

**INVESTIGATING ONLINE SPEAKING CLASS
FOR SEVENTH GRADERS OF UPT SMPN 25 GRESIK
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on all sectors, especially in the education field. It caused many countries to close down the schools of all stages to curb the spread of the virus. The teachers and students have to abandon their face-to-face classrooms and adapt to the implementation of online learning. Thus, the teachers were challenged to carry out online learning during this pandemic. Within this context, this research aims to investigate the online learning of Speaking Skills for seventh graders of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik. In this qualitative research, an EFL teacher of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik became the subject of the observation. The instruments used in this research were observation sheets and field notes. The result of the observation showed that the teacher in the seventh grade of UPT SMPN 25 GRESIK has carried out the online learning of speaking well through a series of activities that could stimulate students' attention. The research outcome is expected to encourage other EFL teachers to be creative in carrying out online learning in this transitional period. Moreover, the research is expected to pave the way for developing solutions and anticipating the problems that may come up in online learning at secondary schools, especially in teaching online learning for Speaking skills.

Keywords: *Covid-19 pandemic, online learning, Speaking Skills, EFL teacher*

Abstrak

Pandemi COVID-19 berdampak pada semua sektor, khususnya di bidang pendidikan. Pandemi ini menyebabkan banyak negara menutup sekolah-sekolah di semua jenjang pendidikan untuk membatasi persebaran virus. Para guru dan siswa harus meninggalkan kelas tatap muka dan beradaptasi dengan pembelajaran daring. Oleh karena itu, para guru ditantang untuk melaksanakan pembelajaran daring selama pandemi berlangsung. Berdasarkan konteks tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi pembelajaran daring untuk kemampuan berbicara siswa kelas tujuh di UPT SMPN 25 Gresik. Dalam penelitian kualitatif ini, seorang guru Bahasa Inggris di UPT SMPN 25 Gresik menjadi subyek yang diobservasi. Instrument yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah lembar observasi dan catatan lapangan. Hasil observasi menunjukkan bahwa guru bahasa Inggris di kelas tujuh UPT SMPN 25 Gresik sudah melaksanakan pembelajaran daring untuk kemampuan berbicara dengan baik melalui serangkaian aktivitas yang dapat menstimulus perhatian siswa. Luaran hasil penelitian ini diharapkan untuk

mendorong kesiapan para guru Bahasa Inggris lainnya untuk lebih kreatif dalam pembelajaran daring pada periode transisi ini. Selain itu, penelitian ini diharapkan bisa menjadi pembuka jalan untuk menemukan solusi dan mengantisipasi masalah-masalah yang mungkin muncul dalam pembelajaran daring di sekolah menengah, khususnya dalam pembelajaran daring untuk kemampuan berbicara.

Kata Kunci: *Pandemi COVID-19, pembelajaran daring, kemampuan berbicara, guru Bahasa Inggris*

INTRODUCTION

It cannot be denied that the best way to get an education is to go to school. For many years, most parents worldwide send their children to schools to get an education. Schools are admitted worldwide as the best place to conduct teaching and learning processes and train the children to be disciplined to obey the rules and regulations made by the institutions. In short, many people have seen schools as public institutions to potentially build well-educated citizens who are expected to take responsibility as contributing members of their communities (Lockwood, 1996).

However, the global pandemic of COVID-19 has forced many countries to close down the schools to limit the spread of COVID-19 by curbing physical contact. Indonesia

schools also have impacted this unexpected crisis caused by Corona Virus Disease 19 (COVID-19). Regular face-to-face learning in the classrooms at all levels of education in Indonesia has been no longer permitted since March 2020. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic Indonesia had to make this impulsive policy to guarantee students, teachers, and educational staff (Mendikbud 2020). To minimize the effect of this crisis in education, the schools at all stages have to adjust the regular face-to-face teaching and learning process to online platforms. Both the teachers and the students have to adapt to online learning.

This sudden change in the teaching and learning process has been a massive shock for students, teachers, and parents. This transformation significantly impacted the students'

growth (Cao et al., 2020). They tend to experience more stress, anxiety, and depression (Wang et al., 2020). Thus, the students need additional support from both teachers and parents in facing the challenges of online learning.

However, this condition also has a positive side for the teachers. The lockdown of schools has led to the new challenge for teachers to sustain the continuity of the teaching and learning process. The teachers have to run online learning in delivering instruction for the students to continue the education practices during the crisis. The teachers have to conduct numerous innovative methods through various online platforms to ensure the continuity of studying by learners (Sandhu & de Wolf, 2020).

Online learning is not a new concept. Some other different terminologies can be used interchangeably with online learning, such as "Distance Learning," "Virtual Learning," and "E-Learning" (Karatas and Tuncer, 2020). All of them refer to the learning method by applying the advanced system of information and

technology, particularly internet technology (Zhou et al., 2020). Before the era of COVID-19, Biasutti (2011) has mentioned that virtual learning expansion was rapidly growing in the education field. In addition, it gained more popularity in recent years since it provided the flexibility of interaction between the teacher and the students despite the time and space problems (Biasutti et al., 2019).

Although plenty of research related to online learning has been mushrooming before and after the outbreak of COVID-19, this kind of research regarding EFL context, especially in Indonesia secondary schools, is still rarely found (Atmojo and Nugroho, 2020). Whereas just like many other students worldwide, EFL students have also been dramatically impacted by the crisis. Many EFL students, especially those with lower English proficiency, may have had difficulties facing and grappling with these academic challenges (Hartshorn and McMurry, 2020).

Moreover, not all EFL students may have access to perform online learning. They may not have

computers or gadgets to reach the online platforms required by their EFL teachers. Thus, careful consideration needs to be taken by EFL teachers in designing the well-planned online instruction as online learning is the new learning setting environment for the EFL students (Karatas and Tuncer, 2020).

As one of the foreign languages in Indonesia, English has become a compulsory subject to be taught in Indonesian schools, particularly in secondary schools. As the souls of EFL, the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) are usually integrated taught in secondary schools. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, EFL students were commonly assigned tasks or activities comprising more than one skill. However, there were also occasions when the EFL learners were involved in activities requiring only a single language skill.

Speaking is one of the skills that usually stand alone in language learning. Many EFL learners who gain good scores in English subjects still encounter some difficulties in

speaking English fluently (Musthafa, 2001). For many years EFL teachers have encouraged their students to speak in the EFL classrooms. Nevertheless, most of the EFL learners are still feel insecure with their ability in speaking. Moreover, a good atmosphere in teaching speaking should require the EFL teachers to highly motivate and encourage the EFL students to participate in every single opportunity in speaking (Harmer, 2007). Furthermore, Riadil (2020) argues that EFL teachers should explore opportunities to incorporate students as part of their instructional design to help them develop their interest in speaking English.

The condition mentioned above has become more problematic in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though English Language Teaching has developed and adopted various methods and implementation, online learning is still considered a new method by mostly EFL teachers. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that causes the students to learn from home has made

the EFL teachers unprepared to assist and assess the students' learning through online platforms.

In addition, Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) found that students have less experience with speaking ability in online learning. It is in line with Karatas & Tuncer (2020), who reported that during the pandemic, speaking skills were ignored and replaced with writing since they were frequently used as the media of communication in online learning. Moreover, all homework, assignments, and projects were submitted in the written form.

This problem occurs in all levels of schools, especially in secondary schools in Indonesia. Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) stated that the lack of preparation and planning made online learning could not run well in Indonesian schools. UPT SMPN 25 Gresik also faced the same problem. Thus, this research investigates how an EFL teacher of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik carries out online learning to teach speaking skills to the seventh graders.

The previous study about the teaching of speaking was conducted by Nashiroh (2017). The study's finding shows the implementation of the teaching-learning process in speaking skills and the factors that support the implementation of speaking activities. Nevertheless, the previous study was conducted in an offline class, while in this study, the writers investigated the teaching of speaking in the online class.

The researchers formulate the two research questions: (1) How do EFL teachers of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik carry out online learning to teach speaking skills during the COVID-19 pandemic? (2) What strategy does the EFL teacher of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik apply in online speaking class during the COVID-19 pandemic?

METHOD

This present study is categorized as descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative research is a type of research that does not use calculation or numerating (Meolong & Lexy, 2007). Likewise, it narrates

comprehending the social life and generating words rather than numerals in analyzing the data (Patton & Cochran, 2007). Therefore, in this research, the researchers focus on describing the result of their investigation in observing the online speaking class at UPT SMPN 25 Gresik.

The instruments of this study were an observation checklist and field notes. The writers use an observation checklist to observe the teaching-learning process conducted by the English teacher, including the English teacher's speaking activity during the online class. This instrument was used to know the implementation of the teaching of Speaking skills during an online class. The observation checklist was made based on the lesson plan of the English teacher. The writer made an observation checklist after the writer got the lesson plan from the teacher.

Meanwhile, field notes are a data collection method by making records on whatever happens in the field. In this study, the field notes were used to collect the data related to

- 1) The teacher preparation in teaching speaking for the seventh graders of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik.
- 2) The teacher's methods in presenting the material in teaching speaking activity.
- 3) Kinds of strategy applied to help the students understand the material.
- 4) How the teacher is evaluating students in online learning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part conveys two sections related to the practices of online Speaking Classes done by an EFL teacher at UPT SMPN 25 Gresik for the seventh graders. It includes the online teaching and learning process and the strategy used by the EFL teacher to carry out the online Speaking Class for the seventh graders of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik.

The online teaching and learning process of speaking

Based on the observation, the EFL teacher of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik decided to use WhatsApp Group (WAG) as the alternative platform to conduct online learning of speaking for class VII E. The teacher argued

that the students commonly used WAG to follow online learning. Moreover, she claimed it was easier to reach the students through WAG than other online platforms.

The researchers observed four meetings of online Speaking classes for VII E students of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik. The following paragraphs try to describe the findings completely.

The first meeting was on March, 19th 2020. The online class started at 07.39. After the teacher opened the lesson and asked the students to fill in the attendance list, she started the main activity by telling the lesson's objective. At 08.21, the teacher asked the students to watch a YouTube video by sending the link on WAG. She asked the students to comprehend the video by writing at least five sentences to indicate that they have seen and comprehended the material on video. After that, they have to read the sentences and send voice recordings via voice note. For around one hour and a half after the teacher gave the task, only 11 of 19 students submitted the voice note. After that, The English teacher sent a picture of

the classroom. The picture included a text with blank words. The blank words were about things in the classroom that students saw in the picture. Once again, the teacher asked the students to send the answers through a voice note. In this activity, 15 students sent their tasks. Before the English teacher closes the lesson, she gave a summary of the lesson. After that, the teacher gave motivation for students to do more practice in speaking at home. Afterward, the English teacher closed the meeting.

The second meeting of the online Speaking class was conducted on the 23rd of March, 2020. The teacher opened the meeting by asking the students to fill in the attendance list first, like in the first meeting. Sixteen students filled in the attendance list in the second meeting. In the main activity, the teacher reviewed the material in the previous meeting. After that, she sent a picture. It was still about things in the classroom. Then the teacher asked the students about the function of things seen in the picture.

Furthermore, the students made five sentences related to the picture and sent their voice recording while reading the sentences through voice notes. From the total number of students, 15 students sent their works. The other students did not give any responses in that lesson. The last activity was closing, in which the English teacher gave an assignment for students to create a video about the lesson. In the video, they had to describe the function of things, at least five things they found in the classroom. After that, the English teacher sent the rules of how to make the video. There was no question from students. So, the English teacher closed the meeting.

The third meeting of the online Speaking Class was conducted on the 9th of April, 2020, at around 09.18. Like in the previous two meetings, the teacher opened the online lesson by checking the students' attendance. Afterward, the teacher gave motivation about learning to speak English. For the main activity, the teacher sent a picture of a little boy with some words written to build

students' knowledge in vocabulary related to the picture. Then the students were asked to make some sentences to describe the little boy in the picture by using the words given before. Around 30 minutes after the assignment was given, eight students tried to accomplish the assignment. For the next assignment, the English teacher asked the students to describe their idol or favorite person. They had to submit their speaking assignment by sending a picture, original text, and voice recording describing the picture. However, there were only ten students who sent their speaking assignments. After waiting for the other students to submit the speaking assignment, the third meeting was closed at 12.06 p.m. by giving a conclusion and confirming their understanding of the lesson. The teacher also expressed her gratitude to those students who had participated in the meeting.

The last observation on the online speaking class was conducted on the 12th of April 2020. The online class was carried out in the afternoon at around 16.52 as the English teacher could not teach in the morning due to

some internal activities at school. The English teacher opened the lesson by greeting the students and asking them to warm up the activity before starting the main activity. For the main activity, the English teacher used a picture of a football player and a text with some blank words. The teacher asked the students to fill in the blanks with the words provided by the teacher. The students were required to submit their assignments by sending voice notes again. Around two hours and a half after the teacher gave the assignment, ten students submitted their assignments. The last activity was closing, in which the teacher confirmed the students' understanding of the lesson.

From the previous description about online learning in speaking, the researchers concluded that although the teaching and learning process was done with online learning, the teacher divided the activities into excellent organization. She tried to stick to Three-Phase Technique which includes Pre-Activity (Opening), Main Activity, and Post-Activity (Closing). In pre-activity, the teacher always set

opening activities like greetings and checking students' attendance.

In the main activity, the teacher tried to apply what she used to do in regular face-to-face class into online learning. Even though she had adjusted the steps, the main activities could not be implemented well in online learning. Moreover, the teacher only used the WAG as an alternative platform in carrying out online learning. In addition, to gather the students' speaking assignments, the teacher always asked the students to send their voice recordings through the voice note for every assignment. Unfortunately, the students were less responsive during the main activity in online learning. The number of students who submit the assignment also decrease from the previous meeting.

In the post-activity, the English teacher sometimes did some evaluation activity and asked the students about the lesson learned. Besides, the teacher also gave information about the following material or homework to the students.

The strategy used by the teacher in carrying out the online Speaking Class

Brown (2007:199) stated that strategies are particular methods of approaching a problem or task modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned design for controlling and manipulating certain information. Based on the statement above, the strategy was an essential aspect of the teaching and learning process. The teacher should choose an appropriate strategy to get learning activity to become efficient and effective and make students understand the material more accessible. The strategies used by the teacher were expected to help and encourage students learning, especially in teaching English speaking. The English teacher of VII E class has tried to use some strategies to teach the students as she wanted to make the students understand the instructions and explanation so that the students can practice the materials.

Based on the observation in four meetings on the online class, the English teacher only used WAG as the online platform in carrying out the

online learning. The strategy stated in her lesson plan could not be applied in online learning. The researchers found that the difficulty of applying the strategy in online learning was because the English teacher did not use other online platforms optimally as the media in carrying out the online learning. Moreover, only a few students responded to the teacher's question, so the strategy could not be applied optimally.

Overall, the teacher was good at implementing online learning through WAG. However, at the same time, the teacher still needs improvement to carry out the online learning and make a suitable strategy in teaching. Moreover, the teacher should attract students' attention to a creative teaching strategy so that all of the students could respond in the E-learning process.

In short, the researchers concluded that the online learning process could fulfill the excellent quality of speaking skills in the learning process if the teacher is more creative in delivering the lesson. The teacher has tried to deliver the lesson

optimally. The teacher also tried to stimulate the students' attention by sending a video link on YouTube. However, adopting online learning is not as easy as flipping our own hands.

CONCLUSION

Based on the observation results, the researchers concluded that the teacher in the seventh grade of UPT SMPN 25 Gresik in teaching Speaking has tried to carry out the online learning well. The teacher has carried out online learning through a series of activities ranging from checking the students' attendance, sending the picture, sending a YouTube video, and giving various assignments for the students. However, the teacher still encounters many problems that emerge from the implementation of online learning. Consequently, online learning did not run optimally since it lacks preparation and planning.

Additionally, although the students seem to be active in online learning, they still feel insecure asking for the teacher's help when they have any difficulties. From the observation, the researchers found out that when

they did not know how to pronounce some words, they did not ask for the correct pronunciation from their teacher. Moreover, the teacher did not try to justify the correct pronunciation. Therefore, the students have to be familiarized with online learning to upgrade their misperceptions about online learning. The student's parents must also be involved in monitoring their children's participation in online learning. So, when the students have difficulties, the parents can encourage them to ask for the teacher's help. Moreover, the parents can also encourage the students to express their ideas while learning.

Regarding the suggestion for further research interested in conducting a further study about online learning, a similar study with more extensive sampling may give deep insight into online learning for speaking activities. The result of this research cannot be generalized for all EFL teachers who carry out online learning. Thus, another set of research with another skill to observe may enrich the development of research

about online learning for EFL students.

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