An Analysis of Difficulties of Teaching English in Online Class at World English Course

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Abstract
This study aims to analyze the difficulties of teaching English in online classes at World English Course, a language institution in East Java. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a limited case study design. Semi-structured interviews with two experienced tutors were used as data collection techniques. Data from the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis, following a six-phase methodological framework. And based on the theoretical perspective of Technology Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) and the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework to analyze these difficulties. The results of this study indicate three main difficulties: barriers to sustainable technology and lack of infrastructure, significant difficulties in maintaining student engagement and building meaningful interactions in online classes, and inherent difficulties in adapting conventional face-to-face pedagogical practices to digital platforms. These difficulties indicate that online English learning at World English is a complex and multi-layered process, heavily influenced by dynamic interactions, pedagogy, and technological factors, all of which have a direct impact on the learning environment and outcomes. The identified problems require intervention strategies to improve the quality and effectiveness of online English teaching. The research concludes with actionable suggestions for World English Course, including creating targeted teaching methods for online education, enhancing student assistance throughout the online learning journey, investigating more flexible online platforms, and implementing simultaneous training for educators of online classes. The research additionally indicates avenues for future studies, including examining particular interventions and increasing participant numbers, to enhance the effectiveness of online English teaching.

Key words: online English teaching, online teaching difficulties, technological hurdles, student engagement, pedagogical adaptation

INTRODUCTION

In this global era, technological developments are occurring very rapidly. Providing a transformative influence in almost every sector of life, including in the field of education. Various innovations are made to encourage technological progress, especially in the field of education. Such as the provision of online classes that can make it easier for everyone who wants to learn but is hampered by distance and time. This provision has a very significant impact on the field of education because in addition to being easy to obtain and access, online classes can also provide intelligence in a more flexible way. Although initially the provision of online classes was a response to the crisis that occurred when the corona virus occurred. Currently, online

classes are an important and growing component of the modern education system, including in teaching English.

Like in many other parts of the world, Indonesian educational institutions also use online platforms to ensure the continuity of learning. One of them is a private language course institution called World English which is located in Kediri, East Java, Indonesia. The change in the teaching system from face-to-face to online teaching has had many impacts. As Maican & Cocorada (2021) argue, this transition, while offering unprecedented flexibility and accessibility, has simultaneously introduced a unique set of complexities and challenges for educators and learners. These unique challenges also apply to educators in English language courses, such as World English. Educators in World English courses are faced with a variety of pedagogical, technological, and environmental barriers that can hinder the delivery of effective English language learning. Nevertheless, a lack of clarity regarding these challenges may hinder the creation of focused interventions, the provision of sufficient teacher training, and the enhancement of the online learning experience for both educators and students. Hence, this research was carried out to examine the difficulties encountered by teachers in World English course.

This study is also based on a theory that explains the complexity of teaching and learning in a digital environment. Such as the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) theory developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006). TPACK emphasizes that effective technology integration in teaching requires an understanding of how technology, pedagogy, and content interact and influence each other. In the context of online English teaching, difficulties may arise when teachers do not have adequate TPACK. For example, the difficulty of adapting pedagogical strategies (Pedagogical Knowledge) to teach English content (Content Knowledge) using certain online tools (Technological Knowledge). The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) was also used in this study. CoI is a model that explains how meaningful learning experiences can be created through three interrelated elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. The CoI framework emphasizes the importance of interaction and interconnectedness between these three elements to support deep and constructive learning in the learning environment, especially in the context of online learning. By

examining the challenges through this lens, this study aims to identify specific areas where teachers in World English courses may lack the necessary knowledge or where the online environment hinders the formation of a strong CoI.

Several previous studies have also been conducted to analyze the issues associated with teaching English in online classrooms. Current studies indicate that EFL instructors encounter considerable difficulties when transitioning to online education. For instance, Hussain et al. (2020) explored the difficulties encountered by EFL instructors at universities in Pakistan during emergency remote teaching, emphasizing problems like insufficient digital resources, absence of teacher training, and challenges with student participation. Likewise, Al-Jufairi and Al-Hammadi (2022) investigated the hurdles in synchronous online English courses in Saudi Arabia, noting issues linked to internet connectivity, overcrowded classrooms, and the efficient utilization of online resources. A study by Wahyuni and Amalia (2023) emphasized that Indonesian EFL teachers faced challenges in integrating technology and keeping students motivated during online instruction.

While this study provides valuable insights into the broad spectrum of challenges in online EFL teaching, there is still a significant gap in understanding the specific difficulties experienced by teachers in the unique operational and pedagogical context of private English language courses, particularly in specific institutions such as World English courses. A significant portion of the current literature frequently emphasizes formal academic environments or broad national studies. This research, concentrating on a particular language course, provides an in-depth viewpoint, seeking to reveal contextual subtleties and challenges that might be overlooked in wider studies. Current studies offer a general perspective, yet there is a significant deficit in thorough examination of the various challenges and their effects on teaching particular language skills (such as online speaking instruction) within specific educational contexts, highlighting a distinct need for this research. Consequently, in light of the identified problems and shortcomings in the current literature, this research seeks to

examine the challenges encountered by educators in teaching English during online classes at World English course.

METHOD

In this research, the approach employed is qualitative. The research design utilized in this study is descriptive qualitative with specific characteristics of a limited case study. The descriptive qualitative method was selected to offer a thorough and detailed understanding of the challenges encountered by English instructors, with the objective of illustrating "what is" concerning their experiences in the online teaching context without needing to validate specific hypotheses (Sandelowski, 2000). This research is limited as a case study since it specifically examines the "World English Course," regarding it as a distinct modern occurrence within a real-life setting (Yin, 2018). This design facilitates a thorough investigation into the specific challenges and subtleties present in this institution, as understood by its educators.

The participants in this study consisted of two English tutors who are presently instructing online courses at the World English program. Participants were chosen through a purposive sampling method. This sampling technique was selected as the researcher aimed to find individuals with direct and profound experience regarding the phenomenon under examination. The main tool employed for data gathering in this qualitative research was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were selected for their adaptability, enabling the researcher to develop a fundamental set of questions while also investigating new themes and gaining deeper insights from participants' answers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The open-ended interviews aimed to gather in-depth accounts of their experiences. This adaptability was vital to completely reveal the obstacles encountered by the educators. Data from the semi-structured interviews will undergo analysis through thematic analysis, adhering to the six-phase methodological framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This adaptable and organized method was selected due to its proven ability to detect, examine, and

subsequently present recurring patterns (themes) in textual data, yielding a comprehensive, intricate, and in-depth description of the research phenomenon.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

This part showcases the results from the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with two English instructors from World English course. They are organized by themes and represent the key issues encountered by teachers in instructing English during online classes. Each theme includes response quotes and explanations, succeeded by an in-depth discussion that analyzes the findings thoroughly, connects them to the theoretical frameworks of TPACK and CoI, and contrasts them with pertinent existing literature on challenges in online ELT. Three key themes encapsulate the major challenges they face in delivering English instruction online at the World English course.

Difficulties of Teaching English in Online Class at World English Course

Technological Hurdles and Infrastructure Limitation

The most important category of difficulties expressed by both participating tutors was about widespread technological constraints and limitations of existing infrastructure. Such as frequent problems related to internet connectivity and the functional capabilities of the online teaching platform itself.

Tutor A voiced annoyance with inconsistent internet access. *"To be honest, the main problem is the internet. It's quite uncertain. Students are engaged in speaking exercises, crucial for language practice, when suddenly I lose connection or a student loses connection. We lose pace, students become frustrated, and it seems that a significant portion of class time is spent attempting to reestablish connections or reiterate instructions. I'm not alone; numerous students face significant bandwidth fluctuations, resulting in interactive activities such as discussions or listening exercises being quite disjointed and difficult to comprehend."* This demonstrates how fundamental

technical problems directly affect students' learning experiences and effectiveness.

Tutor B added about the specific challenges posed by the online meeting platform used. *"We use a platform that is adequate for basic presentations or one-way classes, but for truly dynamic and communicative language teaching, it is quite limiting. Initiating spontaneous discussion areas for pair activities, swiftly sharing an interactive whiteboard, or incorporating external applications for vocabulary games can become burdensome, challenging, and at times inaccessible. This compels me to streamline the classroom tasks, thereby diminishing the depth of the language lesson. I allocate more time overseeing the technology than genuinely instructing the language."* This illustrates a discrepancy between the intended teaching method and the technological resources present. Tutors noted that students sometimes face challenges when they lack suitable resources (e.g., depending on small mobile screens for intricate tasks) or possess inadequate digital skills to utilize online tools efficiently.

Challenges in Maintaining Student Engagement and Interaction

The second challenge consistently mentioned by both tutors was the difficulty in sustaining high levels of student engagement and encouraging genuinely spontaneous and meaningful interactions in an online learning setting. Virtual environments frequently foster a feeling of separation, which may obstruct genuine interaction.

Tutor A expressed significant concerns about the passive behavior of students. *"It was very difficult to gauge whether students were truly engaged or just 'present' in the online space. Many never turned their cameras on, which felt like I was talking to a black box. Encouraging their active involvement, particularly in open discussions or debates, crucial for enhancing speaking abilities, was a persistent challenge. I would pose questions, and there would frequently be quietness. The naturalness that might foster genuine dialogue was*

frequently absent." This emphasizes the challenge of differentiating authentic involvement from the absence of visual signals.

Tutor B added about the observed reduction in organic interaction. *"In offline classes, students interact naturally before class, before breaks, or through short conversations in pair work. Online, that organic, spontaneous interaction, or smooth transition into small group work, is much harder to achieve. The 'energy' of the class felt very different; it was often quieter, and the important process of building genuine relationships, both between me and the students and between the students themselves, took much more time and effort. They seemed isolated."* Tutors also said that external distractions in students' home environments also contributed to this disengagement, making it difficult for students to maintain their focus.

Difficulties in Adapting Traditional Pedagogical Practices

The third challenge revealed that both participating tutors faced significant challenges in understanding and adapting clear and familiar face-to-face teaching methodologies and classroom management strategies effectively to the unique context of online teaching. There was a marked gap between what had proven successful in offline classrooms and what presented significant challenges online.

Tutor A struggled to successfully conduct communication activities crucial for language learning. *"Tasks that depend mainly on unanticipated, spontaneous engagement, physical activity, or dynamic collaboration, like classic role-plays, 'mix' exercises where learners converse and move about, or even class-wide debates that necessitate students to shift or stand, cannot be executed and modified, if possible, for an online setting. It frequently seemed like beginning anew as I endeavored to constantly create fresh methods to reach the same communication objectives. I needed to reassess and reconsider how to instruct crucial abilities like listening and speaking efficiently without the necessary physical presence and dynamic live group interactions."* This emphasizes the

intellectual and imaginative pressure on tutors to entirely overhaul their instruction.

Tutor B noted the importance of giving personalized attention and the continued challenges of managing a virtual classroom effectively. *"Overseeing a sizable online class is significantly more challenging than in an in-person environment. Monitoring and assessing students' progress efficiently is significantly more challenging, particularly when they are not engaged, and offering prompt, individualized feedback is difficult when I cannot move around the classroom to observe them closely. As a result, important practices such as immediate error correction, which is crucial in language learning for accuracy and fluency, are much less instantaneous and impactful online. I often have to wait until they are finished speaking before giving feedback, which turns out to be less effective."* This provides a fundamental difference in pedagogical practice between face-to-face and virtual classes.

Discussion

Based on the interview results above, it can be seen that the findings of this study provide a detailed picture of the complex difficulties faced by tutors in online classes at World English courses. The findings of the study revealed three main themes, namely technological barriers, challenges in maintaining student engagement and interaction, and difficulties in adapting traditional pedagogical practices. These findings provide specific insights into the context of language courses in Indonesia while also being highly consistent with existing literature on the challenges of online English teaching.

Like the technological issues identified in this study, unstable connections and platform limitations have also been discussed in previous studies. For instance, Al-Jufairi and Al-Hammadi (2022) pointed out that problems with internet connectivity are a significant obstacle in online English classes in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Hussain et al. (2020) highlighted insufficient digital infrastructure as a major obstacle for university-level EFL educators in Pakistan. The experiences of tutors at World English courses underscore that a user-friendly online platform and reliable and feature-rich

internet access are not just conveniences but basic requirements for effective online English teaching. This suggests that teachers' difficulties in integrating technology (technological knowledge) may not be solely due to their digital literacy but may stem from the limitations of the technology itself. Direct pedagogical delivery and content access can be hampered when technology is unreliable.

Other difficulties about the challenges of maintaining student interaction and engagement in online classes also reflect widely recognized concerns in online learning environments. Such as the findings of Wahyuni and Amalia (2023), who noted similar struggles among Indonesian EFL teachers in maintaining student motivation during online classroom learning. This matter is especially significant for language instruction that flourishes through communicative engagement and practice. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) highlights possible shortcomings in 'teaching presence' and 'social presence.' When educators find it difficult to promote lively interactions or when students feel alone, the sense of community diminishes, adversely affecting the cooperative learning and cognitive involvement that are crucial for acquiring a language.

Last, the difficulties in adapting traditional pedagogical practices for the online context reveal a fundamental challenge in online language teaching. The tutors' struggles with translating communicative activities and managing classrooms remotely resonate with general pedagogical challenges identified in the literature, where teachers often find it difficult to move beyond direct instruction in online settings (Maican & Cocorada, 2021). This challenge can be viewed through the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), as teachers' current pedagogical content knowledge (the effective ways to teach English in classrooms) does not seamlessly transfer to online settings without particular "technological pedagogical knowledge," which involves adapting and reworking teaching strategies for digital tools. The results indicate that merely transferring offline content to an online format is inadequate; a thorough rethinking of pedagogy is frequently necessary.

CONCLUSION

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with specific characteristics of a limited case study to analyze in depth the specific challenges experienced by

English language teachers in conducting online classes at World English Course, a leading private language institution located in East Java. Through semi-structured interviews with two experienced and dedicated tutors, the study sought to identify the complex and diverse challenges associated with this rapidly evolving educational modality, viewed from the theoretical perspectives of TPACK and Communities of Inquiry. The empirical findings obtained from the detailed accounts of the participants identified three interconnected and frequently mentioned difficulties encountered by English language instructors while adjusting to the online teaching setting at World English Course. Initially, persistent technological obstacles and infrastructural deficiencies surfaced as significant and frequently exasperating issues. These encompassed typical problems like unreliable internet connections for teachers and students, alongside perceived functionalities and the absence of enhanced features in the online learning platforms offered. These technological constraints frequently led to considerable interruptions in the learning experience, heightened teacher workload, and greater professional stress. Second, tutors consistently highlighted significant difficulties in maintaining high student engagement and creating meaningful and natural interactions in online classes. The absence of crucial non-verbal cues (e.g., muted cameras), visible student silence, and the inherent challenges in creating natural peer and teacher-student interactions significantly impacted the dynamic and communicative nature that is vital to effective language acquisition.

Finally, the study highlighted the inherent challenges in effectively adapting conventional teaching practices to digital platforms. Teachers struggled to translate complex communication activities, manage diverse classroom dynamics, and provide direct and personalized feedback in ways that are familiar and effective in face-to-face settings, necessitating a fundamental and often challenging rethinking of their teaching methods. Taken together, these findings clearly emphasize that online English learning at World English Course is a complex and multi-layered endeavor, heavily influenced by the dynamic interplay of important technological, pedagogical, and interactional factors that directly impact the learning environment and outcomes. This study also provides some practical recommendations for World English courses. Such as exploring more versatile online teaching platforms that are easy to use and conducting simultaneous training for online class teachers, developing online-specific pedagogical

strategies, and improving student support for online learning. Then some recommendations for future research, such as expanding the scope of participants, including student perspectives, and examining specific strategies or interventions implemented by teachers in online English teaching. By addressing these difficulties through strategic interventions and further targeted research, the effectiveness and quality of English teaching in World English courses and similar institutions can be significantly improved and ultimately benefit both educators and learners.

Author Biography

Sumiasih started studying English in January 2021 at World English for four months and continued studying at the Basic English Course for nine months. After these courses, the author taught as an English tutor at several private courses in Sumatera and Kediri. Currently, the author is a last-semester student in English education at *Universitas Islam Kadiri*. While writing this paper, the author is a tutor at one of the courses in Kampung Inggris, Pare, Kediri.

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