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THE TEACHING OF WRITING SKILLS IN AN EFL ONLINE CLASSROOM AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL: BETWEEN BANDWIDTH AND IMMEDIACY

Ilma Fitriyana; Agung Ginanjar Anjaniputra

Universitas Negeri Semarang

ilmafitriyana801@students.unnes.ac.id;

anjaniputragi@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract: Despite the need for online classrooms, the scarcity of studies in online writing classes leads to the limitation of the modes of learning in writing classes. This study portrays the learning of EFL writing in online classrooms by delving into different modes that the teacher used. This study is carried out by employing a qualitative approach. The data were collected by using students' reflective journals and semi-structured interviews. The participants of the study were 35 students of the twelfth grade and one English teacher. As the data from the students' journal and the interview were categorized into broader themes, the teaching and learning activity was compatible with modes of online classrooms in Modes 1 and 2 which were low bandwidth-low immediacy and low bandwidth-high immediacy. This denotes low bandwidth as the preferred mode used by the teacher, presumably due to the technical access and supports. Thus, English teachers can implement interesting media for teaching and learning depending on the availability of the learning sources by sticking to the availability of online learning modes. For the students, students can ask the teacher if they encounter difficulties in online classrooms.

Keywords: EFL, online classrooms, secondary school, writing skills

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has produced economic, social, political, and religious challenges, notably in education (Destianingsih & Satria, 2020). Due to this, the Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia mandated learning from home for all grades (Kemendikbud, 2020). This decision affects the learning process, which had previously been face-to-face but was at that time fully online. Online classrooms aided students and teachers during the pandemic. Students and teachers could only meet online either synchronously or asynchronously. In this sense, students could practice writing online (Hamid et al., 2022). Due to the pandemic, teaching students to write can be done in different modes as teachers have plenty of options and are accustomed

to online learning. Online learning can now easily be carried out, which is more flexible than it had been before the pandemic. Thus, the Internet media becomes a communicative tool to motivate students and allow them to write at their own pace using good grammar (Sariani et al., 2021).

The fact that issues in students' writing skills are still prevailing makes writing become the most challenging skill among the four skills of English language learning (Yusuf et al., 2019). Some students have difficulties in writing, especially in organizing their ideas into the written language, maintaining the coherence of the text, grammar and mechanics (Hidayah, 2020; Emilia, 2005 cited in Mustika et al., 2020).

Teachers' role in overcoming students' writing problems is significant because they need to identify the appropriate techniques, methods, or learning media to help them develop their writing skills. Besides, students have issues with autonomy and the level of motivation as they tend to have a delay in finishing the assignments given on time via distance education (Sudusinghe & Kumara, 2019). Teachers should be creative and innovative in teaching writing. Using suitable learning media for teaching writing is a solution to developing students' writing skills and overcoming students' problems in writing (Alsmari, 2019). Having a number of challenges, learning to write online is required to be portrayed in order to see how it is conducted and to obtain how it should be done.

Perveen (2016) classifies online classrooms as synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid. Synchronous classes are done when teachers and students meet online and can interact simultaneously as it is happening such as in live discussion, chats, or even direct talks. In the meantime, asynchronous classes offer students an opportunity to learn in their own pace as interaction and responses may be delayed and discussion or tasks can be done in their preferred time. Moreover, hybrid classes also called blended learning combine both synchronous and asynchronous ways of learning where simultaneous and non-simultaneous tasks are provided. Sakina et al. (2020) found that students perceived blended learning positively and determined that it is one of the effective ways of teaching.

Online writing classes have been studied before. Dost et al. (2020) found that pupils preferred online classrooms. Another study examined students' views of online English classes during the COVID-19 pandemic (Anggraini, 2021). Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2020) also note that teacher-student communication and social contact are weak. During the pandemic, teaching and learning online is fun. However, all lecturers assigned tasks, which was killing them (Khusniyah & Hakim, 2019). Most earlier studies focused on student perceptions of online writing classes. As teachers have an important role in the learning and teaching process in the classroom, the way the teacher teaches in online classrooms in writing classes should be made known. It is important to find so teachers can evaluate themselves to obtain the desired learning objectives. In addition, many students also get difficulty during distance learning (Nugraha, 2021). However, the studies that highlight how online writing is conducted are limited in number. Hence, to fill the gap this study is intended to investigate the teaching of EFL writing skills at secondary schools.

Although many schools have returned to face-to-face meetings, online learning can be advantageous. They demonstrate diverse online learning methods and offer best practices for using learning material in specific circumstances. Some instructional technologies demand quick, reliable internet access, which can hinder student

learning. Face-to-face teaching is faster than email. Knowing bandwidth and immediacy can help choose synchronous, asynchronous, or both. Teachers must choose technology tools carefully since they affect student involvement and learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Types of Online Classrooms

Online classes have categories. Perveen (2016) classifies online classrooms as synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid. While synchronous classes are done simultaneously, asynchronous settings offer students audio or video lectures, handouts, publications, and PowerPoint presentations. Due to its flexibility, asynchronous online teaching has been the most popular, according to Hrastinski (2008). The Learning Management System or other methods make this content available for twenty four hours a week.

Asynchronous e-learning requires careful planning to keep students engaged and interested to foster motivation, confidence, engagement, problem-solving, analytical, and higher-order thinking skills. It also reminds students that they must be active and interactive to follow online classroom activities. Students learn at their own pace and at a convenient time. According to Mehlenbacher et al. (2000), asynchronous e-learning allows the student to participate based on time and schedule, without live interaction with the instructor. In other words, the teacher provides learning material to students with limited time. Asynchronous learning is an online lesson where a teacher is not present from time to time and will be available for some time when needed. In this sense, students learn at their own pace and at a convenient time.

Synchronous learning uses computers and the internet. Synchronous mode fosters community through collaborative learning (Perveen, 2016). Synchronous virtual classrooms allow instructors and students to collaborate in real-time. Webcams and class discussion features a regular classroom, but all participants view it remotely over the Internet. Many use a Learning Management System (LMS) to support the learning and to archive all the materials. The archival e-library allows students to repeat lectures as many times as needed to learn. Thus, a learning approach that incorporates direct student contact and engagement is ideal for online classrooms. Furthermore, synchronous learning allows students to interact in a virtual environment, which reduces isolation. Direct engagement with teachers and students in a real-time synchronous classroom is similar to that of a typical face-to-face classroom, but the distance is no longer a barrier, and Internet connectivity saves time. Synchronous education requires students to be available and a high-bandwidth Internet is a must-have.

Four Modes of Online Classrooms

Online writing instruction has changed communication by using technology (Church & De Oliveira, 2013). Stanford (2020) divides bandwidth (vertical) and immediacy (horizontal) into four zones. The green and yellow zones constitute asynchronous learning, whereas the red and blue ones are synchronous. Asynchronous education gives students time to ponder on course material and post their thoughts on a discussion board. In the meantime, synchronous teaching can help students prepare for group collaboration by providing quick feedback and peer engagement (Hrastinski, 2008). Online platforms provide pupils with more learning tools than traditional instructional materials (Bradford, 2011). According to Bellou et al. (2018), learning outcomes, materials, methods, and technologies affect student perception and attitudes.

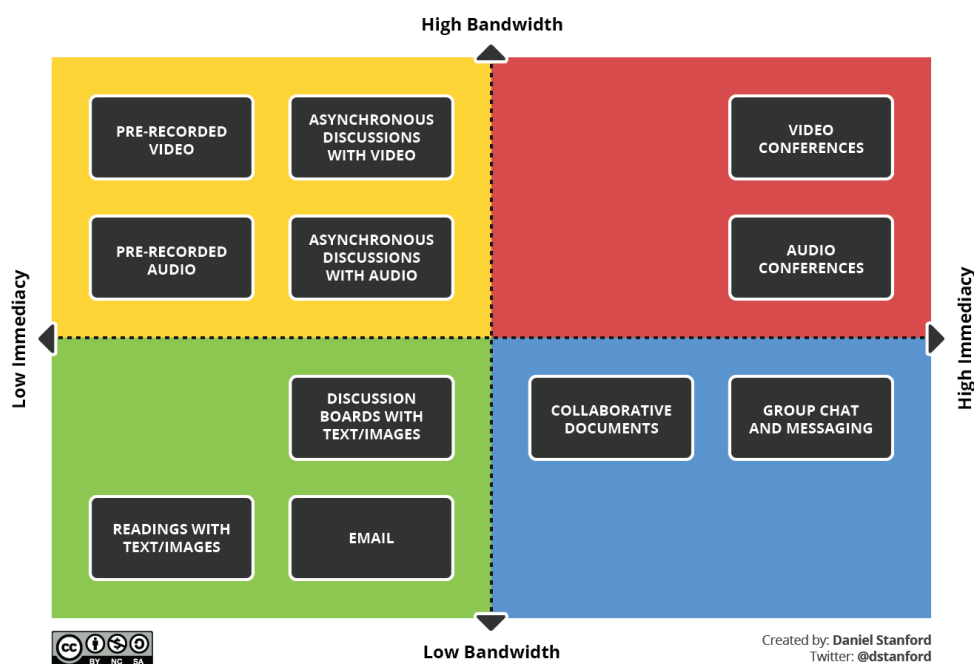


Figure 1. Four modes of online classrooms (Stanford, 2020)

As shown in the figure, the green zone may seem boring but provides a solid foundation and is easy to include in teaching. This can include LMS such as Moodle, Schoology, Canvas, Edmodo, Google Classroom, etc. Google Classroom is mostly used and easily accessible by teachers as it is integrated with Google Mail (Gmail) as the most used mail service. Google Classroom lets students access class material (Iftakhar, 2016). Google Classroom saves you time. Teachers can deliver class directions while sharing paperless assignments, comments, and scoring.

The blue zone entails group discussions and collaborative documents in simultaneous way. Concerning this, instant messaging platforms can be used, such as Telegram, Line, and WhatsApp. WhatsApp can be used by students to learn EFL via group discussions and this new social networking app runs on all current devices and operating systems on mobile and desktop platforms (Bouhnik et al., 2014). This instant message lets users talk and transmit multimedia communications like files, photos, videos, and audio (Church & De Oliveira, 2013).

The yellow zone requires careful preparation and organization to work. It can include the materials such as pre-recorded videos, weekly podcasts, or asynchronous discussion boards with recorded content. To support in implementing this mode, YouTube and Edpuzzle can be the beneficial platforms. YouTube and other social media can enhance classroom learning (Kamhar & Lestari, 2019). Besides, YouTube can be an excellent instructional source, a teaching approach to collect references, and a motivating tool to engage students and encourage modern learning styles.

The red zone mimics natural dialogues and face-to-face teaching but to do this is expensive and not accessible to everyone. Online video conferencing platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Team, Webex, etc. are within this zone range. As an example, Zoom Cloud Meeting is the most popular virtual meeting platform worldwide (Spathis & Dey, 2020). Zoom Cloud Meeting allows remote contact with multiple individuals with the features such as recording, survey, chatting, annotation, etc.

METHOD

This study applied a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative design is implemented to explore the phenomena using words, stories, and pictures. The participants were only 35 students and one English teacher. They were chosen because of their availability. Out of 35 students, 10 students were interviewed since the 10 students played an active role and followed online classrooms in class very well. The students were selected purposively so as to provide much needed data. It is to provide relevant information about teaching writing skills in EFL online classrooms at secondary schools. By focusing on the 10 students, gaining in-depth understanding of the topic under investigation could be more feasible.

This study collects the data by using students' reflective journals and -semi-structured interviews. Reflective journal writing required the students to map the students' progress and changes in their thought about a topic or about the learning journey in which the students were engaged. It allowed the students to think critically through different cognitive processes such as prediction, reflection, brainstorming, and questioning. The reflective journal writing encouraged students to express their ideas, thinking, and curiosity about the world around them. This data collection technique was done once the students follow 4 online meetings by the teacher. In this regard, the researchers used students' reflective journals to investigate the students' experiences with the use of online classroom applications during the COVID 19 pandemic. The second instrument was an interview. In this research, the researchers used semi-structured interviews. The researchers collect the data using interviews whose contents were an adaptation from (Yuiastini, 2021).

Analysis of the data includes creating the narratives of the participants, transcribing, and coding. In creating the narratives of the participants, written transcripts (students' reflective journals) were used to identify discrete experience segments of text where the participants revealed a single experience. The construction of the narrative provided a sequence of experiences that reflected the participants' perceptions and experiences and the topic that emerged from them. In transcribing, after the interview data I got then I copied the data and made a transcript, and reviewed them for feedback on emerging topics. In coding, each participant's transcript was coded and the individual narratives were built using emerging topics.

This study analyzed the data by using an interactive model of analysis. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there were four concurrent verification flows of activity in the model: data collection, data reduction, data display, and data conclusion drawing and verification. By collecting the data, the researchers read and interpreted the reflective journal of students. Then, the researcher wrote the transcription of the interview. According to Sugiyono (2014) data reduction means summarizing and focusing on important things. After getting the data, the researcher then transcribed it. The data that had no relation to the focus of the research was discarded. Displaying data was used to understand what happened and to plan the next work. Those data were selected and frequently cross-checked with the sources of data to find out the pattern and to arrange grounded theory. The last step was conclusion drawing and verification. Conclusions were also verified as the analyst proceeded. The conclusion was analyzed continuously and verified the validity to get the perfect conclusion about the teaching of writing skills in EFL online classrooms at secondary schools.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students Learning English in Online Classrooms

The researchers got the data about the teaching of writing skills in EFL online classrooms at secondary schools by analyzing each point in the instruments. The data highlight the four learning modes proposed by Standford (2020) as they were found in the students' journal and the interview with the teacher. The result was presented in the following table:

Table 1. General data from the findings

Source	Subject	Mode 1	Mode 2		Mode 3	Mode 4
		Google Classroom	Telegram	WhatsApp	YouTube	Zoom
Students Reflective Journal	S1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	S10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher's Interview	T1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

From the table above, there are almost two modes of online classrooms that were not found in all the elements. The cross (✖) symbol showed that the data obtained from students and teachers did not fulfill the modes of online classrooms. Meanwhile, the checklist (✓) symbol showed that the students and teacher had completed the elements properly. Google Classroom, Telegram, and WhatsApp applications were in the 1 and 2 zones. So, it can be concluded that the teaching and learning activity was compatible with modes of online classrooms in modes 1 and 2 which were low bandwidth-low immediacy and low bandwidth-high immediacy.

Interviewer: What applications did you use during the online learning?

The teacher: "Telegram, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp".

Interviewer: Did you use a video conferencing application during the class?

The teacher: "I never use video conferencing because it was expensive".

Based on the data from the interview, the teacher uses online classroom platforms for teaching and learning this is following the modes of learning 1 and 2, and never did the teacher use video conferencing platforms in her class. This is also found as a student

recounted their experience learning to write in online class.

“September 6, 2021 was the first writing class meeting. The material was about application letter. The material was posted on Google Classroom. The teacher asked the students to read and understand the material first. We can asked a question in Telegram Group if we find difficulties understanding the material.” (J9)

As shown above, it can be seen that the platforms used by the teachers include the materials accessible by low bandwidth where the students need to read the materials. The use of Google Classroom facilitates communication between teachers and their students both in and out of class. This is a platform created with the sole aim of fostering an engaging and dynamic classroom setting. Irawati (2020) claims that any institution, charity, or individual with a Google Account may make use of Google Classroom because it is a free online resource. Teachers may use this online platform to develop and distribute course materials (including images, videos, and links), as well as to communicate with and grade their students, as well as to handle classroom administration. Teachers may use Google Classroom to host online classrooms, communicate with students, share resources (such as. exposure files and. learning videos), assign work, and set up collection schedules, among other things. When it comes to education, technology represents a shift from the old ways to the new.

In addition, the use of Telegram as a media to bridge communication between the teachers and the students also does not require high bandwidth. In this regard, Wahyuni (2018) claims that Telegram Messenger is a helpful program that may aid students in their academic pursuits. Any Internet-enabled mobile device, including those with no cost-to-user apps, might use this application. Teachers were able to get in touch with their students more rapidly by utilizing Telegram Messenger, which is a unified cloud platform for sending instant messages, creating student group chats, and sharing large media like films. Anyone may use it without having to endure any sort of adware or pop-ups. Even in the free period, teachers are more approachable to pupils. Based on his assumptions, the researcher considers Telegram Messenger to be a form of educational media utilized in the classroom, particularly in the context of teaching and learning English.

The WhatsApp (WA) mobile software allows users to quickly communicate with one another via text messaging. There is no cost associated with either transmitting or receiving data from users. In addition, everyone from kids to grandparents may use this program with no trouble at all (Muthaiyan & Kanchana, 2016). WhatsApp is a messaging service that provides a number of options and resources to help in educational endeavors. According to research conducted by Bouhnik et al. (2014), users may communicate with one another using text, images, voice, video, files, and URLs. WA's communicative role is examined, and its benefits are used to teach and learn English such as sending and receiving messages, sharing images, documents, written content, and so on.

In an online classroom, the Internet serves as the major medium of instruction and student-teacher interaction (Bakia et al., 2012). Referring to that theory, the researchers analyzed students' reflective journals chosen based on their best results. Based on the findings above, in analyzing students' learning English in online classrooms the researchers need to look at carefully what the students write.

The result of the data from students' reflective journals show that students were facilitated and helped by the presence of online classrooms. In the data student's reflective journals, a student explain the way a learning platform encouraged them to learn despite

the fact that the student also found it difficult to some extent.

“Learning application letter through Google Classroom makes me easier to write an application letter and caption text directly on it because I know how to write well if I had a mistake in English writing”. (J1)

“In my opinion, the material is more understandable if the teacher tells it directly”. (J2)

The excerpt denote how the LMS helps students to write in a way that assists them in selfcorrection. This is in line with Irawati (2020) Google Classroom makes students learning easier and useful for their online classroom in writing class. Notwithstanding its benefit, it was considered difficult since they seemed to learn on their own when compared to direct explanations from the teacher. This is in line with Sulasmiati (2021) English online classroom makes it difficult for students to handle learning materials because the material is not explained directly by the teacher. Next is the data from student reflective journal three.

“We already had experience on how to make a good and correct application letter to apply for job applications because we have many sources to get the example from it”. (J3)

The data show how the Internet is the resource that the student got the material from. This is in line with Rakhmanina et al. (2020) the Internet is considered to be the source of the necessary materials to achieve teaching and learning objectives.

In addition, the data obtained from the interview reveals that teachers did not feel that online classes were successful. It's important for educators to remember that just because they're dealing with challenges in the online classroom doesn't mean they can't model positive behavior for their pupils. Based on the information gathered during the interview, it was determined that the educator merely makes use of Telegram, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp in their virtual classrooms. This is consistent with Stern's (2018) assertion that online classrooms are the most common and widely used form of distance education today. Telegram is a way for teachers and students to communicate with professionals all around the world who have an interest in integrating social media into the classroom (Xodabande, 2017). Online classrooms may be created with the help of Google's software, Google Classroom (Sutrisna, 2018). According to Gon and Rawekar (2017), undergraduates frequently use the free messaging software WhatsApp to send other basic messages, photos, and videos. WhatsApp may be accessed through a number of different methods.

The result denotes that the educator did not make advantage of video conferencing throughout the era of online classrooms because of the high cost involved. That fits with what was discussed, too. According to Octaviani (2021), instructors have the misconception that Zoom is too costly due to the fact that users are only given 40 minutes of free time before they are required to pay. This data suggests that educational institutions prefer to use online classroom systems that are both inexpensive and convenient for both teachers and students.

Another result reveals that the issue the instructor faces is a lack of student motivation. When teachers responded to students' inquiries and offered to advise via the messaging app Telegram, it served as a sort of motivation for the students to continue their pursuit of English language acquisition. As Wahyuni (2018) notes, this is so because Telegram Messenger is a unified cloud-based platform that allows for rapid

communication between teachers and pupils. Once the information has been distributed via Telegram Messenger, students may engage in discourse about it. Students can talk to their teachers or peers if they have concerns or queries.

The next finding revealed that some students followed their teachers' guidelines while completing their tasks. To get a good grade, students need to complete assignments according to their teachers' directions, since failing to do so will result in a lower grade. According to Sowell (2017) giving instructions has a direct impact on student learning; if they are unclear, the class or activity will end in chaos and failure.

It is also highlighted that the impact of online writing instruction was greater in face-to-face settings where teachers could provide more specific feedback to their pupils. As far as this educator was concerned, virtual education simply doesn't compare. In contrast to the findings of studies, the usage of Google Classrooms facilitates teacher education and the dissemination of accurate information to students (Hakim, 2016). Students' productivity and engagement have been found to rise with the introduction of online classroom apps like Google Classroom (Nurhayati et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that the teaching and learning activity was compatible with modes of online classrooms in Modes 1 and 2 which were low bandwidth-low immediacy and low bandwidth-high immediacy. From the students' reflective journals, students were more facilitated in writing using online classrooms because it is easier for them to check their writing and they also get more sources, materials, and examples of application letters and caption texts that help them to deepen the material presented. The students like participating in online classrooms because they find it helpful to use online resources like YouTube as a source for learning English while studying independently at home. The students may study anywhere and at any time when using mobile learning resources. Some students have a problem with the fact that in English online courses, the students learn to grasp the contents on their own at home using the materials that the teacher settles in Google Classroom, Telegram, or Group WhatsApp classes without any direct explanation from the teacher. This suggest the possibility of using online digital media by teachers by considering not only the students' interests but also the availability of technical supports and facilities.

To facilitate student-teacher communication and inquiries concerning English language instruction, educators are increasingly turning to the messaging app Telegram. However, the responsibility for learning rests with the pupils. An optimistic view of the subject matter and the learning process increases the likelihood that the learner will grasp the concepts presented. When students go into online English instruction with preconceived notions that prevent them from succeeding, they are less likely to acquire and retain the content. Therefore, it is also important that teachers provide students with praises, encouragement, and the I-can-do-it feeling during the learning.

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