

**JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN
ENGAGING STUDENTS IN VIRTUAL LEARNING DURING
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

A FINAL PROJECT

**Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the *Sarjana*
Pendidikan Degree in English Education**



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APPROVAL

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The writer hereby certifies that the final project created does not contain any of the works from others except those listed in the quotations and references as a research article should. If the statement is not valid in the future, the writer agrees to accept an academic consequence in the form of revocation of the paper and the degree acquired from that paper.

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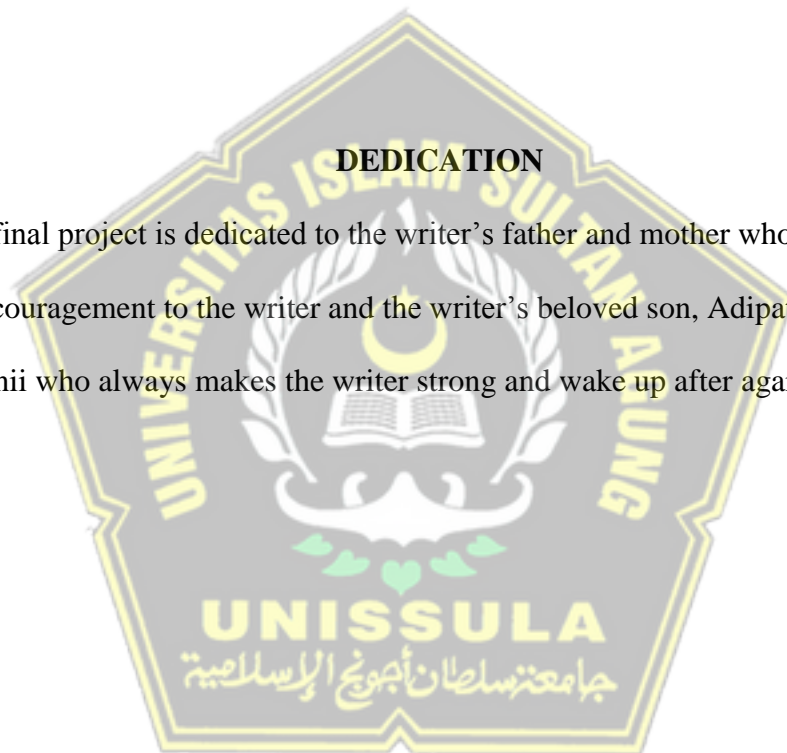
MOTTO

" For indeed after the difficulty there is ease"

Q.S Al-Insyirah: 5

DEDICATION

This final project is dedicated to the writer's father and mother who always give encouragement to the writer and the writer's beloved son, Adipati Mafaqih Assanii who always makes the writer strong and wake up after against all odds.



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ABSTRACT

Majid, A. M. 2022. Junior High School EFL Teachers' Challenges in Engaging Students in Virtual Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic. *Final Project*. English Education Department. Faculty of Languages and Communication Sciences. Sultan Agung Islamic University. Advisor: Hartono, S.S., M.Pd.

In this era of globalization, information technology has become an important role in human life, including education. Coupled with the pandemic where everyone is asked to carry out activities at home only through a virtual application that is never separated from information technology. This was the first experience experienced by all teachers, especially EFL teachers. The study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by English teachers in junior high schools in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and how they coped with those challenges. This study was conducted using a qualitative study that used interviews and observations as the instruments. The subjects of this study were two EFL teachers at Al-Bisyri Islamic Junior High School. This study was divided into two aspects, namely the challenges faced by English teachers in involving students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, and their strategies in facing those challenges. In the first aspect, there were seven challenges faced by EFL teachers in engaging students during virtual learning, namely the availability of time in teaching and learning process, students' lack of vocabulary, teachers' lack of IT mastery, monitoring students, teachers' time discipline, students' background problem, and students' engagement. In the second aspect, EFL teachers had seven strategies for dealing with problems that arose. The strategies were the selection of learning elements, enriching students' vocabulary, improving IT mastery, making sure the schedule and making note-taking, improving the methods of monitoring students, dealing with the students' problems, and improving the students' engagement.

Keywords: Virtual learning, Challenges in engaging students, Strategies in engaging students.

INTISARI

Majid, A. M. 2022. Junior High School EFL Teachers' Challenges in Engaging Students in Virtual Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic. *Skripsi*. Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Ilmu Komunikasi. Universitas Islam Sultan Agung. Pembimbing : Hartono, S.S., M.Pd.

Di era globalisasi ini menjadikan informasi teknologi sebagai peran penting dalam kehidupan manusia, termasuk pendidikan. Ditambah lagi dengan pandemi dimana semua orang diminta untuk melakukan kegiatan di rumah melalui aplikasi virtual yang tidak pernah lepas dari informasi teknologi. Hal ini merupakan pengalaman pertama yang dialami oleh semua guru, khususnya guru bahasa Inggris. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki tantangan-tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa Inggris di sekolah menengah pertama dalam melibatkan siswa dalam pembelajaran virtual selama pandemi Covid-19 dan bagaimana cara mereka dalam menghadapi tantangan tersebut. Studi ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan interview dan observasi sebagai instrumen. Subjek studi ini adalah dua guru bahasa Inggris di SMP Islam Al-Bisyri. Studi ini dibagi menjadi dua aspek, yakni tantangan-tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa Inggris dalam melibatkan siswa dalam pembelajaran virtual selama pandemi Covid-19, dan strategi mereka dalam menghadapi tantangan tersebut. Dalam aspek pertama, ada tujuh tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa Inggris dalam melibatkan siswa selama pembelajaran virtual, ketersediaan waktu dalam proses belajar mengajar, rendahnya kosakata siswa, rendahnya penguasaan IT, pengawasan siswa, disiplin waktu guru, masalah pada latar belakang siswa, dan keterlibatan siswa. Dalam aspek kedua, guru bahasa Inggris memiliki tujuh strategi dalam menangani permasalahan yang timbul, pemilihan elemen pembelajaran, memperkaya kosakata siswa, meningkatkan penguasaan IT, meningkatkan metode yang digunakan dalam pengawasan siswa, memastikan jadwal dan membuat catatan, menangani masalah siswa, dan meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa.

Kata kunci: Pembelajaran virtual, Tantangan dalam melibatkan siswa, Strategi dalam melibatkan siswa

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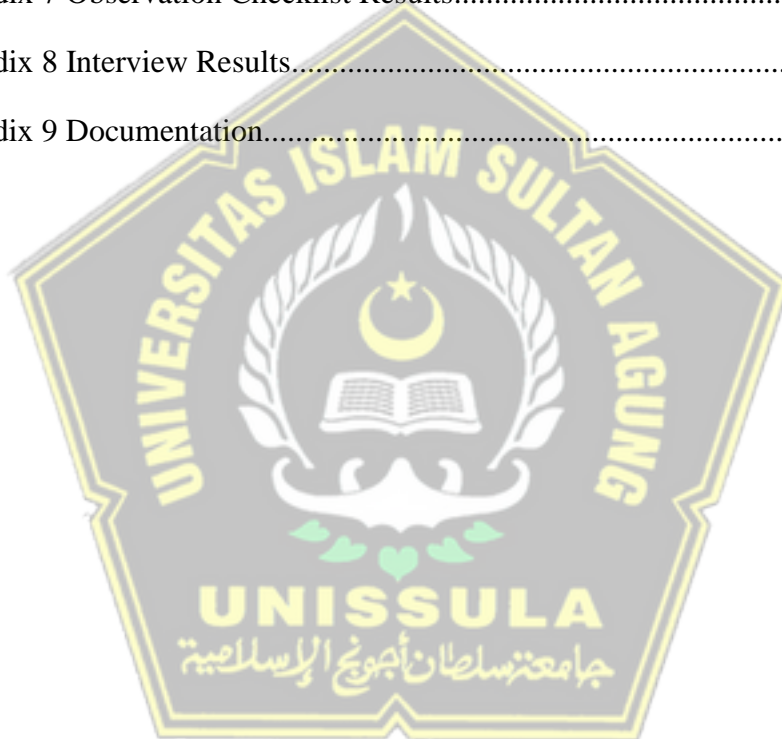
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, there are several sub-chapters namely Background of the Study, Reasons for Choosing the Topic, Statements of the Problem, Objectives of the Study, Limitation of the Study, Significance of the Study, Definitions of Key Terms, and Organization of the Study

1.1 Background of the Study

Information technology is very influential in education in Indonesia. Coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic that requires educational institutions to be encouraged to carry out daily activities from home. Batubara (2021) claimed that to avoid an increasing number of patients caused by Covid-19, the Minister of Education and Culture has mandated that the teaching and learning which are usually carried out in schools be replaced with online learning. During the pandemic, most schools in Indonesia were conducting distance learning, or what was commonly referred to as virtual learning using one of the media in the form of video conferencing. Virtual learning is a method of learning from a distance using the internet or a mobile application as the medium for instruction and student activities. The term encompasses the full scope of learning, including the delivery of learning materials, the assignment of assignments, and the administration of tests via the internet or cyberspace-based learning platforms (Bhuana & Apriliyanti, 2021). Virtual learning was a substitute for face-to-face learning so that learning during the Covid-19 pandemic could still be carried out.

Because virtual learning was a new habit, it could be that teachers had difficulties in conducting virtual learning.

Teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia is very challenging. English teachers must have the ability to master and perform the language aspects, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and so on. Why must this be owned by English teachers in Indonesia? There are two reasons, first, because teachers are role models in class, and second because English is a foreign language that is rarely used by Indonesian students in their daily lives. Because English is not their mother tongue, many students experienced difficulties in communicating their thoughts due to a lack of vocabulary, and poor pronunciation (Susiyanti, 2019).

Another challenge that must be faced by English teachers in Indonesia is how to engage students in the classroom. Students' engagement is one of the elements of an effective classroom. According to Gray & DiLoreto (2016), student engagement has been characterized as the willingness, need, desire, and compulsion of students to participate in and succeed in the learning process. Student engagement has also been defined as students' degree of interest, how they interact with others in the course, and their desire to learn about the topics. Increasing students' engagement in schools is an effort that can be made by schools to reduce the problems that occur in students.

Students' engagement is a major factor in improving student achievement, and also increasing students' motivation to keep learning. Students' engagement includes cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects of students. Cognitive aspects are aspects that are directly related to student knowledge. In other words, the

cognitive aspect is the aspect that measures students' understanding of the lesson, persistence in learning, and also like challenges. Behavioral aspects are aspects that measure how students' attitudes in the classroom, student discipline, and students' social attitudes toward friends. The affective aspect or the feeling aspect is an aspect that measures students' interest in the learning process, perceptions of the learning process, and love for lessons and school. Given online learning, increasing student engagement with virtual learning environments is important to support the plan for higher education, enhance the flexibility with which students may learn, and promote inclusivity (Tobin, 2016). From this explanation, it can be concluded that a study on EFL teachers' challenges in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 outbreak is interesting to do.

1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The study is conducted because of the following reasons:

1. As experienced in other countries, Indonesia was experiencing a health emergency with the emergence of the coronavirus which is a type of pandemic/global disease outbreak that was very rapidly spreading among humans. The government determined that Indonesia was in a condition of disaster emergency. Therefore, the government applied social distancing and carried out activities at home only.
2. Based on the Minister of Education and Culture Circular Letter Number 3 of 2020 concerning Prevention of Covid-19 in the Education Unit, and Number 36962/MPK.A/HK/2020 school teaching during the pandemic was done virtually.

3. English is an international language that is used in all aspects. English is also used in Indonesia as a foreign language and has also been used as a subject in junior high schools. In the context of EFL, several challenges must be faced by the teacher. Coupled with pandemic conditions that are getting worse, teachers must monitor students when learning takes place during virtual learning.
4. Student engagement is defined as the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show. One of the reasons why students' engagement in schools should be a concern is because involvement is an important factor in the success of students' learning and academic processes at school. The success of student learning at school does not only focus on aspects of learning achievement but also aspects of character building and their happiness when they are in school be at school

1.3 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background and reasons for choosing the topic presented above, the problems of the study are formulated as :

1. What did the challenges of Junior High School EFL teachers in Semarang face in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. How did the teachers deal with the challenges?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows :

1. To investigate the challenges of Junior High School EFL teachers in Semarang in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. To investigate how the Junior High School EFL teachers coped with the challenges.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study is that it is limited only to the challenges of Junior High School EFL teachers in Semarang in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and the strategies to cope with the challenges.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study has some significance, namely pedagogical and practical significance.

a. Pedagogical Significance

1. For the Junior High School EFL teachers, this study was expected to motivate the teachers to be more creative in teaching English, for example by applying various methods so the students will be engaged in learning.

2. For EFL students, this study was expected to build students' motivation in learning English through the innovation of teachers' methods in teaching English.

b. Practical Significance

1. For the Junior High School EFL teachers, this study was expected to assist teachers in determining learning strategies and choosing learning media that suit the needs of students in teaching English.

2. For Junior High School students, it was expected that they can find the English lesson in the class more engaging.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The key terms which are the writer used in this study as follows :

a. Covid-19 pandemic

According to WHO (2021), coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The majority of those infected with the virus will have mild to moderate respiratory symptoms and will recover without the need for medical attention. On the other hand, some of them will become critically unwell and require medical assistance. Serious sickness is more likely to strike the elderly and those with underlying medical disorders such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer. Covid-19 can make anyone sick and cause them to get very ill or die at any age.

b. Students' engagement

According to Tobin (2016), student engagement is the interaction between the time, effort, and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions to improve student learning outcomes and development, as well as the institution's performance and reputation. Because online learners appear to have fewer opportunities to connect with the institution, engaging students in online learning is crucial. As a result, it is critical to provide many ways for student interaction in the online world (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

c. Virtual learning environment

Virtual learning is a type of learning environment in which the teacher and the student are separated by time, space, or both. IT applications, multimedia resources, the internet, video conferencing, and other methods are used to deliver course content (Dung, 2020).

d. English as a foreign language

According to Harmer (2004), learning English as a foreign language is commonly believed to be practicing general English at schools and institutions in their home region or as transitory guests in a target-language country. Their requirements are frequently difficult to pinpoint. Broughton (1980) claimed that English as a foreign language is a language which is frequently taught in schools but plays little role in local or personal activities.

e. Teaching challenges

Teaching challenges are several challenges that must be overcome and resolved by teachers to create good and effective learning and achieve

learning objectives. According to Songbatumis (2017), several challenges must be faced by EFL teachers, such as timeless training, a big number of students, limited resource ability, lack of English components (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation), and so on.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The following is the composition of the final project proposal, as follows:

Chapter I is the Introduction which contains the Background of the Study, Reason for Choosing the Topic, Statement of the Problem, Objective of the Study, Limitation of Study, Significant of Study, Definition of Key terms, and Organization of the Study.

Chapter II is the Review of Related Literature which contains the Definition of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Challenges in teaching English, English as Foreign Language, Virtual Learning Environment, and Students' Engagement.

Chapter III is the Research method which contains the Design of the Study, the Subject of the Study, the Data of the Study, the Instrument of the Study, the Technique for Collecting Data, the Data Collecting Procedure, and Data Analysis.

Chapter IV is the Analysis of Results and Discussion which contains the Instruments Validation and Dependability, the Data Analysis, and Discussion.

Chapter V is the Conclusion and Suggestion which contains the Conclusion, and the Suggestion.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents some related theories to support this study. The theories would be used to solve the problems for the underlying requirement. This chapter presents topics of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Challenges in teaching English, English as a Foreign Language, Virtual Learning Environment, and Students' Engagement. It also presents the review of previous studies.

2.1 Covid-19 Pandemic

This subchapter presents the Definition of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education, and the Teaching and Learning Process during Covid-19 Pandemic.

2.1.1 Definition of Covid-19 Pandemic

Coronaviruses are a kind of virus. There are several varieties, some of which are pathogenic. Covid-19 is a pandemic respiratory infectious disease caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which was detected in 2019 (Sauer, 2021). Every country in the world has been hit by the coronavirus, including Indonesia. This pandemic had an impact on many different aspects of a country's travel industry. The economic, social, legal, and educational worlds are all affected by this epidemic. The Covid-19 pandemic is expected to have a huge impact. One of the important sector that has drawn the attention of countries around the world is the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic (Hatip, 2020).

2.1.2 The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Education

During the Covid-19 plague, the world of school was flipped upside down, with a wave of digital classrooms sweeping the worldwide. In light of the Covid-19 virus's rising prevalence, it was estimated in early April that 91.3 percent of students in numerous nations, or around 1.5 billion students, were unlikely to enroll in educational activities. (Batubara, 2021).

According to Hatip (2020), the main concern in the Covid-19 pandemic transmission is learning routines that take place every day at school for a long time and become a gathering place for the masses. During the pandemic, various countries, including Indonesia, made significant decisions about education. As a result, learning is done from home. Learning at home has the effect of forcing students to make rapid learning transformations to close gaps in their knowledge. Even at home, learning must continue during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a policy on education policy implementation during the emergency period of Covid-19 deployment. Some key points can be learned without the use of an online system. Teachers and students will be able to quickly adapt to current conditions thanks to this policy.

2.1.3 Teaching and Learning Process during Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact and change on the world of education, including in Indonesia. The virus outbreak is like a large bomb that has exploded, causing globalization to be disrupted. To stop the virus from spreading, the education system underwent a drastic change. Starting in

preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, and universities. All components of education in the world must fully utilize technology and the internet as a means and infrastructure in implementing online learning (Batubara, 2021).

2.2 Virtual Learning

This subchapter presents the Definition of Virtual Learning, and the Advantages and Disadvantages of Virtual Learning.

2.2.1 Definition of Virtual Learning

According to Dhawan (2020), education processes in synchronous or asynchronous contexts employing multiple devices (e.g., mobile phones, computers, etc.) with network connection are referred to as virtual learning. In these situations, students may learn and engage with teachers and other students from anywhere (independent). In a synchronous learning environment, students attend live lectures, educators and learners communicate in real time, and fast feedback is possible, whereas asynchronous learning environments are poorly organised. A virtual classroom is one in which the teacher and student are separated by time, place, or both. Course information is delivered through IT programs, multimedia resources, the internet, video conferencing, and other techniques (Dung, 2020).

2.2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Virtual Learning

Some of the advantages of virtual learning are it is possible to study from anywhere and at any time, it is possible to save a significant amount of money, and there will be no commuting on crowded buses or trains, as well as saving time

(Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020). According to Dung (2020), virtual learning enables schools to connect out with students who desire to learn from a distance while somehow improving staff educational experiences. Additionally, according to continually changing IT technology, teachers are always obliged to master new tools and apps to expand both the content and instructional activities of their courses. Students choose virtual learning because of its freedom, expenditure, and convenience of access.

The most significant disadvantage of virtual learning is that there is no opportunity for social interaction. This is certainly relevant for college students or teenagers, who should make acquaintances and engage in social activities with individuals their similar age. Another drawback relates to the variety of virtual classrooms is limited, and certain classes need students to get involved in learning environment, practice, and skills enhancement. (Hiranrithikorn, 2019).

2.3 Students' Engagement

This subchapter contains the Definition of Students' Engagement, the Importance of Students' Engagement, and the Strategies for Engaging Students in Virtual Learning.

2.3.1 Definition of Students' Engagement

Student engagement is a multifaceted concept that is affected by a variety of psychological, behavioral, and sociocultural factors. Students' internal drivers, behavior, cognition (e.g., self-regulation, deep learning strategies), and the affective (emotional) dimension are all highlighted in the psychological view of

student engagement (Nicholson, 2018). According to Tobin (2016), Student engagement is the relationship between time, effort, and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions to promote student achievement and progression, as well as the productivity and reputation of the school. Student engagement has been linked to improved general education, practical competence, and social growth, among other things.

English is introduced and utilized as a foreign language in Indonesia. When it comes to countries where English has little circulation, teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging endeavor. Since the dawn of independence, the government has identified English as one of the most essential international communication languages. As a result, the government has proposed making English a mandatory subject in secondary schools. According to a directive published by the Minister of Education and Culture, the purpose of teaching English in schools is for students to be fluent in English throughout the globalization period. (Songbatumis, 2017).

2.3.2 The Importance of Students' Engagement

In online courses, students' engagement is critical to student learning and satisfaction. Students' engagement improves virtual learning performance by increasing students' satisfaction and students' motivation to learn, also reducing isolation. For decades, the definition of engagement has been debated in the literature on virtual learning. Students' engagement is described as their psychological investment and effort devoted toward learning, comprehending, or mastering the learning, capabilities, or talents that school was supposed to

encourage. Student engagement in web - based learning is crucial since students usually tend to have limited opportunities to interact with the school.. Guidelines for designing effective online courses have been developed, because of the need for engagement (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

According to Banna et al. (2015), several learning theorists have emphasized the importance of engaged learning for many years, emphasizing the idea that students learn most effectively when they work together and engage in discussion with their peers. Learner engagement has been linked to positive learning outcomes like critical thinking and better grades. Because student engagement is built through interaction, encouraging it in the classroom is critical to ensuring that students actively create their knowledge and achieve high levels of achievement.

2.3.3 Strategies for Engaging Students in Virtual Learning

According to Martin & Bolliger (2018), active learning opportunities, such as participating in collaborative group work, having students facilitate presentations and discussions, actively sharing resources, creating course assignments with hands-on components, and integrating case studies and reflections, are all part of engagement strategies. Students are more engaged when instruction increases student-faculty contact, provides opportunities for students to work cooperatively, encourages students to use active learning strategies, provides timely feedback on students' academic progress, requires students to spend quality time on academic tasks, establishes high standards for acceptable academic work, and addresses different learning styles.

2.4 Teaching Challenges

In this subchapter, the Challenges in Teaching English, and the EFL Teachers' Challenges in Virtual Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic are presented.

2.4.1 Challenges in Teaching English

Songbatumis (2017), states that while teaching English may appear to be similar with teaching any other subject, it presents its set of challenges. EFL teachers must deal with a variety of obstacles, including ongoing training, a large number of students, limited resource capacity, a shortage of English components (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation), and so on. These difficulties come in a variety of shapes and sizes that English teachers face.

Severe lack of training. As a result, teachers may find themselves teaching English without adequate English training in general or in teaching English to learners in particular, which is common in poor or rural areas.

Crowded class. Overcrowding in English classes is one of the most frequently mentioned issues faced by English teachers. There is insufficient space in the classroom for the teacher and students to move around, the walls between classrooms are thin, and noise will disrupt other classes.

Lack of vocabulary. Students' lack of vocabulary is caused by their belief that they are not required to comprehend English terms since they are unusual and non-existent in their real lives. As a consequence, they are discouraged to learn

them. As a result, currently studying English as a foreign language are limited by their comprehension of the target language's grammatical and vocabulary, and they must work to grasp the material.

There is a shortage of resources. English teachers have difficulty because of a shortage of resources. The number of learning materials necessary to acquaint students with English and give them with adequate exposure to the target language, on the other hand, is crucial. Furthermore, a lack of facilities and equipment will make it difficult for teachers to efficiently educate. As a result, teaching is vital and must be made available as soon as feasible.

2.4.2 EFL Teachers' Challenges in Virtual Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic

According to Atmojo & Nugroho (2020), many issues arise because of teaching EFL learning virtually. Students, teachers, and students' parents are all to blame for the issues. Some challenges of teaching English during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as some students' lack of access to a smartphone. It was brought on by their family's financial situation. The second issue concerns a shaky internet connection. In rural and mountainous areas, cellular signal and internet coverage remain a problem. Some students live in rural and mountainous areas. The third issue is that many students are digitally illiterate. They have trouble using the applications and platforms that are used for online learning. The students have never learned through virtual learning previously and interact with those applications and platforms. The fourth point is some students have a general lack of literacy. Even though the teacher's instructions are written clearly, students are

difficult to comprehend them. It's usually because they don't pay attention to the teacher's instructions and are too lazy to read them. If the words are too many for them, they will skip the instruction.

2.5 Review of Previous Studies

The previous study is very important as a basis for the preparation of this study. Its usefulness is to find out the results that have been carried out by previous researchers. However, several studies have been studied and the writer examined more deeply. There were some summaries of the previous studies :

1. The first study that the writer reviewed was the study of *EFL Teachers' Challenges in the Integration of Technology for Online Classrooms during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic in Iran*. This study was written by Khatoony & Nezhadmehr (2020). A total of 30 non-native Iranian teachers who were English language teachers at English language schools in the Iranian provinces of Tehran, Hamedan, and Rasht volunteered to participate in this study. Because this is a mixed-method study, the researchers used an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach. The researchers used a questionnaire survey and interviews to look into the challenges faced by EFL teachers in online classrooms during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study's findings were divided into two, quantitative and qualitative findings.

a. Quantitative Result

According to data from the TIQ questionnaire, teachers' accessibility to technology devices is acceptable for teaching online during the Covid-19

pandemic, but students' lack of accessibility reported by teachers can be conflicting for teachers.

b. Qualitative Result

According to participants' responses using the online platform (Whatsapp Application) interview, some teachers prefer to teach in online classrooms rather than in face-to-face classrooms during the Covid-19 pandemic. One of them stated that online classes have made learning more convenient for students.

From the results above, it was concluded that during the Covid-19 pandemic, Iranian EFL teachers preferred to conduct online classes using technology. Although it may be effective in this critical situation, the use of all unplanned technological can be an issue and problem for instructors, students, and administrators. All technology-based classrooms have issues, but teachers and students should be aware to improve their effectiveness of learning and teaching activity.

2. The second study that the writer reviewed was *Tantangan Pedagogi Pembelajaran Daring Guru Bahasa Inggris Selama Pandemi Covid-19* by Putri (2021). The study included three participants who represented the primary and secondary schools. The researcher used a qualitative research method. It was created to gather extensive data on the brand-new phenomena, such as the challenges that primary and secondary EFL teachers had when delivering E-learning during the Covid-19 outbreak, specifically in terms of pedagogical issues. The information was gathered

using a questionnaire that included closed-ended and open-ended questions. The results of the questionnaire revealed that getting and giving feedback, as well as teaching material with hard-basic competence, are among the general challenges faced by teachers. According to the findings, the writer thinks that transferring face-to-face educational and learning activities to a virtual format in a limited amount of time offers obstacles for many circles, including primary and secondary EFL teachers. There are two complicated aspects of teaching English that is being challenging for EFL teachers such as giving feedback and teaching material in basic competence that students have difficulty on it.

3. The third study that the writer reviewed was the study written by Escobar & Morrison (2020) which was entitled *Online Teaching Placement during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Chile: Challenges and Opportunities*. This interpretive case study included 27 Chilean EFL teacher candidates who were interested in learning more about the challenges and opportunities of virtual teaching. An interpretive paradigm and exploratory case study methodology have been used to define this research study. This study used a mixed-methods approach. As a result of this study, the lack of interaction with students was found to be the most negative and challenging aspect of the emergency online teaching placement, which could have an impact on their professional development. The lack of internet access and equipment among students was a common issue that teacher candidates had to deal with. From the result above, the writer concludes that even though

technology can help with curriculum delivery, it will never be able to replace the rich relational nature of face-to-face teaching or the kinds of human relationships that are so important in good teaching.

4. The fourth study that the writer reviewed was *Challenges and Solutions of Teaching English as a Foreign Language Online during a Global Pandemic like Covid-19: Saudi EFL Teachers' Perspectives*. This study was written by Rahman (2020). In July 2020, the present empirical study was conducted on teachers from three different Saudi Arabian universities (Qassim, KKU, and Najran). This study will have a total of 50 teachers (25 males and 25 females). With the help of a self-administered online questionnaire, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. This study aimed to assess a variety of issues related to teaching English online during pandemics such as Covid-19. The quantitative findings revealed that the majority of respondents (56%) believe regular face-to-face classes are superior to online instruction. They also believed that students were less motivated in an online class (68 percent). However, the qualitative data revealed that a few of the respondents were pleased because online classes save time and can be conducted anytime-anywhere, and it is critical to conduct online classes during the pandemic like Covid-19 for the safety and continuation of education. Based on the result, the writer concludes that although there are some discrepancies, the study has revealed some promising results. It cannot be denied that online teaching has helped to

repair some of the educational damage caused by Covid-19 during the quarantine.

From the preview of previous studies, the writer presents the differences and the similarity between the previous studies and this study itself. The differences between the previous studies with this study were in the method used and the challenges that arose. Overall the previous studies were had resulted in the challenges faced by the EFL teachers, one of the challenges was the availability of the network, for example, students' lack of learning resources used in virtual learning, and students did not have enough quota to join the virtual learning. And for the similarity was on the topic that presented some challenges faced by the EFL teachers in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study was worthwhile because it presents the challenges faced by the EFL teachers in virtual learning during the Covid-19 that focused on engaging students and how to cope with the challenges that arose. Considering that student engagement was one of the important elements that was used to make the class more effective. Not only that, virtual learning was the exact topic to investigate because nowadays education in the middle of the pandemic, most of the schools in the world, especially in Indonesia where the teaching and learning activities were done virtually.

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF STUDY

In this chapter, the Design of the Study, the Subject of the Study, the Data of the Study, the Instrument of the Study, the Technique for Collecting Data, the Data Collecting Procedure, the Data Analysis, and the Time Schedule are presented and elaborated.

3.1 Design of the Study

A study design is a process for obtaining reliable and efficient answers to research questions. It is the way to find the process of collecting data to respond to the research question. This study was conducted using a qualitative study. According to Gay, L. et al. (2012), qualitative study entails gathering, analyzing, and interpreting extensive narrative and visual (i.e., nonnumerical) data in gaining insights into a specific phenomenon of interest. A qualitative study aims to delve deeply into the study setting to learn more about how things are, why they are, the way they are, and how participants in the context perceive them.

The writer used a qualitative study because the objectives of the study were to investigate the challenges of Junior High School EFL teachers in Semarang in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and how they coped with those challenges. The writer wanted to know deeply about the challenges faced by the EFL teachers in teaching activities during the Covid-19 pandemic and how the teachers dealt with the challenges.

3.2 Subject of the Study

A subject of the study is an individual who participates in research. To help answer the research questions, the data is collected from the subject of the study. This study included two junior high school teachers as participants. The participants were chosen on purpose based on their ability to participate in this study and their prior experience with virtual learning. Therefore, the writer chose EFL teachers who teach English at junior high school in Semarang because the teachers had feasibility involvement in this study which focused on the teaching challenges faced by the EFL teachers in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Likewise, the writer chose EFL teachers who had experience in conducting virtual learning.

Participant 1 was an EFL teacher of VII and IX grades. She has taught English at Junior High School for 4 years. While Participant 2 was an EFL teacher of VIII grade. She was an English teacher for 3 years. Since the pandemic came, they taught English in virtual learning because of the Prevention of Covid-19 in the Education Unit of the Minister of Education and Culture.

3.3 Data of the Study

This subchapter presents the Types of Data used in this study.

3.3.1 Types of Data

The data in this study were gathered using a narrative account which consisted of interviews and observations. A narrative study is an investigation of how different humans experience the world around them, and it includes a

methodology that allows people to tell their "storied lives" stories. Typically, the researcher focuses on a single person and collects data by interviewing them and listening to their stories. The researcher and the participant then write a narrative about the individual's experiences and the meanings they assign to them (Gay, L. et al., 2012)

3.4 Instrument of the Study

Data collection tools refer to the devices/instruments used to collect data. The instruments of the study were a paper observation checklist and an interview which contained a combination of close-ended and open-ended questions.

3.4.1 Observation Checklist

The procedures or tasks required to show knowledge, abilities, or mastery of skill might be the subject of observation checklists. Each activity must be written in a form that allows it to be observed and measured (Musial, et al., 2009). It provides a method for collecting data on specific behaviors, knowledge, and skills in a systematic manner.

Six aspects were used in the observation checklist, namely situation in the classroom, teaching activities, duration that was used in the teaching activities, teaching behaviors, subject manner, and teacher-students rapport. There were five scales used. They were very poor, poor, moderate, good, and very good. The observation checklist that was used in this study can be seen in Appendix 2.

3.4.2 Interview

An interview is a process in which a researcher and a participant have a conversation about a research study's questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to (Gay, L. et al., 2012), researchers may gain essential information via interviews that they would not be able to obtain from observation alone. As a result, combining observations and interviews was a great technique to collect supplementary data. By interrogating and investigating participants' replies, interviewers probed further into their responses. There were three aspects used in the interview, namely teaching experience, challenges in teaching in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, and student engagement. The writer was improved the quality of data obtained from research interviews by improving the reliability of interview protocols which can be seen in Appendix 1.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The criteria for a good instrument are validity and reliability. The term reliability is used to assess the consistency of measures given to the same people at different times, as well as the equivalence of sets of items from the same test. The better reliability is more accurate the results, which increases the chances of making the right research decision (Mohajan, 2017).

Qualitative study is unfamiliar with the term validity and reliability. But the very idea that the study must be true, trustworthy, and objective is certainly held as the power of research. In a qualitative study, as Lincoln & Guba (1985) claims, there are credibility instead of validity and dependability as reliability.

3.5.1 Credibility

According to Trochim and Donnelly (2007), as cited by Kumar (2011), Establishing credibility is indicating that the findings of qualitative research are credible or acceptable from the standpoint of the study participant. To know that this study was credible, this study presented validation rubrics of the instrument which consisted of interview questions validation rubric and observation checklist items validation rubric. The instruments validation rubrics used in this study were adapted from Simon (2011).

This validation was used to assist the expert in providing an overview of the instruments. It allowed the expert to make corrections and suggestions as needed to improve the instruments' validity. The validation of the instruments can be seen in Appendix 3.

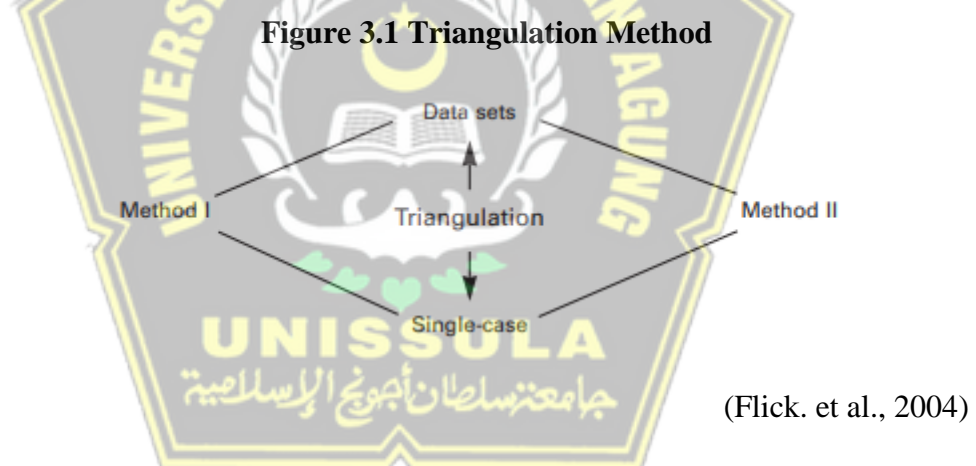
In the interview validation rubric, there were 4 scales used, namely not acceptable, below expectations, meet expectations, and exceed expectations. While in the observation checklist validation rubric used 2 scale criteria, namely accepted, and not accepted. The validation of the instruments in this study was done by two experts. The instruments validation rubrics from the experts can be seen in Appendix 4. The total score of the instruments' validation rubrics from the experts showed that the instruments were valid without any revisions.

3.5.2 Dependability

The dependability test is carried out in qualitative research by conducting an audit of the entire research process (Sugiyono, 2013). This study used triangulation to test the dependability of the instrument. According to Merriam &

Tisdell (2016), triangulation involves analyzing and merge data acquired through observations carried out at various times or in different locations, data collected from persons with various ideas, or follow-up interviews with the same people.

Triangulation might be classified into three types, such as source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. The triangulation method was employed in this study. According to Sugiyono (2013), the triangulation method or technique is the way researchers utilize several data gathering approaches to get data from the same source. For the same data source, researchers employed participatory observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation in combination.



3.6 Technique for Collecting Data

Data collection techniques are a method for determining a problem's solution or analyzing it. The techniques for collecting data in this study were semi-structured interviews and observation. In a semi-structured interview, there was a few key questions that cover the scope of the areas to be investigated. It gives the writer a little more freedom to investigate the subject.

The questions given by the writer in the interview focused on the objectives of the study which were to investigate the challenges faced by the Junior High School EFL teachers in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and how they coped with the challenges. The answers were then analyzed by the writer to conclude. Whereas observation was a method of data collection in which information about a phenomenon is gathered by observation. Gay, L. et al. (2012) states that during observation, the focus is on understanding the natural environment as it is experienced by participants, rather than altering or manipulating it. The observation was done by the writer when the teachers taught in the classroom. The observation was aimed to know how the teachers managed the class.

3.7 Data Collecting Procedure

The data collecting procedure was to set up a system to assist the researcher in analyzing the data. There was a sequence of steps to do for succeeding in this study. The sequence of steps would be enumerated by the writer as follows :

1. Giving the questions that were used in the interview and the list of checklists that were used in observation to the expert to evaluate whether they were clear, concise, and easy to understand.
2. Requesting permission from the school to conduct the study. The writer presented the school with an official research letter from the faculty.
3. Arranging the meeting with the teachers and doing the observation in the class.

4. Doing the interviews with the teachers.
5. Analyzing the information. It was completed once the writer had gathered all of the necessary information.
6. Concluding the study. The study's final step was to generate all of the data into paragraphs. It was a conclusion that addressed the study's research question about the challenges faced by the Junior High School EFL teachers in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and how the teachers coped with the challenges.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis in a qualitative study comprises consistently and properly summarizing data, which leads to the presenting of study findings in an indisputable manner. The steps of data analysis used in this study are based on the theory of Miles and Huberman (1984) as quoted by Sugiyono (2013). They were explained below :

3.8.1 Data Reduction

The writer summarized, picked essential ideas, focused on the most relevant elements, and examined for themes and patterns in this step. As a consequence, the shortened material presented a better picture and made it easier for the writer to collect and identify further information.

3.8.2 Data Display

Data display in qualitative research could take the form of a brief description of the relationship between categories, flowcharts, and other visual

aids. The descriptions of the aspects studied, both as a whole and part by part, were easier to understand if the data was presented in a concise, clear, and detailed manner. The data was then displayed in the form of a description or report based on the study data gathered.

3.8.3 Conclusion Drawing/Verification

The preliminary conclusions reached were only temporary, and would be revised if no strong evidence was found to support the next stage of data collection. When the writer collected data, however, the conclusions put forward at an early stage were supported by valid and consistent evidence, and the conclusions were credible. As a result, the conclusions might be able to answer the problem formulation that was formulated from the start and developed after all was done.

3.9 Time Schedule

This subchapter presents the schedule of this study from the proposal seminar until the final project examination which was done by the writer.

Table 3.1 Time Schedule

No	Activity	Date
1	Giving the instruments validation rubrics to the experts	20 April 2022
2	Asking the official letter from the Faculty to request the school permission of conducting the study	22 April 2022

3	Arranging the meetings with the teachers and doing the observation	27 May – 31 May 2022
4	Doing the interview	15 June – 21 June 2022
5	Analyzing the data and conclusion drawing	25 June – 30 June 2022



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the Results and the Discussion of the Study. Each challenge faced by the EFL teachers and the strategies used in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic were elaborated using the triangulation method. This qualitative study was conducted to investigate the challenges of the EFL teachers in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, and how they coped with the challenges. The subjects of this study were two EFL teachers of junior high school in Semarang that were selected purposively considering the feasibility of involvement in this study which focused on the challenges and the strategies in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.1 Availability of Time

To fight the spread of the Coronavirus (Covid-19), the Minister of Education and Culture developed a modified 2013 learning curriculum defined as an emergency curriculum (Kemendikbud, 2022). This was many teachers' first experience, particularly EFL teachers. The challenge must be faced by the EFL teachers in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was the use of time. From that statement, Teacher 2 claimed that “Because it used an emergency curriculum, we delivered the material more briefly”.

To address this issue, EFL teachers apply strategies like selecting learning aspects including methods, strategies, and materials depending on the needs of

students and school circumstances. Teacher 1 argued that “The selection of learning tools including the material was based on students’ needs and also school’s goals”. Based on the writer's views, EFL teachers might make appropriate use of their limited time while providing students with the necessary information. This was confirmed by Haryadi & Mahmudah (2021), who claimed that the emergency curriculum be established in accordance with academic conditions and accomplishments, so that learning materials used during the Covid-19 pandemic meet the needs of students and teachers.

4.2 Students’ Lack of Vocabularies

According to Simamora & Oktaviani (2020), in Indonesia, teaching English as a foreign language is being challenged by the EFL teachers. Even though students had English lessons when they were in kindergarten. As quoted the Teacher 1, she claimed that “If in the past, in kindergarten or elementary school students already had provisions, sometimes they also had difficulties, especially students who did not have provisions”. Students who intend to be competent in English should improve their linguistic competence since vocabulary is a key component of learning English as a foreign language. The more students acquired their vocabulary, the easier it was indeed for them to learn and use English as a foreign language.

EFL teachers addressed the issue of students' lack of vocabulary by enhancing students' vocabularies to improve their vocabulary mastery by presenting some instances of vocabulary and then teaching students how to read it as well as the definition of the word. The EFL teachers also used their mother

tongue to help students understand the material, as stated by Teacher 2, “My strategy in delivering the material was using 2 languages in my explanation. For example, I explained it using English first, and after that, I translated it into Indonesian, sometimes I also used Javanese”. The observations revealed that the EFL teachers utilized language that the students understood while delivering the topic. Furthermore, EFL teachers adopt a rhythm that corresponds to the student's capacity to identify an issue in the English lesson learning material.

4.3 Lack of Information Technology Mastery

In this world of globalization, information technology affected all parts of humanity. Similarly, education must evolve in tandem with scientific progress. Not only that but in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, information technology, particularly education, played a crucial role in all sectors of life.

According to Putri (2021), teachers, especially EFL teachers, might be less prepared to conduct virtual learning in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, virtual learning should undertake well-structured. According to this statement, teachers, specifically, EFL teachers, must maintain to conduct virtual learning even if they are unwilling or inexperienced in doing so. Teacher 1 once said that “Yes, moreover I have lack of IT mastery. Plus the demand to teach virtually,...”. She was aware of her limitations in IT knowledge, and there were requirements for her to continue studying virtually.

This might be handled by EFL teachers who were determined to continue studying more deeper about IT mastery and developed IT competence, which made it easier for them to conduct virtual learning. As quoted by Teacher 1 in the

interview session, “Plus the demand to teach virtually, so I had to learn about IT, how to conduct the meeting via online using Zoom, Google Meet”. Observations of classroom activities also revealed that the EFL teacher might follow the evolution of science by utilizing IT in education and undertaking virtual learning during the Covid-19 outbreak.

4.4 Time Discipline

Virtual learning was the first experience for all teachers, especially EFL teachers. Some of the differences that developed entail teachers adapting to the new situation. Learning over a network connection or virtual learning could be accomplished in a variety of ways. It means that virtual learning can be done in anywhere and anytime with some video conference applications, such as Google Meet, Zoom, and so on (Najib & Mursidi, 2021).

From the statement above, Teacher 2 stated that “Maybe it was quite a shock because it was the first time in teaching virtual learning. The problems were on time discipline,...”. It was clear that the EFL teachers encountered one cultural shock when it came to conduct learning, namely time discipline. Because virtual learning had a flexible schedule, there was a chance of scheduling conflicts with other teachers and forgetting the schedule.

In this situation, the EFL teachers utilized strategies like as mentioned by Teacher 2, “..... I produced a notebook that I carry alongside me every day to take notes the schedule of online teaching”. This reduces the risk of forgetting the teaching schedule, as well as coordinating with other teachers to minimize scheduling conflicts.

4.5 The Problem in Monitoring Students

According to Rosalina and Elyani (2020), one of the shortcomings of online learning was the lack of teacher and student interaction due to space and time limits. Teachers were incapable of monitoring student actions while they were studying. This was supported by Teacher 1's statement, "Because it was the first time, teaching in the middle of pandemic using virtual learning, there were found some problems. Such as, could not monitor students during the lesson and assignment". The homework given at the junior high school in Semarang was provided using a virtual application called Whatsapp group. Not only were assignments distributed virtually, but attendance was also monitored through a Whatsapp group.

Unlike face-to-face learning, which was freely to monitor students' work and students' attendance. Students could manipulate attendance without following the learning organized by the teacher. Not only that, students could do things amid ongoing learning, such as sleeping, playing, and so on. Teacher 1 argued, "To deal with the problem, I used Whatsapp group. So, if there was a meeting, the attendance would be listed, then for the assignment just like that, if there were students who did not submit the assignment, it means that they were absent". To handle issues with student monitoring, EFL teachers depended completely on the Whatsapp Group for assignment submissions and attendance management.

4.6 Students' Background Problems

Farrell (1995), stated that students with emotional and behavioral issues continued to create challenges for teachers, supportive services, society, and their

parents. The number of students referred to educational psychologists appeared to be growing. When addressing the reasons for emotional and behavioral problems, it was critical to recognize that there were likely to be a variety of interconnected aspects to consider. Negative behaviors are the outcome of a complicated interaction between environmental circumstances and elements contributed to the environment by the individual. The family environment and school, in especially, might have a significant impact on students' social and emotional development. These two factors collaborate with the students' genetic background.

Teacher 1 stated that "Every human has their fate. Sometimes there is a position above, sometimes there are also those whose position is not okay". Every person, including students, has a different background. They were born into competent or wealthy households, peaceful or troubled houses. This was not the way students wanted to live their lives. The problems that occurred in the students' learning would be difficult for students to achieve their academic or non-academic proficiencies.

According to Laheem (2013), anyone who is primarily connected to students such as teachers, and parents, must provide priority, pay attention and offer care in supporting and enhancing students' behaviors, in addition, protect students from exhibiting further violent behavior. A teacher should take a role in dealing with students' problems. The EFL teachers used a personal approach to address this issue to enhance students' motivation and interest in participating in learning, as well as motivation to achieve their goals. In the observation result of this study regarding the students' background problems, the EFL teachers could

deal with the students' problems using the personal approach to know what kind of problem and to find out the best way to overcome the problem.

4.7 Students' Engagement

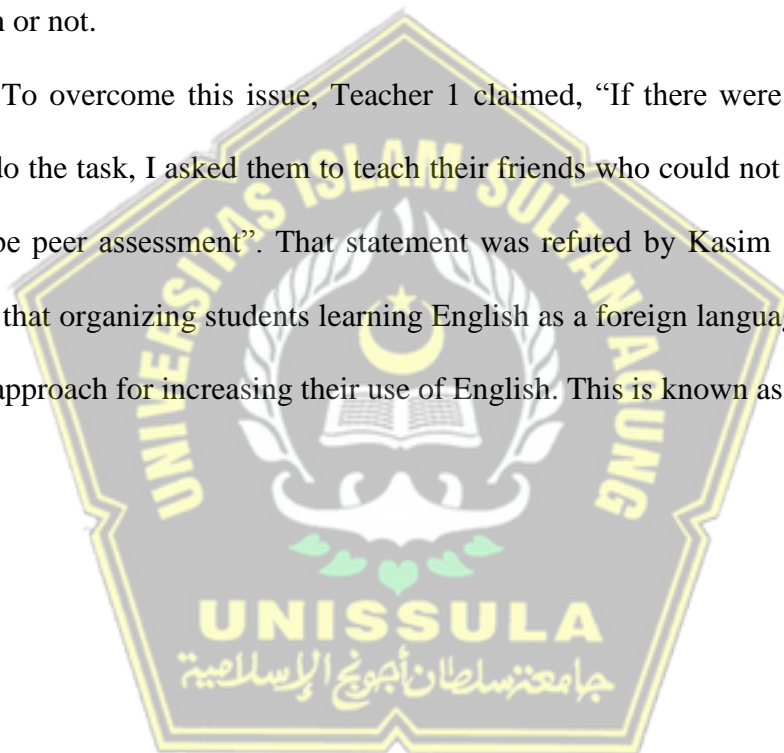
Student engagement is a broad phenomenon influenced by several cognitive, behavioral, and social aspects (Nicholson, 2018). Because students looked to have fewer chances to interact with the school, student engagement in virtual learning is crucial. As a result, presenting several possibilities for students to be involved in the digital environment was crucial. The necessity of engagement has led to the development of successful virtual classrooms (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

Enthusiasm and competence are two aspects of students' engagement. Teacher 2 argued that "Interests and talents junior high school students in English was on the low level. Because in the previous school, they did not get the English lesson, then now they have to learn it. Plus, English is a foreign language that is never used in their daily lives". According to EFL teachers, students' enthusiasm and abilities in English lessons, were very limited compared to other subjects. This was due to students not obtaining English classes at their former schools. They struggled with English tasks. They felt English was a tough subject to understand.

In addition to the students' lack of enthusiasm and skill in English, there were one or two students who were interested in taking part in English classes. This might be demonstrated in terms of assignments and student participation in answering and asking questions. Students who were enthusiastic about

participating in English classes were more likely to answer questions and complete tasks on time. Furthermore, excited students tended to be enthusiastic and engaged in responding to questions from the teacher, as well as actively requesting English materials. In the observation result regarding the students' engagement aspect, the EFL teachers could engage students before starting the class and students' receptive to the explanation was good whether they like English or not.

To overcome this issue, Teacher 1 claimed, "If there were students who could do the task, I asked them to teach their friends who could not do the task. It could be peer assessment". That statement was refuted by Kasim (2015), which argued that organizing students learning English as a foreign language into groups is one approach for increasing their use of English. This is known as group work.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the study's conclusions based on what was covered in the preceding chapter and the writer's suggestions for future research.

5.1 Conclusion

This study's conclusion is meant to address the research question posed in the first chapter. It depended on the result of the discussions. There were seven challenges and strategies identified in engaging students in virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely:

1. The use of short time in the teaching and learning process using an emergency curriculum. To overcome this challenge the EFL teachers were wise in choosing the learning elements that suit with the students' needs and school conditions.
2. Regarding students' lack of vocabulary, the EFL teachers improved students' vocabulary mastery by teaching them the definition of the words and how to pronounce them. The EFL teachers also used students' mother tongue to explain the material to help students understand it.
3. The EFL teachers recognized their lack of IT mastery. They have known that IT nowadays was being an important part of life. To do their obligations in integrating IT into education, they wanted to continue studying IT deeply to enrich their IT mastery.

4. To decrease the problem in teachers' time discipline, the EFL teachers made note-taking to write down the schedule and cross-checked the schedule with the other teachers to avoid the necessity of schedule crashes.
5. The EFL teachers monitored students' work and attendance in virtual learning using the Whatsapp group.
6. To deal with the students' background problems, the EFL teachers used a personal approach to know what kind of problems were, and find out the way to solve the problem.
7. Improving students' engagement regarding enthusiasm and competence in English lessons in virtual learning was done by the EFL teachers using group work to help students who were less enthusiastic and competent in English lessons in understanding the material.

5.2 Suggestion

After the writer had finished the study and reached a conclusion, she would like to make suggestions to those who are related to the study's topic. It is done to give such conception to improve the next teaching, learning, or research.

The first suggestion is for the EFL teachers. From the result of the instruments, the writer could see that the EFL teachers were already taught based on the criteria in the teaching and learning process. Their strategies and method used in their teaching were based on the school goals and students' conditions. Nevertheless, the EFL teachers should be innovative in teaching English remembering that students' enthusiasm and competence in English were at a low level to improve students' engagement in the English lesson.

The second suggestion is for the EFL students, learning English at the junior high school level is an opportunity to start students' ability to speak English. Because English is an international language that is always used anywhere. Maybe at this time in daily life, it has not been used, but the next day, English will become useful.



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