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An Analysis of English Teacher's Teaching Strategy in English in New Normal Era (A Study Conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Telaga)

(*Analisis Strategi Pengajaran Guru Bahasa Inggris dalam Bahasa Inggris di Era New Normal (Studi yang Dilakukan di SMA Negeri 1 Telaga)*)

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Abstract

This study explores the teaching strategies employed by English teachers at SMAN 1 Telaga in adapting to the "new normal" era post-COVID-19. Using a descriptive qualitative research method, data were gathered through structured questionnaires from three experienced English teachers. The study identifies key strategies, including the integration of technology such as Google Meet, Zoom, and WhatsApp, as well as innovative teaching methods like role-playing, audiovisual media, and group discussions. The findings indicate that these strategies effectively increased student engagement. However, several challenges were encountered, including unstable internet connections, low student motivation, and limited access to digital devices. Teachers also faced difficulties in assessing students' understanding in an online or hybrid learning environment. Despite these obstacles, institutional support, such as training on digital tools and infrastructure development, played a crucial role in facilitating effective teaching. To enhance English teaching in the post-pandemic era, this study recommends the further integration of interactive platforms, project-based learning, and blended learning approaches. Schools should also conduct regular training sessions for teachers to improve their digital literacy and pedagogical skills. Additionally, fostering a more interactive and student-centered learning environment can help address motivation issues. This research provides valuable insights into adapting English teaching strategies to overcome digital and motivational barriers, ensuring a more effective and engaging learning experience in the new normal era.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi strategi pengajaran yang diterapkan oleh guru bahasa Inggris di SMAN 1 Telaga dalam beradaptasi dengan era "new normal" pasca-COVID-19. Menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur dari tiga guru bahasa Inggris berpengalaman. Studi ini mengidentifikasi strategi utama, termasuk integrasi teknologi seperti Google Meet, Zoom, dan WhatsApp, serta metode pengajaran inovatif seperti role-playing, media audiovisual, dan diskusi kelompok. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi tersebut efektif dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa. Namun, terdapat beberapa tantangan, seperti koneksi internet yang tidak stabil, motivasi siswa yang rendah, dan keterbatasan akses terhadap perangkat digital. Guru juga mengalami kesulitan dalam menilai pemahaman siswa dalam lingkungan pembelajaran daring atau hibrida. Meskipun demikian, dukungan

institusional, seperti pelatihan penggunaan teknologi digital dan pengembangan infrastruktur, berperan penting dalam mendukung efektivitas pengajaran. Untuk meningkatkan pengajaran bahasa Inggris di era pascapandemi, penelitian ini merekomendasikan integrasi lebih lanjut dari platform interaktif, pembelajaran berbasis proyek, dan pendekatan blended learning. Sekolah juga perlu mengadakan pelatihan rutin bagi guru untuk meningkatkan literasi digital dan keterampilan pedagogis mereka. Selain itu, menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang lebih interaktif dan berpusat pada siswa dapat membantu mengatasi masalah motivasi. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan berharga tentang adaptasi strategi pengajaran bahasa Inggris untuk mengatasi hambatan digital dan motivasi, guna menciptakan pengalaman belajar yang lebih efektif dan menarik di era new normal.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed education in Indonesia, including English language teaching. During the pandemic's initial stages, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) and local education offices, implemented the Distance Learning Policy to replace face-to-face instruction, prompting English teachers to adopt online teaching methods (Lie et al., 2020). As the pandemic subsided, President Joko Widodo introduced the term "new normal," aiming to restore sectors that had been disrupted, including education (Setijadi, 2021). This transition required teachers to prepare for new teaching approaches while adhering to health protocols. By June 2020, Indonesian schools began hybrid learning, blending online and face-to-face methods under strict health measures (Ginting et al., 2021).

The transition to the new normal highlighted the limitations of online learning, such as unstable internet connections and decreased student engagement (Mamolo, 2022). Many believed that face-to-face instruction remained essential for optimal education (Stoian et al., 2022). However, adjustments in teaching practices were necessary, such as limiting student attendance to 50% capacity, prohibiting crowding, and ensuring compliance with health protocols (Barnhart et al., 2022). These changes significantly impacted English language teaching, requiring educators to employ innovative strategies to engage students effectively.

Research shows that English teachers utilized various methods during the pandemic, including YouTube videos, WhatsApp groups, Google Classroom, and Zoom, to overcome challenges like internet instability and low student motivation (Kaban & Dalimunte, 2022). In the new normal era, blended learning has become essential, combining online and offline strategies to meet the needs of students (Singh et al., 2021; Sukirman et al., 2022). Teachers are expected to collaborate with parents and students to create effective learning environments, leveraging digital tools such as videos, PowerPoint presentations, and interactive applications (Susanti & Prameswari, 2020).

At SMAN 1 Telaga, teachers have adapted their strategies to address the challenges of the new normal. Pre-observation at the school revealed that cooperative learning, particularly discussion methods, has been widely adopted to foster student engagement. However, some students have shown signs of reduced motivation and boredom, preferring to use smartphones over participating in class activities. These observations underscore the importance of developing innovative teaching strategies tailored to the new normal context.

This study focuses on identifying and analyzing the strategies employed by English teachers at SMAN 1 Telaga to adapt to the new normal. Drawing on previous research, such as Marlina et al. (2021) and Subakti and Prasetya (2022), which emphasize the importance of innovative teaching methods and teacher adaptability. This research aims to contribute to the development of effective English teaching strategies in the post-pandemic era. By addressing the specific challenges faced by educators, this study seeks to provide practical insights for improving English language instruction and fostering student engagement in high schools during the new normal era.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method to investigate how teachers support students in learning English within the "new normal" educational setting. Descriptive qualitative research was chosen to provide a detailed description and analysis of the strategies employed by teachers to achieve varied learning outcomes. According to Shank (2006), qualitative research is a systematic and empirical study of meaning. The term "systematic" refers to a planned, organized, and widely accepted approach within the qualitative research community, while "empirical" signifies that the research is grounded in real-world experiences. Researchers are interested in understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) highlight that qualitative research employs interpretive and naturalistic approaches, allowing researchers to study phenomena in their natural settings and interpret them through participants' perspectives.

2.1 Data Collection

This study utilized a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument to obtain comprehensive insights into the teaching strategies employed during the "new normal" era. The questionnaire consisted of six sections with a total of 18 questions, ensuring that all relevant aspects of English teaching were thoroughly examined. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, teaching experience, and educational background, to contextualize the participants' responses. The second section focused on the integration of technology in teaching, exploring the frequency of digital tool usage and its effectiveness in achieving learning objectives. The third section investigated teaching strategies used during the "new normal," particularly the methods implemented and challenges encountered in managing online and hybrid classes. The fourth section examined assessment methods, evaluating their accuracy and the frequency of feedback provided to students. The fifth section identified major challenges faced by teachers, such as difficulties in technological adaptation, low student motivation, and the extent of institutional support received. Lastly, the sixth section allowed participants to provide suggestions and recommendations for improving English teaching in the post-pandemic era. This structured approach ensured that the data collected was both comprehensive and relevant to the research objectives.

2.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study followed a qualitative descriptive approach, guided by the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The process involved three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction phase, the researcher carefully examined and filtered the collected responses to retain only relevant information, eliminating any data that was not directly related to the research objectives. This step was essential in simplifying and organizing the data for further analysis. The next stage, data display, involved presenting the reduced data in a structured narrative format. This organization allowed the researcher to identify patterns, relationships, and significant insights regarding the teaching strategies implemented during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this process, the study was able to establish connections between various phenomena observed in the data. Lastly, in the verification and conclusion drawing phase, the researcher synthesized the findings to form credible conclusions. This step involved an iterative process of cross-referencing data with existing literature to ensure consistency and reliability. The conclusions drawn were continuously validated until data saturation was reached, confirming that no new information emerged. This rigorous analytical approach ensured the accuracy and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The transition to the New Normal era has reshaped the educational landscape, compelling teachers and institutions to adapt to remote and hybrid teaching methods. This chapter delves into the findings from a comprehensive questionnaire designed to evaluate the experiences of English teachers during this period. The questionnaire is structured into six sections: Demographic Information, Use of Technology in Teaching, Teaching Strategies, Assessment and Feedback, Challenges and Support, and Suggestions and Recommendations. The analysis aims to identify effective practices, challenges, and potential areas for improvement in teaching English under the constraints and opportunities of the New Normal.

3.1 Demographic Information

The demographic section provides insight into the background and teaching contexts of the respondents. The questionnaire included four questions about gender, age, teaching experience, and the level of education at which the respondents teach.

All three respondents were female teachers with significant experience in teaching English. Two were over 45 years old, while one was between 36 and 45 years old. Each teacher had over 10 years of teaching experience and worked at the senior high school level. The demographic data highlights the respondents' extensive experience and seniority in teaching. This background likely contributes to their

ability to adapt and innovate within their teaching practices during the New Normal. Additionally, teaching at the senior high school level presents unique challenges, including preparing students for higher education and exams, which may influence their teaching strategies and the use of technology.

3.2 Use of Technology in Teaching

The use of technology in English teaching during the New Normal varied among teachers. Teacher 1 reported always using technology, Teacher 3 often used it, while Teacher 2 occasionally incorporated digital tools into lessons. The most commonly used platforms included Google Meet, WhatsApp, Zoom, YouTube, and educational games on Google. These tools were found to be effective in engaging students and facilitating interactive learning. The integration of technology ensured continuity in education, with Teacher 1's consistent use reflecting a proactive approach, whereas Teacher 2's occasional use suggested potential barriers such as digital literacy or limited access. Video conferencing platforms like Google Meet and Zoom were essential for synchronous learning, while tools like YouTube and Google games supported asynchronous learning. However, the differences in technology use highlight the need for targeted training to ensure equitable and effective integration across all teaching practices.

3.3 Teaching Strategies

Teachers employed various strategies to enhance student engagement and comprehension in online learning. Teacher 1 used role-play, games, and audiovisual strategies, while Teacher 2 relied on demonstrations and case-based group discussions. Teacher 3 combined role-play and games to maintain student interest. Participation rates varied, with Teacher 1 observing similar engagement levels to face-to-face classes, while Teachers 2 and 3 noted higher participation in online settings. Despite these efforts, challenges such as unstable internet connections, lack of student participation, and difficulties in ensuring student understanding persisted. The diversity in teaching strategies reflects an effort to accommodate different learning styles, with role-playing and games fostering engagement, and case-based discussions encouraging critical thinking. However, infrastructural challenges, particularly internet instability, continue to hinder the effectiveness of these methods.

3.4 Assessment and Feedback

Teachers used assignments, projects, and participation in online discussions as primary assessment methods, with Teacher 3 also incorporating offline tests. Satisfaction levels with the accuracy of assessments were high, with Teachers 1 and 2 expressing satisfaction, while Teacher 3 was very satisfied. Feedback frequency varied, with Teachers 1 and 2 providing weekly feedback, whereas Teacher 3 gave daily feedback. These assessment methods aligned with the need for flexible and interactive evaluation in remote learning. The use of offline tests by Teacher 3 demonstrated a hybrid approach that balanced online and in-person assessment. Regular feedback was crucial in supporting student learning, but the differing frequencies suggest variations in workload management and institutional expectations. Ensuring a balance between assessment accuracy and workload distribution remains a key consideration for effective teaching in digital environments.

3.5 Challenges and Support

Teachers faced several challenges, including adapting to technology and addressing low student motivation. Teacher 3 identified low motivation as the primary issue, while Teachers 1 and 2 also struggled with technology adaptation. Despite these difficulties, all teachers reported receiving adequate support from their schools, making additional recommendations unnecessary. The challenges reflect broader systemic issues, such as the digital divide and the psychological impact of the pandemic on students. Institutional support has been crucial in easing this transition, with training and access to digital tools helping teachers adapt. However, the persistent issue of low student motivation suggests a need for more innovative engagement strategies to sustain interest and participation in online learning.

Thus, to improve English teaching in the New Normal, teachers recommended enhancing communication, utilizing engaging learning strategies, and implementing continuous evaluation. Specific suggestions included using platforms like WhatsApp and Google tools for interactive communication, incorporating project-based and self-directed learning approaches, and integrating multimedia such as videos, audio presentations, and online games. Additionally, conducting regular and comprehensive evaluations through varied methods like written tests, projects, and quizzes was emphasized. These recommendations align with contemporary pedagogical practices, stressing the importance of interactive, flexible, and student-centered learning environments. The integration of diverse media and teaching tools caters to different student needs and preferences, ensuring more effective and engaging learning experiences.

4 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This study demonstrates how English teachers at SMA 1 Telaga successfully adapted their teaching strategies during the New Normal era by integrating technology with active learning methods. Technologies such as Google Meet, WhatsApp, and YouTube were effectively utilized alongside pedagogical strategies like demonstrations, small group discussions, role-playing, games, and audiovisual media. These methods fostered student engagement and facilitated communication, although challenges such as unstable internet connections and low student motivation persisted.

Institutional support, including technology training and provision of teaching facilities, played a crucial role in enabling these adaptations. However, further improvements are necessary to address ongoing challenges. The findings contribute to existing theories on technology integration in education and propose a hybrid model that combines traditional and digital strategies to enhance teaching efficacy in modern learning environments.

4.2 Suggestions/Recommendations

Suggestions for improving the teaching and learning process during the new normal era emphasize active participation and innovative strategies. Students are encouraged to engage in interactive methods like demonstrations, group discussions, and role-playing to enhance their understanding and retention of English material. For English teachers, using diverse strategies, such as games and audiovisual materials, can help maintain student interest and create an interactive classroom environment. Leveraging platforms like WhatsApp, Google tools, and specialized English learning applications is recommended for delivering materials, assignments, and quizzes. Interactive media, including videos, audio presentations, and online games, can further enrich the learning experience. Flexible approaches, such as project-based learning tied to students' daily lives and independent learning with resources like articles, videos, and podcasts, are essential for fostering motivation and practical English skills. Effective two-way communication should be prioritized by frequently engaging with students and providing feedback through various channels like WhatsApp or Google Meet. Regular and comprehensive evaluations, including written tests, projects, presentations, and quizzes, are necessary to measure student progress accurately.

The English department plays a crucial role by providing resources, training, and professional development opportunities to support innovative teaching practices. Facilitating collaboration among teachers can also enhance teaching effectiveness. For future research, it is essential to examine the long-term impacts of these strategies on student outcomes, compare traditional and innovative teaching methods, and explore challenges in different educational contexts to refine and improve practices further.

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