Teachers' Adaptation to Post-COVID-19 English Language Teaching and Learning Situation

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Abstract. Post-COVID-19 has resulted in the reopening of schools and this calls for teachers' adaptation to address the changing realities of teaching and learning activities. This study aims to explore how English teachers adapt to the Post-COVID-19 English language teaching and learning situation. This study was conducted in a public Vocational High School (SMKN) 1 Labuapi, West Nusa Tenggara. Two English teachers, the only English teachers at the school, were selected purposively to be the participants of the study. Using a qualitative research design, the study employed observations, interviews, and document study as the data collection techniques. Observations in the classrooms focused on investigating teaching and learning interactions and activities. Semi-structured interviews with the teachers were conducted to find out a range of teachers' adaptation strategies in developing materials, delivering lessons, assessing students, and giving feedback. Document study involved reviewing lesson plans used by the teachers during the English language teaching and learning activities. The findings show that teachers' adaptation strategies are influenced by the teachers' professional and pedagogical skills as well as students' motivation in learning English.

Keywords: Adaptation Strategies · Post-COVID-19 · English Language Teaching and Learning

1   Introduction

In response to the outbreak of Covid-19 and to minimize physical contact, on 24 March 2020, Ministry of Education and Culture instructed all schools and campuses to close. The ministry issued circular No. 4 of 2020 regulating educational institutions at all levels to implement a distance learning program typically called learning from home. This program refers to the learning process carried out online by students and teachers at home to break the spread of covid-19 disease [1]. The Learning from home process is implemented to provide a meaningful online learning experience for students while the teachers have the flexibility to choose the appropriate curriculum including providing qualitative and useful feedback to students' work sent online from home [2].

As teaching and learning are conducted online, this program is also called online learning. To be able to participate in the online learning, a student needs to use an electronic device, be it a desktop, laptop, mobile phone, or any other digital media

[3]. Through the devices, some applications such as WhatsApp Group, google classroom, google meet, and zoom meeting are downloaded and used for online teaching and learning. Instruction in online learning activities dominantly involves synchronous and asynchronous learning [4]. He explained that synchronous learning occurs when the participants interact in real-time from different locations as in a video conference. Asynchronous learning is the opposite of synchronous where the participants are in no-real-time interaction or recorded. Implementing online teaching, teachers are required to apply these two strategies in order to facilitate students' learning.

While some studies show that online learning could enhance students' collaborative skills [5], implementing online learning proved to be challenging due to some factors such as uneven access to the internet, the disparity in teacher qualifications and education quality, the lack of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills [6], and limitation in network quota and reception [7]. Despite these challenges, both teachers and students have got used to participating in online learning.

In June 2021, however, the Indonesian Ministry of education and culture reopened schools and issued education policy *Pembelajaran Tatap Muka Terbatas (*PTM) or Limited Face-to-face Teaching and Learning where schools run only 3 h a day and only half of the students are allowed to study in class a day. Due to this new regulation, teachers need to find strategies to fulfill the curriculum and student's situation and condition. In consequence, the reality of teaching keeps changing, teachers need to keep adjusting to meet the demands of their daily professional demands [8]. Teachers need to mitigate the learning loss during the Covid. To do this, some schools intend to continue remote learning or online learning and blended learning while other schools reopen offline class [9]. Providing offline class would provide a holistic learning including social, physical, and mental-wellbeing that students missed out due to the Covid pandemic. As the policy has only been released recently, it is unclear how it is implemented. Investigating teachers' adaptation to the policy related to the reopening of schools in EFL classrooms, it is therefore necessary to inform ELT practices on curriculum and material development. Moreover, as there are only few studies, if any, conducted to investigate how teachers adapt to this teaching and learning situation, this study was carried out to explore how teachers adapt to the post-COVID-19 English Language Teaching and Learning Situation.

2   Methods

This research was qualitative in design and involved two teachers (T1 and T2), the only English teachers at the public vocational high school (SMKN) 1 Labuapi. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique used to select participants with certain considerations and goals [10]. Using a qualitative research design, the study employed observations, interviews and document study as the data collection techniques. Observations in the classrooms focused on investigating teaching and learning interactions and activities. Semi-structured interviews with the teachers were conducted to find out a range of teachers' adaptation strategies in developing materials, delivering lessons, assessing students, and giving feedback. Furthermore, lesson plan reviewing in this study was conducted to analyse the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

3 Results and Discussion

While teachers and students, even parents, have recognized online teaching and learning, many countries in the world, including Indonesia, legislate policy of reopening schools. However, reopening school requires teachers to do some modifications in curriculum and planning lessons. This study discovered teachers' adaptation in delivering lessons, assessing students, and giving feedback.

3.1 Teachers' Adaptation in Delivering Lessons

The finding revealed that even though in-class learning has been reopened, teachers were unlikely to deliver lesson as they used to do before the covid outbreak. It seems to be more difficult in post covid. The teachers are required to ensure safe, comfortable, and effective learning process. T1 said "though schools are reopened, learning process is more difficult to manage because we still need to practice health protocols including doing social distancing and wearing a mask". Another difficulty is related to the time limit, only three hours a day with 50% of students' attendance. This finding showed that teachers as implementers of national education policy should positively respond to the top-down policy despite many challenges. Teachers' responses to education policy and the challenges would be different from context to context [4]. Responding to the reopening policy, the teachers in this study decided to continuously use online learning in addition to in-class learning. This combination of online delivery and face to face is done, according to the teachers, as an effort to cover learning materials assigned in the curriculum. Besides, students have so far been familiar with online mode of learning as what T2 maintained… "Students have adapted to virtual classes, and they seem happy with that. On teachers' side, we can also deliver quite a lot of learning materials". T2 added that teaching and learning have been effective especially due to synchronous and asynchronous aspects that online learning offers. However, the teachers were also responsive to the reopening policy. When asked about how they deliver lessons with rather restricted time and students' attendance, the teachers said that during class meetings, they discussed concepts, answered questions posted during the online meetings, and provided students with opportunities for social interactions. Social interactions among students were held when the teachers presented and discussed the concept. It is interesting that despite the time limit, the teachers could deliver the lessons communicatively.

Teachers' professional and pedagogical skills seem to have contributed to this communicative lesson. With these skills, teachers create engaging material and activities including for online teaching and learning [5]. Both teachers explained that they had been well informed with the theory that language learning improves through communication and they accordingly applied the theory based on the level of students' competence. They also convinced that they got used to carrying out interactive dialogic teaching and learning process, even in an online class. The result of interviews with them clearly shows as T1 said, "We have recognized and conducted interactive synchronous teaching and learning. We usually use Breakout Room feature in Zoom where students can interact with other students in pairs or small groups to do tasks that we assign to them. We can also monitor them." In relation to this, T2 said that "if we can deliver the lesson in synchronous session interactively, why not use interactive and communicative

lesson in face-to face class?" This teachers' responses show that they had benefited from synchronous mode as it provides real-time interactions, collaborative and interactive activities [11]. Indeed, Zoom application provides features namely Breakout Room, Chatroom, digital whiteboard, and screen sharing to allow interactive and communicative discussions. Teachers' ability in using those features to deliver lessons also implies that they have adequate pedagogical skills. Their pedagogical skills also support them in adjusting to the reopening policy in relation to giving assessment which is described in the following section.

3.2 Assessing Students' Learning

Reopening schools will result in different ways of assessing students. As students are allowed to attend the class in person, assessment would likely be conducted on site. This suggests a shift from online assessment to on-site assessment which calls for teachers' adaptation. The teachers also make adaptation in designing a plan for effective learning assessment in response to the school reopening. The teachers reported that they combined two types of learning mode in providing assessments. T1 reported that Covid-19 pandemic forced them to develop online assessments which was quite challenging at the beginning. One of the issues, as both teachers reported, was due to the unequal internet access that students had. In fact, it commonly happens in Indonesia especially in rural area [7]. The challenges, however, have now been anticipated as can be seen from T2's response, "Well yes...not all students have adequate infrastructure needed for learning assessment, technically known as formative assessment until they received enough internet quota from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Since then, formative assessment has been going well." From this interview, it can be inferred that both teachers and students have been familiar and comfortable with formative assessment held online. Pedagogically trained with online teaching, the teachers admitted that they took advantages of asynchronous mode, where learning is made quite flexible and accessible [11]. T1 claimed, "Formative assessments are at best when they are ongoing, and asynchronous mode does facilitate this. We can just upload language tasks for students to Google Classroom where the students can download them, do them and submit them to the Google Classroom." T2 confirmed this particular benefit of asynchronous mode by saying, "We can set up time limit for the task completion in the Google Classroom, so the students can monitor their own speed in completing the tasks. This, in turn, develops positive attitudes such as responsibility and discipline."

From the teachers' comments, it can be seen that the teachers in this study have sufficient professional and pedagogical skills in integrating technology into language teaching and learning. This study, therefore, shows different finding from [6] study which indicated teachers' lack of information, technology and communication skills. This study also indicated that the teachers have developed professionally since they could explain that using asynchronous mode in assessing students would help students continue to grow and learn while developing their positive characters such as responsibility and discipline. Despite the benefits of asynchronous mode in providing formative assessment to the students, as both teachers reported, assessment in asynchronous learning mode can be time consuming. Both teachers reported that they usually use Google Doc comment feature to give specific feedback and to point at the exact area in the student work

that they were referring to in their feedback which took teachers' considerable time. Reopening school policy would then be a good alternative in dealing with students' learning assessment.

Providing formal assessment in face-to-face classroom context is another adaptation strategy used by both teachers. Both teachers maintained that assessing students on-site would be helpful to provide quick and critical feedback to the students. While this claim would be widely agreeable, assessing students within 30 min and with 50% student attendance would be less effective compared to the one within a normal meeting hour and full student attendance. The teachers also realized shortage of time and attendance. To cope with this problem, the teachers decided to use both online and in-class learning to give formal assessments and feedback and they defined the combination as blended learning. The use of the blended learning by the teachers shows their creative adaptation to the post Covid-19 English language teaching and learning. This creative adaptation is motivated by the teachers' professional and pedagogical skills and serve students to develop their learning in difficult situation.

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