

Adopting photovoice to explore teachers' experiences in online teaching

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Adopting photovoice to explore teachers' experiences in online teaching

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ABSTRACT

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak has caused a rapid and massive change in the education sector across the world and left no choice to teachers to maintain their status quo. As a country with very diverse geographical and technological conditions, Indonesia has felt the severe impact of this pandemic. This study explores how Indonesian English as foreign language (EFL) teachers struggle to adapt to the online teaching process, identifies the challenges they encountered during the online teaching and learning process, and investigates their strategies in coping with the associated challenges to ensure the learning objectives were achieved. This study employed photovoice as a visual research methodology to capture the new phenomena and answer the research objectives by inviting four English teachers from three different islands, Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi to share their experiences and strategies for survival. The results indicated that Indonesian EFL teachers suffered from challenging experiences, including the trial and error of learning management system (LMS) choice, and were confronted with unpleasant feedback from the students. This study also identified poor internet connection and low online student participation as the main issues. To deal with such problems, especially with low student participation, they viewed disadvantaged situations as a trigger to improve their creativity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has created the discourse of forced fully-online learning across the globe [1]. In this respect, both teachers and students have to adapt with this situation where the integration of online technology into the educational system is not optional anymore, but mandatory instead. In North America, Australia, and some European countries where virtual teaching and learning technologies were introduced earlier and have become part of their school culture, the adaptation process is not as challenging as that in the countries which treat this technology as alien. In America, for example, the use of technology into the learning system was first developed by BF Skinner, a Harvard professor in 1954, which was later known as Program Logic for Automated Teaching Operation (PLATO). In Britain,

the use of online learning systems was initially popular among public open universities in the 1970s [2]. This present study attempts to snapshot the use of online teaching among English as foreign language (EFL) classes in the Indonesian context, investigates the hindrances encountered by EFL teachers, and unpacks the strategies they make to solve those issues. This study will benefit the teachers in handling their online EFL classes, the policymakers who oversee developing regulations to ensure that the online teaching and learning process runs effectively, and the students who will be saved from unnecessary learning loss.

In the past years, the notion of online teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak has been concerned as a research issue. Various studies explore the teacher's experiences [3], and students' teacher experiences [4] dealing with online teaching-learning practices, challenges, and opportunities in online teaching [5]. For instance [6] contends the craft of teachers' online teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic reveals the implications for teacher's professional development in applying technology and points out the virtues and hurdles of online teaching. Additionally, previous studies employ different designs of qualitative approaches in the form of case studies, descriptive studies, and content analysis. However, this study uses a new paradigm research design, photovoice, to scrutinize teachers' experiences in conducting online teaching. The use of photovoice will enrich the data since it eases the participants to express complex experiences, feelings, or ideas, particularly in online teaching experiences. With the phenomenon of the teacher's online learning experience in Indonesia, this study aims to provide images of English teachers' meaningful experiences in adapting and improvising online teaching, which leads to the enrichment of research data about English teachers' experiences teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is hoped that others can learn from this research participants' experiences in teaching English online as preparation for the suspension of face-to-face classes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other health emergency conditions.

Some studies pertaining to teachers' experiences in online teaching as the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic have been carried out around the world, for example, in China [7], in Portugal [8], in Germany [9], in Hong Kong [10], in Chile [5], and in the Netherlands [6]. Both teachers and prospective teachers gained experiences in opportunities and challenges in online teaching [4], [5]. The experience from face-to-face teaching to online teaching is one of the positive aspects perceived by prospective teachers [5]. In particular, the positive aspect of prospective teachers of early childhood is their experience with a variety of tasks to be accomplished in the different phases during online teaching starting from teaching design until the evaluation [4]. Another aspect is information and communication technology (ICT) competence. Teachers having ICT competence reacted positively toward online teaching [6]. However, the shift from face to face into online teaching has limitations as the negative aspect of online teaching. For the prospective teachers, they cannot interact with students in a real situation [4], [5], and it becomes a challenge for them. In addition, the facilities to support online teaching are considered as the challenge encountered by both teachers and schools. Therefore, to support professional development, the role of schools in providing facilities (such as computer technology) and training [7], [9]–[11] is urgently needed.

Research by Spoel *et al.* [6] aims to compare the expectations and experiences of teachers teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings showed that the teachers had better experiences in innovating and adapting teaching methods to technology than expected even though they must face some challenges, such as network disruptions or unsupportive hardware. This study used a survey distributed to participants on the second day of announcing schools' temporary closure due to the coronavirus and after the online learning process has been running for a month. Unfortunately, the researchers only used surveys and did not enrich the data with interviews that could describe the real teacher's expectations and experiences more clearly and, in more detail, and demonstrate trustworthiness. Also, the time lag between data collection and the government's announcement of school closings is too short to describe more accurately what teachers are like in innovating and adapting teaching methods to technology.

Another study conducted by Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison [5] aims to reveal the experiences and challenges experienced by EFL teacher candidates in teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic in remote areas. This study indicated that EFL student teachers teach synchronously and asynchronously, even when they learn to use unfamiliar software. However, this study tends to focus on explaining raw data rather than data interpretation in the findings section. Besides, the researchers also did not provide further information about the remote area's context and compare the data from one instrument to others in data analysis to keep the trustworthiness.

The existence of online teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak is a well-researched topic in Indonesia. Many studies have been conducted on the topic in which they drive to online teaching activities, challenges, problems [12], teachers' attitudes [13], and teachers' engagement Lie *et al.* [14]. EFL teachers in Indonesia have implemented synchronous and asynchronous methods to deliver online teaching activities, however, they still face several online teaching problems [12]. Furthermore, the teachers have applied various educational platforms, yet, they declare positive and negative attitudes to online teaching [13], [14] highlight teachers have struggled to improve the quality of online teaching by considering students, teachers' exposure

to online teaching, technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and support systems. Moreover, online teaching challenges, problems, and teachers' attitudes have been well explored by case studies, and teachers' experiences have been less captured, particularly by conducting photovoice. Notwithstanding online teaching literature focuses on challenges, problems, and teachers' attitudes [12]–[14], no empirical research currently has scrutinized teachers' online teaching experiences in a single study.

The COVID-19 pandemic has opened opportunities for both teaching professionals and students to learn new things especially technology related to how knowledge can be delivered and acquired effectively [15]. However, acquiring technological skills does not guarantee that both teachers and students can teach and learn effectively. There is still another skill that they need to possess to ensure the success of the teaching and learning process i.e. digital competence [16]–[18]. Digital competence includes a set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that help individuals achieve goals using digital technologies [16], [17]. Specifically, digital competence covers the skills of individuals related to information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem-solving [19], [20]. All these competencies are fundamental for teachers in doing their professional jobs in this era. Therefore, teachers need to commit to developing their digital competence and at the same time develop pedagogical activities to assist their students in acquiring the competencies needed in this digital world [18], [21]–[23]. The very first endeavour to build this digital competence is by developing technology-related teaching skills.

Technology-related teaching skills spotlight two important issues i.e., the issue of how the use of technology in teaching will happen successfully and how the students can achieve the learning goals through the teacher's assistance. The former deals with what the teachers need to plan, design, and implement successfully the teaching activities they have prepared. The latter is related to how the teachers support and scaffold their students in the learning process using digital technology [15], [24]. To ensure the two objectives are achieved teachers need a competency of a combination of complex cognitive skills, highly integrated knowledge structure, and attitude [25]–[27]. It can be achieved only when the teachers develop a combined knowledge of technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge which is popular as technological pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK).

In teaching EFL in this industry 4.0 era [28], [29], the teachers must also develop their TPACK. The reason for developing technology knowledge is that the students now were born in the era of "digital technologies", so what they learn must be based much more on technology than the "previous generations" [28]. As a consequence, the teachers should have ICT competence. Moreover, during the COVID-19 outbreak, all teaching and learning processes are carried out virtually, and all teachers are required to design their teaching activities, materials, and quizzes through a variety of online platforms. In regards to the teacher knowledge, Shulman [30] proposed seven branches of knowledge, i.e. i) content knowledge, ii) general pedagogical knowledge, iii) curriculum knowledge, iv) pedagogical content knowledge, v) knowledge of learners and their characteristics, vi) knowledge of educational contexts, and vii) knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds. Among these, pedagogical content knowledge is the prominent teacher knowledge that has been the concern of numerous educational research [31]. The concept of pedagogical content knowledge 'represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction' [30]. Due to the need for technology in education, it is now integrated into language teaching, and the concept is called TPACK [32].

Previous studies on the relation between teachers' experience and their teaching knowledge yielded various findings. Clermont *et al.* [33] found that the experienced teachers had more knowledge than the novice teachers. A similar finding was reported by [34] that EFL experienced teachers had a significant relation to pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge compared to the EFL novice teachers. However, the EFL novice teachers had a significant relation to technological knowledge, technological content knowledge, technological pedagogical knowledge, and TPACK rather than their counterparts. These previous findings indicate that EFL experienced, and novice teachers are concerned about their professional development programs in different dimensions. Unlike the two previous studies, Chen and Goh [31] found no relation between teaching experience and EFL teachers' knowledge. The problem was that there was no support from the university pertaining to facilities and resources that could be used by both the teachers and the students during the teaching and learning process.

Research by Spoel *et al.* [6] used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research through a comparison of two surveys to compare the expectations and experiences of teachers teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that male teachers had better experiences than expected when compared to female teachers. According to the teacher, with the urgency to do online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers must be creative and innovative in managing the learning process and using teaching methods. However, over time the teacher becomes increasingly challenged to deal with students due to network disruptions or unsupportive hardware. This study used a survey in data collection. The survey was divided into two; first, the pre-test survey was distributed to participants on the second day of announcing

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schools' temporary closure due to the coronavirus. Second, during the online learning process, the post-test survey was distributed to respondents one month after they completed the pre-test survey. Unfortunately, the researchers only used surveys and did not enrich the data with interviews that could describe the real teacher's expectations and experiences more clearly and in more detail. Also, the time lag between data collection and the government's announcement of school closings is too short to describe more accurately how teachers innovated and adapted teaching methods to technology.

The study conducted by [5] aims to reveal the experiences and challenges experienced by EFL teacher candidates in teaching online during COVID-19 in remote areas. This study used an interpretivist paradigm and exploratory case study methods where data were collected through an online questionnaire, a blog, entries, and a semi-structured interview. The results of this study indicated that student teachers teach synchronously by using the Microsoft Teams platform, Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and asynchronously by creating learning videos and sending them to the school's online platforms. Furthermore, the experience of teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic made student teachers learn to use several unfamiliar software. Also, student teachers must be creative in involving students in the online teaching process, which is also a challenge for student teachers. The researcher stated that the results of his study were different from those of other similar studies. However, compared with the results of other studies [6], this study's findings are almost no different from research on the experiences and challenges experienced by EFL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many teachers worldwide, teachers must conduct online teaching due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Teachers teach courses online exclusively by applying asynchronous and synchronous teaching due to the halt of face-to-face classes [10]. Regarding teaching experiences, teachers must convert offline to online teaching by considering the implementation of digital tools to cope with the challenges and applying novel approaches in online teaching [9]. They must deal with the challenges in their online teaching such as distance, scale, and personalized teaching and learning [35]. Due to this study's focus on Indonesian teachers' teaching experiences, it is essential to discover several studies on EFL teaching. Furthermore, the history of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) shows the new path of teaching English beyond the existing teaching methods [36]. The new direction guides the teachers to cope with the challenges in TEFL.

In most studies concerning EFL teaching experiences [37]–[39], the focus is on teachers' challenges and opportunities in TEFL. Research by [37] was aimed at discovering the challenges in teaching English in the Arab World countries by reflecting on his teaching experiences in teaching hundreds of students in Jordan, the West Bank, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The finding showed that the teaching experience in EFL has main problems including a lack of teachers' preparation, lack of learners' motivation, teaching methods, and assessment techniques. However, the pitfall of his research was an unclear explanation of the research method used. Apart from that, the main weakness in his study is he makes no attempt to find current references to support his research.

Another study conducted by [38] was purposed to highlight the current challenges in teaching and learning English for EFL learners in Iran. The finding revealed seven challenges which covered students, teachers, materials, teaching methods, evaluation, curriculum, and policy. Yet, there is no further information about the research method used. In short, those studies [37], [38] focus on teaching experiences for discovering the challenges in TEFL. In addition, this present study also deals with EFL teaching experiences. However, the distinction between this study and those studies can be seen in the research method used, the target participants, and the context of the study particularly in the COVID-19 outbreak. This present study explores the EFL teachers' experiences in adapting to the online teaching process, unpacks the problems they encountered, and investigates how they cope with them.

2. METHOD

2.1. Context and procedure

To capture teachers' experiences in online teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak, a photovoice method was conducted. Photovoice is one of the research methods that focuses on participants' lived experience. As a specific visual methodology, photovoice allows research participants to be actively involved in taking photos and engaged in the research process [40]. The involvement of the participants is not only in the decision-making about which photos they take but also in describing and giving illustrations and making stories about the photos. This helps the researcher understand what is really happening within the selves of the participants regarding the photos taken.

By using photovoice as a methodology, the researcher as well as the research participants can record and reflect on strengths and concerns, promote knowledge and critical dialogue, and help decision-making [40]. With photos, the researchers can dig for rich data and see the world from the participant's point of view. The photos also allow the researcher to see the multi-dimensions of society as perceived by the participants

and to contribute to social change [40]. Photovoice as a methodology also offers the opportunity to advocate empathy, humanity, self-esteem, empowerment, and creativity [41]–[43]. In exploring teachers' inquiry in online teaching, the researcher asked the teachers to take a picture in the form of a metaphor or real picture that reflected their online teaching circumstances. Then, the teachers wrote and shared their experiences in the aspects of context, reasons, and emotion as the photovoice explanation. The context is related to the time, location, or time of photos taken. The reasons revealed the causes of the photos taken. The emotion part focused on teachers' experiences, problems, and solutions.

2.2. Participants

The participants involved in this study were four English teachers in high schools who teach EFL in three different islands of Indonesia. Two of them are from Java, one from Sumatra and the other one is from Sulawesi. The different teaching areas are representative data for capturing teachers' online teaching experience across Indonesia. They shared their online teaching experiences through photovoice in the form of reflective journals. In analyzing the photovoice, the teachers' reflective journals were coded according to four aspects: the context of the photo, reasons, differences between teaching experiences before the outbreak and in the outbreak, and challenges of online teaching.

2.3. Data collection

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the data were taken via WhatsApp platform to ease the communication between the researchers and participants. The researchers provided a template for sharing teachers' online teaching experiences in Photovoice. The researchers also explained the photovoice template, the aim of the research, and the significance of the research. In addition, the teachers sent their photovoice and confirmed whether it fitted with the aim of the research or not yet. All teachers gave appropriate responses to fulfill the purpose of the research.

2.4. Data analysis

Descriptive data in the form of photovoice responses were analyzed qualitatively. Those data were gathered in which they had two types of data that showed two metaphor photovoice and three real photovoice's. After collecting the data, the data were analyzed and themed based on their reflection to answer the research questions. The themes reflected the research's aims and drove the research's significance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 shows the low participation of the students in online classes. No matter how the teacher tried to encourage the students to participate, only a few of them responded. Figure 1 shows the teacher's photovoice that related to the students' low participation in online classes. Through this photovoice, Ms. Sovy (a pseudonym) wanted to share how she struggled to teach English in a pandemic situation that lasted for a year. She had to try different kinds of LMS to explore several learning sources and finally choose Google Meet and YouTube as online teaching media. Google Meet is opted not for only because it is free but also user friendly and can substitute face-to-face classes. Although she had done her best to prepare for her class, she still found problems during online teaching such as unstable internet connection and students' low participation. As the photovoice illustrates, it is only the teacher who turns on the camera. She perceived this disadvantaged situation as a challenge and planned better for her online class. Joseph [44] argues stressful situation does not necessarily cause negative impacts. Rizqi [45] considered stressful environment as a "positive force or challenge" which made her more resilient to stress (p. 24). Ms. Sovy showed that the problem she encountered during her online teaching raised her creativity by creating an ice-breaking activity and developing an attractive PowerPoint presentation. She was happy that she could scaffold the students to speak. In short, her creativity could boost her students' motivation, one of the key features that she believed to be the most significant factor in learning [46]–[49].

Figure 2 illustrates how Ms. Adinda (a pseudonym) struggled to teach online classes due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The teacher participant used the metaphor of the condition in a cozy little coffee shop to show her anxiety, hurdles, and teaching strategy in her online teaching. She shared that she needed more energy to conduct her teaching such as preparing materials which took her energy seriously. Besides, she mentioned that she was worried about her students' achievements and was in doubt about her students' future education. Furthermore, she highlighted her teaching hurdles, for instance, communication, internet connection, and the students' participation. Dealing with these problems, she tried to implement quantum learning as her teaching strategy in which she started her teaching by motivating the students, applying fun activities, and evaluating the teaching and learning process. It is in line with [4], [5] who emphasize that the shift from face to face into online teaching has limitations as the negative aspect of online teaching. For teachers, they cannot interact with students in a real situation, and it becomes a challenge for them. [14] underlines teachers have struggled to

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improve the quality of online teaching by considering students, teachers' exposure to online teaching, technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and support systems.

Context: 44

Online Learning has been going on for a year. Various online media such as WhatsApp, Google Meet, Zoom, YouTube, and other LMS have been used. We watch various videos on YouTube, and I give the materials and exercises through LMS. This morning I used Google Meet. **I took this photo while teaching class XI through Google Meet.** Today I taught Cause and Effect sentences. At the first meeting, I gave material on Problem-based learning which ended with a Kahoot quiz.

Reasons:

The choice of Google Meet is because it is free and more user-friendly compared to the paid online media Zoom. In addition, Google Meet can be used to explain the English material directly face-to-face in front of the class. So, I hope that the material can be understood better than sending the material in the form of a file. One of the advantages of using Google Meet as a teaching medium is that it facilitates communication with students, teachers can also get direct responses and two-way communication.

Emotions:

But in practice, in using this media, I have experienced several obstacles that sometimes make me disappointed. Not all students can follow properly due to poor internet connection. Sometimes in Google Meet learning, student participation is very low. Although the preparation and teaching actions have been carefully planned, sometimes students are not active in the class discussion. They rarely express their opinions. When there is a question or discussion, only a few students comment and answer, the rest just keep quiet. This is also worsened by the setting on Google Meet in which they choose not to turn on video and sound for various reasons. Here the role of the teacher is very important to find teaching strategies that can activate students. Special for the delivery of material through Google Meet, I combined the material with Ice breaking both at the beginning and in the middle of the class. Grateful and happy in this way, students want to speak. In addition, I sometimes ask questions that can encourage students to express their opinions. Also, I provide rewards for students who actively give opinions. I hope they will be motivated. Delivering an attractive presentation is also a challenge. I also use PowerPoint, which is not monotonous and hopefully, it attracts students' interest in following the lessons. Finally, I conclude that whatever online media or LMS is used, motivation is the most significant thing to make the students learn. Teachers must continue to develop teaching skills and discuss and share experiences with their colleagues for effective online learning to achieve students' learning goals.



Figure 1. Teacher's photovoice (The look of Google Meet in online teaching): obstacles in online class and teacher's online teaching strategies

Context:

This photo was taken in a cozy little coffee shop on the side of the road. I enjoyed the warm situation with my friends. The delicious taste of the iced coffee reminded me of drowning in silence like the current situation in online teaching.

Reasons:

I was shocked by the real facts of online teaching. My online teaching was silent and cold like the night air and ice cube. I needed more energy when explaining materials, creating teaching videos, writing teaching summaries, and talking in voice notes. Sometimes, I was afraid to think about my students' destiny if all my efforts were useless. In this photo, the situation when I was in a cozy little coffee shop showed my worry. The ice represented my doubt about when this will be ended, the shadows represented my thought about how it will be for the education in the future. Besides, the light of the handphone represents we need for technology nowadays.

Emotions

In this online teaching, I felt I got karma from the cartoon Dora the Explorer. When I watched it, I said "This cartoon is strange, she asks, and she answers the questions by herself". And, wow, I am like a Dora right now in this online teaching. Sometimes, I ask a question and I answer my own question because my students don't answer it. The main problem with online teaching is "communication", it is very difficult to communicate with the students because of the network. Not only that, but sometimes when I give instructions, the students do not pay attention to the learning and just keep silent. When I give them assignments, just 20 % of the students submit the assignment, the rest of them just phantom students. I always try to make the learning process interactive by providing fun learning and making the students comfortable with the learning, however, it doesn't work at all. I use quantum learning as my strategy to teach English. First, I motivate the students, then I make the students feel comfortable and I make some models of learning that are enchanting (based on me) such as using voice notes to speak English and I make some videos so the students will have a better understanding, after that I evaluate the learning process and give them appreciation but all those activities are done in an online way.



Figure 2. Teacher's photovoice (iced coffee): Real facts of online teaching and teacher's online teaching strategies

Figure 3 captured Ms. Sisil (a pseudonym) challenges in handling online teaching as depicted in Figure 3. She tried several platforms to be used in her online teaching and ended up in Google Meet. She felt comfortable using this platform to hold her students and could manage the class well based on her competence which showed her mastery of confronting the challenge of online teaching using digital technology [9]. To adapt to such a situation, Ms. Sisil redesigned the contents of lessons to meet the "online learning behavior characteristics of students" [7]. Many students had low concentration in online teaching. As a consequence, they lack motivation to participate in the online class. However, she kept trying to motivate the students by applying various teaching strategies to make her class active, such as adding materials from online sources, YouTube, and ice-breaking activities. She never gave up finding interesting strategies to make her students engaged in the teaching and learning process.

Context:

*This photo was captured in one of the online teaching activities by using Zoom. Since the instruction of teaching online during the pandemic era, teachers should be confident in their ability to teach online. **I had to find effective teaching platforms for online teaching. In this condition, no teaching platform can be used in all situations. Each has strengths and weaknesses.** Firstly, I used Zoom Conference for one semester. Then, I used Google Meet until now. I designed materials adjusted to this condition in the form of modules, and they were uploaded to Google Classroom. Regarding the tasks, the students uploaded their tasks in Google Classroom for online teaching and brought them to the classroom for offline teaching. To keep interacting with the students, I usually contact them via WhatsApp, Messenger, or telephone. To avoid boredom, I added the lessons with materials from **Quizziz, Rumah Belajar, Ruang Guru, and YouTube**. In addition, **I always do ice-breaking activities to vary the teaching and learning activities in each meeting.***

Reasons:

***Icebreaking is an activity to motivate students to learn.** During online teaching, students tend to feel bored, sleepy, and lose motivation which causes an uncondusive situation. **It also makes the students understand the lesson learned.** Therefore, ice-breaking activities need to be given. Besides, **it is important to do icebreakers in the first meeting at the beginning of the semester because the students do not know each other yet.** This activity can enhance their relationship.*

Emotions:

Ice-breaking activities in online teaching can increase students' motivation to learn and develop their relationships.** However, there are some students not wanting to take part in this activity. It may be that they do not know about the rules or are not confident to join it. If they were asked why they didn't join the activity, they only smiled. Even some of them did not activate their cameras in Zoom meetings/Google Meet, so they did not participate in the ice-breaking activities. The reason was that the internet connection was not good. Consequently, **the ice-breaking activities selected should be the ones that can optimize the online teaching-learning process.



Figure 3. Teacher's photovoice (The look of Zoom in online teaching): The importance of effective teaching platforms and the use of icebreaking

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Figure 4 illustrates Ms. Ayana (a pseudonym) her struggles in teaching online English classes during the COVID-19 pandemic and how she solved it through this photovoice. The teacher participant explained that face-to-face teaching was better than online teaching. It could be inferred that online teaching gave a serious challenge to the teacher participant [4], [5]. Online teaching, in this case using Google Meet, made her need to repeat the material explanation many times because the students often misunderstood the material. Misunderstanding happened because of network disruption [6], and many of the students shared one cell phone with their family members; even some of them did not have any cell phone. So, some of them could not join the Google meeting and did not care about their tasks. She tried to overcome this obstacle by doing offline teaching for some meetings.

1

Context:

This photo was taken when I was teaching English by using Google Meet and showed an unattended class with piles of students' work.

Reasons:

This photo represented my feeling that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the condition was better since the material could be conveyed to the students directly. Since the outbreak, some students had a lack of discipline about time. They stayed up late because they did not have to go to school in the morning, and only a few of them joined the Google Meet.

Emotions:

I feel teaching before the COVID-19 pandemic was much more fun because we could directly interact with the students and quickly know their personalities. I provided lessons and could teach the discipline of time and neatness. Also, the material could be delivered optimally. Meanwhile, there are always obstacles in the process of online learning because not all students can learn using Google Meet due to some problems. The first problem is a misunderstanding of the teacher's information. Even though the instructions are written in all capital letters, the students are still disobedient. A lack of reading culture may cause it. When the network is slow, my explanation will be misunderstood by the students. They often ask me to repeat the explanation. Some students do not have handphones because of economic factors or because their families only have one phone, so they must share it with their family members. There are 32 students in 1 class, but only a few of them participate in the learning process. Some students constantly change their WhatsApp numbers, so I must enter their new numbers into the WhatsApp group class and inform other teachers. Also, if their parents use the cell phone to work, they will have difficulty doing their assignments. It is understandable because many people here still have low incomes. Most of the people work as fishermen. Thus, some students do not get full attention from their parents at home, so they do not care about the tasks. To overcome this situation, I did some face-to-face teaching meetings so the students who did not have a cell phone and internet access could attend the lessons.

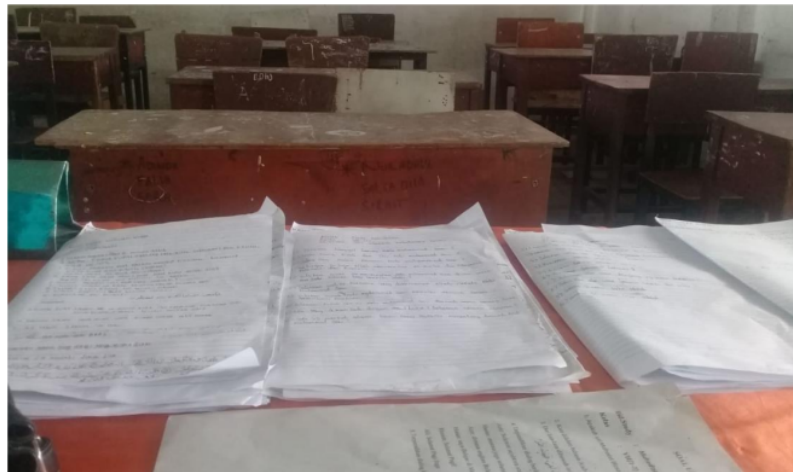


Figure 4. Teacher's photovoice (an unattended class with piles of students' work): Comparing before and during online teaching due to the Covid-19 outbreak, online teaching obstacles, and teacher's solution

3.1. Teachers' experiences in online teaching

Dealing with the first question, the teachers have tried teaching their students by using a variety of platforms that were convenient for them, like WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom Conference. Of all the platforms existing, they ended up the online teaching on the use of Google Meet and Google Classroom. These two platforms were selected because they were free. Regarding online teaching, some teachers adjusted the teaching materials by redesigning them into modules and uploading them into Google Classroom. They felt very different situations during online teaching compared to offline teaching. In online teaching, the first impression they felt was that they taught as if they were teaching themselves. None asked questions or answered questions from the teachers. As a result, the teachers themselves answered the questions. The class was quiet, and there was no interaction occurred. Various learning activities have been

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done to make the students active, but only a few of them participated because of some reasons, like a bad connection, not having an internet data package, and even not having a smart mobile phone/laptop. Furthermore, they needed more time and extra preparation to conduct online teaching in order to find supporting materials to create lifelong learning. The teachers met several challenges in their online teaching such as the students' misunderstanding about teachers' instructions or explanations, the students' attitude in online classes in which they tended to off their cameras although they had good internet connection, and low students' participation. Similar findings were also found in [50]. Therefore, in some schools, the ineffectiveness of online teaching was accompanied by offline teaching for several days a week.

3.2. Obstacles in online teaching

Through photovoice, participants express the obstacles they experienced while implementing online teaching. These obstacles can be divided into two groups, internet network disruption and low student participation in the learning process. The internet network, which is often unstable, results in students misunderstanding the teacher's explanation, so the teacher must repeat the explanation many times. This problem was like that found in [12] in which most of their participants lived in remote, rural, and mountainous areas which caused the internet connection poor and unstable. This situation was worsened by the fact that most of them could not afford to purchase sufficient internet quota which resulted in uncomfortable online learning conditions. Meanwhile, the low participation of students in the learning process is the most formidable challenge for teachers. During the learning process, most students only listen to the teacher silently without any two-way interaction. When the teacher uses the discussion method, students are still passive, even not paying attention to the teacher's explanation carefully. A similar problem was found in [51] which caused students' disengagement from the class. Besides, only some students take part in the learning process through Google Meet, or if they take part in learning, most of them turn off their cameras. Therefore only 20 % of students submitted their assignments. The economic condition of students' families also causes students to be passive in the learning process. In [12] this problem prevented them from participating in online classes as some of the parents could not afford to provide reliable smartphones for their children. The parents who have to work do not have enough time to pay attention to their children's learning process at home. These challenges make it difficult for teachers to carry out online teaching maximally.

The phenomenon of online silence has disturbed teachers by making them 'struggle awkwardly to handle student learning' [52]. Unlike offline silence where one can observe visible reaction [53]–[55], silence in virtual settings involves factors such as delayed communication [56], self-perceived behavior unknown to teachers [57], the need to work at one's own pace and within individual mental spaces [58]–[60], and the cognitive load of learning content [61]–[63]. Such difference between face-to-face and virtual contexts shows that silence is not context-free [64] but is often governed by factors such as self-discipline [65], learner cautiousness [66], stress [67], anxiety [68], [69], self-inhibition [70]–[73], cultural influences [53], [74], and personality [75], [76]. Being confronted by such factors, teachers need to manage student learning by organizing choices [77], providing intensive guidance [78], enhancing social networks [79], [80], optimizing mindful space [81]–[83] as well as encouraging peer harmony [84], [85] and self-truthfulness [86]. Although the digital age allows getting in touch with anyone anywhere on the planet instantly, humans continue to live in a time of loneliness and complicated human relationships [87], [88].

3.3. Teacher's creativity in online learning

The unavailability of a reliable learning management system (LMS), unreliable internet infrastructure, teachers' unpreparedness toward the online instructional process, students' low motivation as well as students' low participation have triggered the teachers to be creative to survive to help the students receive their rights to learning. These unpleasant situations have affected the teachers to develop a strong sense of positive attitude due to feeling of being responsible for their students' learning success. The absence of reliable LMS has forced teachers to find free and easy-to-use LMS to help them teach online. Students' negative attitudes toward joining online classes have also inspired them to find ways to make them engage more in the learning process. They searched for teaching strategies that might help the students to get involved more actively in online classes, explored learning websites to find instructional resources as teaching materials, and created interesting and less threatening activities to improve the student's learning motivation. As such, it is not surprising that they ran activities to energize the students. This has confirmed that teachers' positive emotions could develop their sense of creativity in the online teaching process and help them survive during the pandemic. This 'blessing in disguise' situation has increased the sense of creativity of the teachers, a quality which is highly required in online learning [12]. Furthermore, they said that in online learning, teachers need to be creative and innovative in providing activities to the students. This is understandable as students' involvement in class activities will improve the students' engagement.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the use of photovoice in portraying the lived experiences of EF teachers who are struggling to adapt to the virtual teaching and learning process. With this method, this study has managed to identify the emotions of the participants during the early stage of the adaptation, their emotions on the students' participation in online learning, and how they cope with the problems they encountered during the study. Unfamiliarity with online technology has been the dominant issue accumulated among the four participants. Therefore, teacher training on the use of online LMS can be recommended to help teachers to survive in this online era. This will include the provision of user-friendly LMS which can promote their creativity to develop teaching material and class activities to make the students engaged. Providing reliable online school infrastructures such as stable internet connection will also be beneficial to help the teachers survive.

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Adopting photovoice to explore teachers' experiences in online teaching (Bambang Widi Pratolo)






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