Classroom?

A4 : T1 wrote "There is no notification from Google Classroom to show that all students have submitted the task". T2 emphasized, "The signal". T3 narrated "Student's misunderstanding of the test instruction." The teachers gave a variety of different answers including no notification from Google Classroom to show that the students has sent the assignment (T1), signal error (T2), and students' misconception about test instruction (T3).

c. The English teachers' strategies to overcome difficulties in using Google Classroom for teaching

Q5 : What were the strategies that you used for overcoming those difficulties you faced when teaching online using Google Classroom?

A5 : T1 answered "Suggest student to find better internet connection to do the task". T2 explained, "I give the exercises of the material to the students by giving them due date". T3 said, "Maximizing the direct reply on the comment section and repeating the highlighted comments of the discussion". In this section, the teachers had various answers as they had different strategies, which is logical because they were faced with different difficulties and different causes as stated in the earlier sections.

Q6 : What were the strategies that you used for overcoming those difficulties you faced when conducting mid-term/final exam using Google Classroom?

A6 : T1 explained, "I would check the Google Classroom before the due date to know who have not submitted the task then I will inform to the WhatsApp group to identify and confirm the problems they face when doing the task". While, T2 wrote "I give a time limit to the students". And T3 noted, "Giving brief, clear, and simple instructions in an understandable order". It can be concluded that to overcome teacher difficulties faced when

doing midterm / final exams using Google Classroom, it is important for teachers to give clear but simpler instruction and time limit, and also to remind students on their tasks and check on students' problems if any in order to provide solutions.

d. Interesting experiences using Google Classroom that future teachers who will teach using Google Classroom should know.

Q7 : Please share some important or interesting experiences of using Google Classroom that you think should be known or noted by teachers who will teach using Google Classroom in the future.

A7 : T1 highlighted, "Google Classroom helps teacher to conduct a test/exam efficiently. We can interact and give comment to the students' task beside the score. We can attach some links from YouTobe, learning website, other application to share materials or task". T2 emphasized, "I think teaching online by Google Classroom can be accessed by the students because it doesn't need too much money (quota)". T3 wrote, "They should use/maximize the marks features on the Google Classroom to give feedback and assessment to the students in a meaningful way". The teachers answered variously based on their own personal experience.

e. Other online tools used by the teachers

Q8 : If any, what other applications did you use for teaching in addition to Google Classroom?
Option 1 : WhatsApp
Option 2 : Zoom
Option 3 : Google Meet
Option 4 : Schoology
Option 5 : Others

A8 : T1 selected WhatsApp, T2 selected others and typed Google Form, while T3 used Zoom. From here we can also know that not only teachers used more than one application

in their teaching but also they prefer differentt apps based on their comfort and familiarity.

2. Data analysis

a. The difficulties faced by English teachers when teaching using Google Classroom.

Of all the teachers who answered the online questionnaire, all of them answered that the difficulties faced when teaching English online using Google Classroom showed that all teachers had difficulty making students active in learning activities using Google Classroom. From this statement, the teacher lacked the ability to make students more active in learning. This is actually the opposite to what Lynch (2018) found in his research that showed that Google Classroom is able to increase student learning activity such as face-to-face classes by providing material including sharing links, videos, and interactive games, collaborative assignments. Relating these teachers' responses and Lynch's study result, it can be assumed that the teachers might not have explored all those recommended features suggested by Lynch, may be because this was also the first experience for the teachers to run classes online using the app. Therefore, it is suggested that in the future teaching, teachers can prepare more interesting discussion material on Google Classroom by providing games, videos, and pictures so that learning becomes fun and not boring which can trigger students' active learning using the application.

Regarding the difficulties faced by teachers when taking online exams using Google Classroom. P1 said that "To control students submitting the task before the due date ends". Shore (2019) found that in most online classes, teachers do not give repeated reminders to students to turn in and do assignments and they are only reminded by the notification and themselves whether they will do the task or not. This is why completing online learning requires high dedication and self-motivation from students themselves, and if the teachers are okay, the can also

volunteer themselves to give reminders to students more over if it is in their first experience to have online classes because students are also still adjusting. Then, P3 said "To make the students understand how to do the exam". To overcome this difficulty, in my opinion, the teacher should clearly explain the stages of working on the questions using Google Classroom before the exam is carried out and requests students to ask if they need some guidance.

b. The factors that caused difficulties for English teachers when teaching using Google Classroom

The data shows that the first causing factor was internet access problems. T1 said that "Actually I didn't conduct weekly class/meeting using Google Classroom. Probably some technical problems such as students' internet limited access and lack of knowledge in operating the Google Classroom makes the class less active". T2 also added information that " The signal and to make the students more active because we can't control the students' activeness". These problems are similar to what Gamelearn (2017) said, technical problems are one of the main problems in online learning such as compatibility of smartphone PC usage, students understanding to operate applications, and internet connectivity. The student experiences internet problems because they go to a place without a good internet connection, causing disconnection of internet connection. This problem is in line with what Kumar (2015) said that not all students are equipped with a high internet connection during online learning. For the problem of operating the application, they must have not followed the teacher's instructions when explaining, causing problems for students to not understand how to operate the application and of making the class less active.

From the T3 statement said that "The features of Google Classroom especially on commenting and highlighting students' comments through the discussion". As in the Google Classroom feature, the teacher can provide value points for assignments and add feedback in the form of comments for students to discuss assignments (Edteachteacher, 2017), the teacher must provide comments to students after the assignment or material being discussed and the teacher discusses it to students so that students better understand the content of the material they are discussing. About the teacher's difficulty factor when students do the exam, T1 said that, "There is no notification from Google Classroom to show that all students have submitted the task". According to Indra (2017), the notification feature notifies students when they turn in assignments and also notifies teachers when students send assignments, and teachers can know when students send assignments late. So, in Google Classroom there is notification of students who have sent their assignments. Another difficulty which was pointed by T3 was "Student's misunderstanding of the test instruction". Usually students do not pay attention when the teacher explains test instructions. Then students misunderstand when doing test questions and make the teacher have to explain again from start to finish in detail.

c. The English teachers' strategies to overcome teaching difficulties using Google Classroom

In the strategy of teaching English teachers using Google Classroom, T1 has a strategy "Suggest student to find better internet connection to do the task". From this statement the student must find a better internet connection. To find it students can go to the city to find a good internet connection or find a strong and good wifi connection so that they can do assignments smoothly.

As for material practice and for the exam for students, P2 provides a deadline for collection. According to Edteachteacher (2017), Google Classroom automatically creates an assignment calendar to remind you of assignments with due dates. If students are not given a time limit for solving the questions, the students

usually collect assignments that are often late and sometimes even forget to do them. So students can estimate the time to collect assignments.

T1 also added more detail information that "I would check the Google Classroom before the due date to know who have not submitted the task then I will inform to the WhatsApp group to identify and confirm the problems they face when doing the task". I agree that reminding students on class chat forum on social media should be done because it is the fastest way to send information to students thus can help students do the tasks on time. To do the exam, T3 suggested "Giving brief, clear, and simple instructions in an understandable order". It is true that by providing clear instructions, students can understand the order of taking the exam and there are no misunderstandings when working on the questions.

d. Interesting experiences in using Google Classroom that teachers who will teach using Google Classroom should pay attention to in the future

T1 said that "Google Classroom helps teacher to conduct a test/exam efficiently. We can interact and give comment to the students' task beside the score. We can attach some links from YouTube, learning website, other application to share materials or task". Google application is integrated with other features such as Gmail, YouTube, Google Doc, Google Sheet, Slides, and many more are helpful for sharing material, grading assignments, and providing feedback and more (Iftakhar, 2016). Teachers can save time while learning using this Google Classroom application. Because the teacher can provide material easily by attaching links, videos, pictures from YouTube for learning and assignments, the teacher can also provide feedback to students through comments. P2 also added "I think teaching online by Google Classroom can be accessed by the students because it doesn't need too much money (quota)". This finding is in line with Iftakhar's statement (2016) that using Google Classroom is free because anyone can access this application without payment. They just need to log in with their Google account to join the class. So students don't need to worry about using Google Classroom because it doesn't cost too much, just buying enough quota and requires a good internet connection and easy to use via mobile phone devices.

While T3 answered, "They should use/maximize the marks features on the Google Classroom to give feedback and assessment to the students in a meaningful way". The Google Classroom feature has assessments, the teacher can assign any grading to assignments and add personal feedback comments to assignments(Edteachteacher, 2017). Google Classroom supports many different ways of scoring. The teacher has the option to monitor each student's progress on assignments where they can make comments and edits. Modified assignments can be graded by the teacher and returned with comments to allow students to revise their assignments.

e. Other online tools used by the teachers

Besides Google Classroom, T1 used WhatsApp application for teaching. According to Alqahtani (2018), WhatsApp is an online platform that facilitates classroom teaching and learning. Other general websites showcase the advantages and benefits of WhatsApp in teaching and learning using its special aspects such as group chat, audio, video and graphics. This feature facilitates time communication between teachers and students to continue learning even outside the classroom. In this WhatsApp application the teacher can also provide assignments and material by sharing links, videos, pdf, audio, images, and others.

On the other hand, P2 also uses Google Forms for learning. According to Sivakumar (2019), Google Forms is a web-based application used to create forms for data collection purposes. Students and teachers can use Google Forms for surveys, quizzes, or event registration sheets. Web based can be

shared with respondents by sending a link. The data collected using forms is usually stored in spreadsheets. This Google form for learning, usually teachers can easily give assignments or do tests. In Google form the teacher can provide questions, can include photos and videos. For question options can be multiple choices, short answers, and paragraphs. When the teacher gives assignments, the teacher usually provides a link for the assignment and goes directly to the Google Form and students are ready to work on the questions.

While another application which was used by T3 was Zoom. Zoom is a representative cloud-based collaborative video conferencing service offering features including an online meeting, group messaging service, and a secure session recorder. Zoom offers the ability to communicate in real time with individuals via a computer, tablet, or mobile device (Inc, 2016). Zoom is now often used as online distance learning to make learning more effective. This is because Zoom provides a video conference that can be reached by all participants or students and teachers. In addition, Zoom has a chat feature so that if anyone gets a good listener at a video conference they can talk via chat.

CONCLUSION

After all series of data collection, presentation, and analysis were done, it is concluded that the difficulties that challenge the teachers when teaching English distantly using Google Classroom are (a) getting students to stay active in their learning activities using Google Classroom, (b) controlling students to submit assignments before the deadline ends, (c) making students know how to do questions using Google Classroom which were caused mainly by the following factors: (a) technical problems such as poor signal and limited internet access, (b) lack of students' knowledge in operating Google Classroom, (c) some troubled Google Classroom features, especially in student comments during discussions during learning, (d) the inexistence of notification feature from Google Classroom that indicate students' task submission records. Here, researchers recommend Indonesian English language teachers who deal with similar issues in their distance teaching practices to apply the same strategies suggested by the subjects teachers namely (a) suggesting students to find ways to get a better internet connection when having distant classes, (b) providing a deadline for collection and rechecking the Google Classroom before the due date to find out who had not sent the assignment, (c) maximizing the direct reply function in the highlighted discussion comments column, (d) giving clear, concise, and simple test instructions in the exams via Google Classroom.

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