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Cultural Shock in Learning: Students' Strategies in the Beginning of Pandemic

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Abstract

Indonesian government policy ordering universities to conduct online instructional activities created a cultural shock for both lecturers and students. This policy is a way to break the chain of transmission of the Corona-19 virus; as a result, all teaching staff and students must find a mode to continue the teaching and learning process. This research is a case study that aims to describe the students' strategies to maintain their success in studying Technology-based Language Teaching Methodology (TbLTM). TbLTM is a unit offered in the first semester of Masters in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris) of Postgraduate Education Directorate, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa. Surveys and online interviews were the data collection methods for this qualitative research. The students and the teaching staff were the subjects of this research. The data were analyzed using reflective thematic analysis of Braun and Clark. The findings indicated that students employed various applications to cope with the online learning challenges of this workshop-type unit at the beginning of the pandemic.

Keywords: Application, Challenges, Online learning, Workshop

Introduction

The decision to conduct online lectures due to the Covid 19 virus pandemic that has hit the world, fosters a new academic online culture. The Government of Indonesia through the Ministry of Education requires all levels of education to carry out the teaching and learning process through online. In this way, learners and teachers must learn and teach from their respective homes or places. The implementation of online teaching has caused a cultural shock of the teaching and learning process that has been more face-to-face meetings in the classroom. Lecturers previously did not use online mode were forced to use online more often. Students who used the internet more for social media purposes began to prioritize their internet packages for online lectures. There can be a change in academic online culture. In the process of establishing an online culture academically, workshop courses have their challenges.

These workshop courses combine theoretical understanding and practical use according to the disciplines studied. For the English Language Education study program, one of the workshop courses is the Technology-based Language Teaching Methodology. This course aims to learn the theory of English teaching and look at the possibilities of using technology to assist with teaching methods. This purpose implies that the scientific content of language teaching must be communicated and will be aided by the application of technology as a support for the teaching methods studied.

Face-to-face meetings in the classroom will be easier to achieve the teaching objectives because the content knowledge and the teaching process of technology use can be directly monitored. Students in the face-to-face meetings can directly discuss the issues being faced. The internet access is also an obstacle both in terms of bandwidth and cost in its implementation. Teaching using video format is very helpful for workshops because it involves audio and visuals. Certain practice-project processes are presented more clearly using video. The problem is, video requires a large bandwidth and greater internet costs. This becomes a burden especially for students. Considering this, videos can be accompanied by texts that require a smaller bandwidth.

To enrich the teaching content of this course, it is also necessary to have scientific journal articles which give additional exposure to academic texts to students. Students can develop their academic literacies when exposed by academical readings. Exposure to journal articles provides students with the opportunity to learn, broaden their horizon, and deepen the theory at a practical level.

To complicate this, the use of various means or multimodality in the implementation of this lecture is considered necessary. The multimodality facilitates the learning of language teaching theories and methods integrated by technology. Students can experience the learning process using possible modes and access. They also employ their multiliteracies to learn. These are also in line with the different learning strategies of each student.

Multimodality in English language teaching can encourage learners to take advantage of various modes or ways to achieve understanding of learning objectives. There is almost the same understanding between multimedia and multimodal where the difference between the two can be from the point of view of its use. Multimedia emphasizes its use in knowledge exposure while multimodal on how to learn knowledge. This is in line with Farías, Obilinovic, and Orrego who state that multimedia is a tool used by teachers to deliver their teaching materials and multimodal based on the understanding that learners use various means in the learning process (2011). By the rule of thumb, multimodal can develop after and along with multimedia development.

The use of these modes gives learners the opportunity to learn according to their type of learning (Magnusson & Godhe, 2019). In addition, the presence of various modes/learning tools if appropriately used will produce maximum learning. Previous research reports the effectiveness of teaching language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing by using the available advance as technology (Januarty & Azizah Nima, 2018; Sari et al., 2020; Tseng & Yeh, 2019). Teaching at the university level has its own challenges related to the mastery of foreign languages and the teaching of disciplined content learned. Students must have at least language literacy, academic literacy, and technology literacy (Cahyaningati & Lestari, 2018). In the discipline of English Education, the demands of mastery of English as a foreign language and mastery of educational and linguistic content are significant. Both lecturers and students are demanded to acquire the language and the academic content (Freyn, 2017; Nabhan & Hidayat, 2018).

In relation to the implementation of multimodality in the field of English Language Education in this research context, there will be socio-cultural alternation of teachers and learners from face-to-face interactions to online teaching learning. The alternation includes all language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. All of these skills in their development can already be delivered digitally or online.

Problem Formulation

In this contingency situation of Covid-19 pandemic, both lecturers and students must make various adjustments. Lecturers and students must negotiate on what platform best suits the context of both parties. With regard to this, this research raises the questions: What is the platform used by lecturers and students to carry out learning? And What are the students' strategies in online learning in the context of this contingency?

Method

This research is a case study (Falk & Guenther, 2006; Silverman, 2016) on Technology-based Language Teaching Methodology course of Master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. The subject of this study was all students who joined the class and the teaching staff. Anonymity was applied to guarantee any bias of teaching authority so that the subject was certainly not in a state of intimidated by the teaching staff of the course. The students should be aware of their independency in the course when giving opinions and telling their experiences during learning. It is expected that the interview reveal the students' true learning experience (Silverman, 2017). The course outline document of the semester was used to be analyzed. Lastly, the teaching reflection evaluated the program. The data was collected using survey methods, online interviews, and teaching reflections. The three data sources and collection methods become data triangulation for this qualitative research. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will be applied in processing qualitative data. The analysis in this study consists of six steps as follows: (1) data recognition, (2) data code creation, (3) determining the initial theme, (4) reviewing the theme, (5) defining and naming the theme, and (6) writing the results of the analysis by paying attention to the interrelationship between themes, contexts and related theories. As the researcher acted as the teaching staff indicated as the subject of this research, it involved two research collaborators with the division of role. The role of first collaborator was to ensure the validity of the data analysis and contribute feedback on the teaching reflections so that the data analysis becomes more reliable. The second collaborator played a role to be the technical executor of the entire research process. For ease of reference, Figure 1 illustrates the methodology of this study.

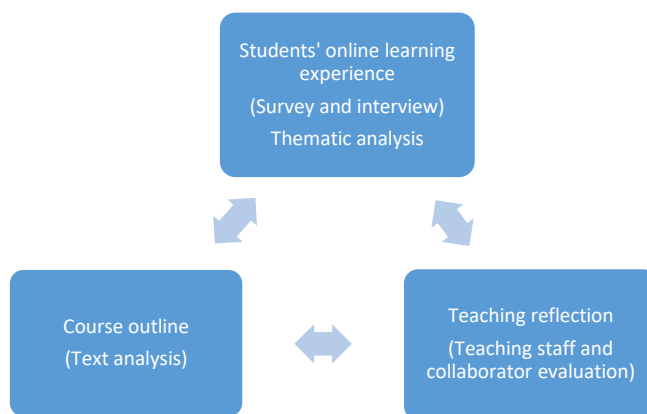


Figure 1 Research methodology

Results and Discussion

During the course of Technology-based Language Teaching Methodology, students use a variety of platforms or applications. The findings of this study show that students use at least five platforms/applications:

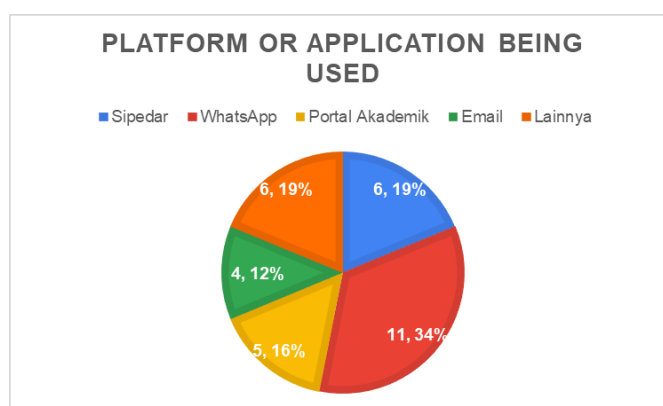


Figure 2 Platform or application used in this online Technology-based Language Teaching Methodology

The data indicate that no students use a single application during the learning process. Of the various platforms or applications, the WhatsApp app is the most used. In an online interview to corroborate the results of the survey illustrated in Figure 2, it was found that students use a variety of platforms or applications according to what they can use and the internet access they can reach. WhatsApp has the convenience to be able to simply communicate, convey ideas both written and oral, Video, make a video call. Images can also be facilitated by this application. The main reason for using this app is its easy-to-use display on the mobile phone or smartphone they use.

The Academic and Sipedar portals are two platforms provided by universities to support online learning in this university. Academic portals are used for data and documentation of academic activities but are still limited to some learning activities such as assignments, assessments, upload and download text materials. Facing the Covid 19 pandemic, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa developed a Network Learning Information System (Sistem Informasi Pembelajaran dalam Jaringan - SIPEDAR) that began to be used in odd semester 2020/2021. This system is adequate to facilitate the learning process, although the teaching staff and students use other applications as well as support.

Email (Electronic mail) was used for task submission as the support of the Academic Portal because of the limitations of the academic Portal for uploading image and video file types. In this study, student work/project needed to be displayed. Other applications used by students were used as a supporting function for project work or assignments. The teaching staff and students used WhatsApp for communication purpose during lectures.

The students applied several strategies to support their mastery of learning in this course. Overall, the online learning strategy carried out by students brings up the following three themes.

1. Course outline as the study guide
2. Academic readings

3. Application tutorials

Students followed the course outline as their study guide. For example, students expressed that:

"I tried my best to follow the lecturer's guideline from the RPS. RPS helps a lot to find out what do we need during the course, I know what I need for instance journals, books, some apps. Etc. And absolutely preparing our gadgets, internet data, laptop, and other technical stuffs to support the online learning."

Students were looking for additional sources. For example, students exclaimed:

"I'm following the teacher's instructions and search for scientific sources that have many theories and concepts to increase awareness."

Students are looking for additional sources from the internet about tutorials on the use of an application. For example, students articulated:

"I have (l)earned extra info about apps to success because study online needs to know all apps related to study whether discussion as WhatsApp and portal or face to fa(ce) as Zoom and Google meeting."

During the course, students realized the need to follow the course outline because it listed the weekly activities. Course outline indicates successive learning activities to work. The beginning activity leads to the next activity and the final activity comprises the combination of skills learnt in the previous activities.

This course applies project-based approach that is student-centered. It generated them to be active in exploring more knowledge beyond the given teaching material. Without additional material, the students found difficulties not only in acquiring the content knowledge but also the skills to operate the applications in this course.

The limited interaction during online learning became the challenge of workshop-based teaching such as this course. Teachers cannot directly observe what the students do in working on the application. The students cannot discuss their problem directly in operating the applications. This situation led the students to seek more tutorial in the internet commonly YouTube.

Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of the themes above is that in taking the Technology-based Language Teaching Methodology Course, students used various platforms or applications that were basically determined by the internet signals they had. Lecturers adjusted to these conditions to ascertain the communication was maintained and teaching materials delivered. The dependence on signals or internet access brought about WhatsApp more widely used because of its lightweight character and more practical for communication used.

Another conclusion that can be taken is that the Technology-based Language Teaching Methodology course which is workshop is grounded on technology literacy, academic literacy, and social literacy of the teaching staff and the students. At least the three literacy must be mastered by the teaching staff and the students because the transfer knowledge of the learning process will be cut off. The teaching staff must constantly update knowledge about computer technology for English language teaching because of the evolving nature of technology. Students attending the course must at least have the basic skills of operating a computer and be independent enough to explore critically and analytically to integrate knowledge of English teaching methodology with computers. It is also necessary to continue developing the culture of institutions in using the internet, thorough planning, and quality assurance to ensure this course run properly.

Recommendations

This research was limited to one class in a university. Conducting broader scope of further study is recommended so a more wide-ranging findings can visualize more reliable master's degree students' strategy to cope with the online learning during the pandemic. The effectiveness of the online learning will provide further contribution on this topic.

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