



## Teachers' Experience in EFL Class by Implementing Blended Learning During Covid-19: Narrative Inquiry

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**Abstract** This study presents the story of experience of EFL teacher in teaching and learning process during pandemic by implementing blended learning. The research design was qualitatively through narrative inquiry. Meanwhile, the reach instrument used by the teacher was narrative box and interview guide. Next, the researcher analyzed the story by re-telling narratively, the researcher then segmented the narrative data into themes. The finding of this study reveals that the teacher tried to apply suitable online platform to teach in blended learning, then it was decided that the teacher used Google classroom and WhatsApp. This application was chosen because of the school policy and it was easier for the students to be implemented. Moreover, there were some problems in its implementation; those were internet connection, and students' awareness.

**Keywords** : *Teacher Experience; EFL Class; Blended Learning; Covid- 19; Narrative Inquiry.*

**Abstrak** Kajian ini menyajikan kisah pengalaman guru EFL dalam proses belajar mengajar di masa pandemi dengan menerapkan blended learning. Desain penelitian ini adalah kualitatif melalui naratif inquiry. Sedangkan instrumen yang digunakan adalah narrative box dan pedoman wawancara. Selanjutnya peneliti menganalisis cerita dengan menceritakan kembali secara naratif, peneliti kemudian mengelompokkan data naratif tersebut ke dalam tema-tema. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa guru mencoba menerapkan platform online yang cocok untuk mengajar dengan metode blended learning, kemudian diputuskan bahwa guru menggunakan Google classroom dan WhatsApp. Kedua platform ini dipilih karena merupakan kebijakan sekolah dan sangat mudah bagi siswa dalam hal penerapannya. Selain itu, terdapat beberapa kendala dalam pelaksanaannya, yaitu koneksi internet, dan kesadaran siswa.

**Kata Kunci** : *Pengalaman Belajar; Kelas EFL; Covid-19; Pembelajaran Campuran; Narrative Inquiry.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Corona virus disease (COVID-19) has been labeled as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), posing a temporary threat to civilization globally. This disease first emerged from Wuhan, China and has spread almost all over the world. After examining the lethal virus' quick spread and seriousness around the world, WHO's general director declared COVID-19 as a pandemic in March 2020, along with the declaration of social distancing as a measure of limiting the virus's spread (World Health Organization, 2021). The percentage of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia has been steadily increasing. As a result, the Indonesian government through the educational ministry issued a circular Letter No. 15, 2020 about the teaching and learning should be conducted at home during pandemic. Therefore, the Indonesian education systems are mandated to conduct remote learning, which transforms the traditional face-to-face teaching system into a virtual learning where the technology is needed for its implementation. In addition, virtual learning is entirely reliant on the technology gadgets and the internet access (Adedoyin and Soykan, 2020)

Furthermore, some challenges in implementing virtual learning are school adaptability, teachers' ability in operating computer, learning platform and also the internet access both for teacher and students. Another issue in terms of education is the online learning's reliance on technology equipment and platforms. The implementation of virtual learning has raised a number of issues, including the school availability in term of infrastructure (Winn, 2018). In fact, teachers have limited resources to participate in virtual learning, and some students are lack access to computers and other electronic devices (Lie,2020)

In Indonesia, a new normal age was recently implemented Based on the educational ministry, the school in green zone can conduct the teaching and learning process at school but the school have to implement the health protocol such as adhering to health protocol norms and maintaining social distance (Yunus and Rezki 2020). Blended learning is the most appropriate strategy that can be utilized in such a situation. Furthermore, because it pertains to technological advancements, the concept of blended learning is appropriate for the twenty-first century. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) state that blended learning as "thoughtful integration of face-to-face learning experiences with the virtual

experiences" (p.96). Moreover, according to Ja'ashan (2015), blended learning has both face-to-face meeting and online meeting in its implementation. Despite the fact that the introduction of blended learning in most developing nations was fraught with difficulties, it is widely regarded as the most effective learning method (Kintu, Zhu and Kagambe 2017). Dziuban (2018) supports this argument by claiming that blended learning can create a productive learning environment and a successful result as well. Therefore, the interaction among professors and learners has resulted in the act of demanding for efficient and effective teaching and learning process.

Moreover, many researchers have recently become interested in blended learning as a result of its existence. There are many researches that have been conducted to investigate the quality of blended learning seen from different point of view. Mendieta and Barkhuizen (2020) conducted a study to see the implementation of blended learning in a Colombia. Sriwichai (2020) performed a different study that looked into students' willingness for learning English in a mixed learning environment as well as the problems and challenges they faced while learning. Though some researches related to blended learning has been conducted, but it's rarely analyze in term of narrative inquiry approach to examine the experiences of EFL teachers in its implementation specially amid Pandemic covid-19.

The current study looks into the lives of EFL teacher who has been teaching English in the classroom many years. Through narrative inquiry, the experiences of EFL teachers were investigated further related to the implementation of blended learning amid pandemic. Human experiences are interpreted as living entities that communicate a tale about their lives using this way. Researchers also used the narrative inquiry to turn the personal experiences instruction into an intellectual and professional knowledge to other people (Clandinin 2006). For this background of the study, the researchers were interested in conducting a research to know how the teacher implements blended learning amid pandemic by using narrative inquiry approach.

## **METHOD**

Through this research, the researchers engaged with the stories from This research design was qualitatively through narrative inquiry. According to Creswell (2012) , narrative research is a method that focuses on exploring people, getting data through stories, reporting personal experiences, and discussing those experiences with the person. According to Clandinin (2006), Narrative allows us to know how social and personal aspect interconnect in the life of teachers, as well as how the teachers' experiences are molded by the wider social and institutional narratives the live.

The teacher told about his stories in teaching English during pandemic situation, focusing on the experiences, perception, and some obstacles toward the blended learning implementation amid pandemic.

### **1. Research Procedure**

The procedure of this research was adapted from Creswell (2012). The procedure shows a clear and comprehensive step to conduct narrative inquiry. As a result, it was accomplished in the research context. Those steps were identify a phenomenon to explore, purposefully selected teacher, collect the story from the teacher, re-story the teacher's story, collaborating with participant, reporting the finding about the participant's experience, and validate the accuracy of the report.

There was an EFL teacher involving in this study. The teacher has been conducting the teaching and learning process through blended learning amid pandemic. Meanwhile, in collecting the teacher's stories, the researcher used research instruments such as narrative box, Narrative frame, and interview guide. Then, the researchers analyzed the story by re-story narratively, the researcher then classified the narrative data into some themes. According to Creswell (2012), after re-storying or retelling the story, the narrative researchers present the themes or categories. The theme was grouped based on the chronology of the experiences to elicit teacher's past, present, and future. The next step of analysis was coding. The coding can be seen in the table bellows:

**Table 1. Coding**

<b>Experience of the teacher</b>	
<b>Codes</b>	The meaning
<b>T1</b>	Teacher 1
<b>Tepol</b>	Teaching English during Pandemic (virtual learning)
<b>Prol</b>	Problems in virtual learning
<b>Bld</b>	Blended Learning design
<b>Dld</b>	Discovery learning design
<b>Dbd</b>	Differences Both Blended and Discovery Learning
<b>Adb</b>	Advantages and Disadvantages of Blended Learning
<b>Bio</b>	Break it out
<b>Ho</b>	Hope

## **2. The Quality of the Study**

To keep the quality of this study, the researchers pay more attention to what Barkhuizen, et.al (2014) in term of trustworthiness and rigor. Furthermore, in increasing the trustworthiness in narrative inquiry, the researchers referred to naturalistic perspective, Lincoln and Guba, (1985), and research conducted by Loh (2015). There are four criteria of trustworthiness; those are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) mention seven techniques to accept the credibility; those are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, referential adequacy, negative case analysis, and member checking. In this research, the researcher used triangulation and member checking. Furthermore, to gain dependability and conformability in the study, the researchers maintain: 1) a dependability audit examining the process of inquiry; how to collect the data, how the data kept, the data accuracy, 2) a conformability audit examine the product to provide the finding, interpretation and recommendation should be attached by the data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Teaching English in Pandemic situation

The virtual learning which was implemented amid pandemic gives new experience to the teacher in teaching and learning process. Selecting material, choosing an appropriate learning media, and designing learning activities are new experiences in conducting virtual learning. It also a challenge for the teacher to make an interesting learning activities that use technology in order to reach the learning objective. Related to the use of technology in learning, T1 said that: *"In pandemic situation teachers and students do not be allowed to meet face-to-face therefore, we send the learning material in the form of videos, ppt, and so on, students are given a link that points to the media or video."* (T1.TePO11)

Besides, even though the teacher get confused in finding an appropriate platform for the students, the teacher considers and tries various technologies or platforms which are suitable and reachable for students and can be implemented in virtual class.

*"Media features used by teachers here are Google Classroom and WhatsApp because these media are easier than others and don't use up a lot of quota as the Zoom application and others."* (T1.TePO12)

T1 also added that from these media, there are advantages and disadvantages of each, as narrates below:

*"Yesterday, we focused on Google Classroom because using WhatsApp was not optimal, so we used Google Classroom. However, from the two media, there are advantages and disadvantages of each. For example, the Google Classroom can't immediately do a video conference but WhatsApp media can do that, then if using the Google Classroom, we can send assignments to students ahead of time like I have a schedule on Tuesday I can make that material now or the other day by scheduling in Google Classroom, but WhatsApp can't be like that. So WhatsApp can be used for video conference only and one of the reasons for using WhatsApp, it is an application recommended by the government and does not use a lot of quota."* (T1.TePO13)

Furthermore, in this pandemic situation, EFL teaching for developed country is a challenge. The virtual class implementation raises problems. The teacher found that the virtual class implementation amid pandemic doesn't work well because of internet network limitations, motivation is another problem that come out in virtual learning.

*"We are fully online, of course the internet network must be stable. For example, when the learning process using video conferences, so that our delivery is clear and can be accepted and comprehended by students, as well as students the network must be stable." (T1pr01)*

*"Sometimes the students just fill in the absence, even though there is media that has been sent on the Google Classroom, sometimes students just see it, fill in the absence, and if there is an assignment only some students who collect it. maybe next time we should provide material that students are curious about it." (T1pr02)*

Through this theme, the teachers' experience demonstrated that the condition of virtual learning amid pandemic is challenging. It requires more creativity in teaching the students amid pandemic. At the beginning of pandemic, the teacher was pushed to use some online platforms which were appropriate to the students. Besides, it must also pay attention to how it is applied and how the students keep active even more active than the teacher.

## **2. Discovery Learning and Blended Learning**

The theme tells about how the teacher manages the implementation of blended learning and discovery learning during pandemic situation. It covers the stories of designing pattern of blended and discovery learning, the difference of them, and the blended learning disadvantages and advantages.

## **3. Designing Pattern**

### **3.1 Blended Learning**

The Indonesian government established the concept of new normal in July 2020, and it was new life order in aspect of human life. In term of education, the government allowed the school to conduct teaching and learning at school for green zone. Therefore, blended learning was used as an appropriate method to be implemented in this era. T1 responded that there were some teachers who said blended learning was a new thing because it emerged during the pandemic yesterday, therefore, the teacher doesn't really understand the design.

*"Blended learning is something new for some teachers because it emerged yesterday during the pandemic, blended learning focuses on*

*the media, but there is also blended learning for students who are face to face with the teacher but there are limitations. the implementation here is from home, so at school there is already a special schedule for online schedule such as the daily schedule but there is a difference because if it is adjusted like a face-to-face teaching schedule, it is impossible, so in a day usually teach two classes but can also be one class in a day. there is a special schedule for blended learning.” (T1BLd1)*

The teacher was expected to be able to integrate the conventional and modern teaching continuously, in order to apply blended learning and produce a new learning system that is more appropriate in the pandemic era. T1 uses his online classes by presenting or explaining the material then it can be continued by giving reinforcement for the material in his face-to-face meetings. In addition, T1 explains the use of blended learning also combines various forms of devices.

*“The use of blended learning, the teacher can combine the advantages and experiences of online learning that students have experienced and face-to-face learning that will be carried out. The teacher can give the material first for students to understand at home and then discuss it in class when face-to-face meetings.” (T1BLd2)*

*“Blended learning combines various forms of devices that can be used in learning, from commonly used communication applications such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook, and web-based learning programs such as Edmodo, Zenius, Quipper, Zenier, or using other applications such as Google Classroom by providing material and discussed in class and vice versa.” (T1BLd3)*

### **3.2 Discovery learning**

While it is the same as blended learning, the teacher also apply discovery learning to keep students active even though in online learning and pay attention to its application.

*“Discovery learning is a method whose learning method is student-centered or the student's own activity, so the students are active, not teachers. For example, when we give assignments such as videos, so the teacher does not explain in full, only part of it and the students are required to look for more information. (T1DLd)*

## **4. The Differences Both Blended and Discovery Learning**

This part is a story from the teacher related to the difference of applying both particularly the method.



*(T1Dbd) "Of course there are differences in terms of method, if blended learning combines learning with technology which is suitable in using online teaching and learning, like yesterday we can't use discovery learning because we can't meet face to face with students directly, even though face to face is only through learning media so using discovery learning is less effective"*

## **5. Advantages and Disadvantages of Blended Learning**

The implementation of blended learning that have been being implemented in school amid pandemic create positive effects for the teacher and students, however There are also weaknesses in the implementation of blended learning that found by the teacher even students.

*(T1ADb1) "Besides being able to optimize the little time given during face-to-face meeting, blended learning also benefits for students, including students being able to create independent learning and academic responsibility for students, preparing students to face a technology-centered world, increasing collaborative abilities, and triggering full involvement (physically and socio-emotional) students in an interesting and fun learning process."*

*(T1ADb2) "Each method has advantages and disadvantages. One of the benefits is we can give assignments directly from home because we have used the media, so we can give assignments to students at any time and at the appointed time. while the problem, it comes mainly from students because learning has to be online and uses several media, sometimes even though students have smartphone, laptop and so on, sometimes they don't have internet service that supports it, even though there is internet data the location also determines."*

## **6. Break It Out**

The teacher explained that the school and the government provided solution to the students in order that they can learn virtually by giving internet balance, furthermore, the government has decreased time allocation in learning and decrease the criteria of learning achievement as well. The teaching and learning process is just for learning experience amid pandemic.

*(T1Bio1)" Thank God, the network provided by the school here is stable, but when online learning cannot be used by students, but both teachers and students have received a one-year study quota from the government."*

*(T1Bio2)" The government has created a new curriculum (prototype curriculum) to improve and accelerate material left behind in online learning during the pandemic."*

## **7. Future Route**

Through this theme, the teacher narrates some evaluation and the future plan related to the implementation of blended learning amid pandemic. The teacher said that blended learning give new experiences in term of teaching and learning process specially teaching English for foreign language.

According to the teacher's story, T1 has been trying to find out the appropriate activities in implementing blended learning amid pandemic. In other word, the teacher tries to find an appropriate media, method and activities to the students. T1 argues that an appropriate approach that can be implemented in pandemic situation is blended learning.

*(T1Ho1)" Something must be evaluated when implementing blended learning, such as when we are fully online learning, we can carry out face-to-face learning even though once or twice a week to re-deliver the material that has been sent in learning media such as on google classroom or whatsapp, it is better. sometimes even though we provide material or assignments, students just read but do not understand, in fact, there is no feedback when doing face-to-face learning and continuing the material directly."*

For the future, the government has provided learning media, and the use of technology should be implemented in the classroom even though the pandemic ends. Furthermore, to find an appropriate online platform is needed to make the virtual class works.

*(T1Ho2)" Because blended learning is related to technology, surely there must be a multifunctional or smart application or web for learning media provided by the government, so there is no need to use several applications in the learning process."*

Person's experience can become knowledge for others as well as the experience of the teacher in this study. Besides, the professionalism of the teacher has to notice the teachers' level of knowledge, responsibility teachers' level of knowledge, autonomy, responsibility, (Jensvoll and Lengkang, 2018). Therefore, whatever the situation, the teacher has been competent to perform the process of

teaching and learning, transfer the knowledge to the learners, and conduct evaluation. In other word, pandemic is not the reason not to learn and stop teaching. The teacher in this study has shared his experience in teaching English amid pandemic and proven his professionalism in teaching EFL.

Dealing with facilities in online learning, it was found that the teacher tried to use the proper online platform to teach such as Google classroom and WhatsApp. The teacher can share form of videos or power point. But on its implementation, the teacher found it hard to be implemented to his students because of internet connection. The teacher's experience on technology affects the teaching and learning process. It is supported by Watson (2020) who claimed that the technological experience of teachers in an online environment is also one of the challenges that determine the smoothness of instructional activities.

Furthermore, the finding shows that the implementation of blended learning gives a positive response to the teacher. Although there are still some challenges in its implementation, blended learning is considered better than full online learning. It can be an alternative and effective strategy in pandemic situation. It is in line with the expert who stated that Blended learning has been considered an ideal learning approach due to its accommodation of the strengths for both face-to-face interaction and technology-based instruction or a fully online course ( Garrison and Vaugan, 2008; Dagwal, 2017) . Another study from Arifani, 2019); Kurucova, Medova and Tirpakova, 2018) state that blended learning implementation has been described to be more effective than the classical face-to-face or purely online learning instruction. It means that the blended learning is a suitable strategy used in pandemic situation where the teaching and learning process can be conducted both in full online learning and full face-to-face because of the pandemic.

Wang et al., (2015) confirm that learners in blended learning system are transferred from passive to active learners. Because they interact with other learning subsystems including instructor, institution, learning support, content, and technology through a dynamic and adoptive blended learning process, they become researchers, practitioners, and collaborators. It is different with the finding of this research where the teacher found the students are passive. So it

can be concluded that there is an aspect which is not supporting the implementation of blended learning in this pandemic.

## CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this pandemic, all the educational activities or teaching and learning process was conducted from home virtually and it was not too successful and effective especially in State Senior High School 1 Pakong. Therefore, Blended learning can be a good solution for the learning activities in pandemic situation. The teacher's experience and creativity are needed in implementing blended learning. Dealing with online platform, it was found that the teacher choose an appropriate platform to the students, and the suitable platform used by the teacher in State Senior High School 1 Pakong was Google classroom and WhatsApp as the main platform in online class.

Furthermore, based on the teacher's story, it was found that the success of the implementation of blended learning in this pandemic is affected by some factors such as students' motivation, internet access and scheduling at the school. In this research, internet access becomes a big problem for the students in online class and challenge for the teacher, the students did not attend the class by the reason of internet access or connection. Sometimes, students just fill in the attendance list and was not active in Google classroom. In addition, only a half students read the assignment without submitting. Therefore, the teacher uses face to face learning to give reinforcement about the material given virtually.

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