Mitigating Learning Loss and Accelerating Learning Recovery through New Learning Strategies in TEFL

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Abstrak

Pasca Pandemi Covid-19, banyak siswa di Indonesia mengalami *learning loss*. Setelah pemerintah memperbolehkan untuk melakukan pembelajaran tatap muka, tentu guru atau dosen perlu segera melakukan akselerasi untuk memulihkan pembelajaran (*learning recovery*). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan strategi yang digunakan untuk mengatasi *learning loss* dan mempercepat pemulihan pembelajaran. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif yang fokus pada perkuliahan bahasa Inggris di jenjang perguruan tinggi. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan yaitu wawancara semi terstruktur dengan beberapa dosen Bahasa Inggris baik di program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris maupun dari program studi lain di beberapa universitas di Indonesia. Teknik analisis data melalui beberapa tahapan, diantaranya reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan, dan pengecekan keabsahan data dengan menggunakan teknik triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat empat strategi yang digunakan untuk memulihkan pembelajaran, diantaranya dengan menggunakan strategi pembelajaran yang menarik, seperti *Drill and Practices* untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata, metode *cooperative learning* dan pembelajaran mandiri, merancang pembelajaran menyenangkan, dan menggunakan pembelajaran berbasis proyek. Dengan demikian, untuk mengatasi *learning loss* dan memulihkan pembelajaran dosen harus menyediakan waktu yang lebih, energi, dan strategi untuk mengatasi learning loss yang dialami oleh mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: *Learning loss*; Pemulihan pembelajaran; Strategi Pembelajaran; TEFL.

Abstract

In the post-pandemic era, many Indonesian students suffer learning loss. After the government allows the schools to have offline learning, teachers and lecturers should do acceleration for learning recovery. This study is aimed to describe strategies used by English lecturers to recover learning loss. This study is a descriptive qualitative study that focuses on English lectures at higher education levels. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with some English lecturers who teach in the English education department and other departments at several universities in Indonesia. The technique of data analysis includes data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and data validation through triangulation technique from data resources. The result shows that there are four strategies that used by the lecturers to mitigate learning loss and accelerate learning recovery for EFL learners, they are teaching using more interesting and various teaching strategies, such as Drill and Practise method to improve vocabulary mastery, promoting autonomous and cooperative learning, designing joyful learning activities, and implementing project-based learning. Therefore, lecturers perceive that to accelerate learning recovery, lecturers should provide more time, energy, and strategies to catch up with the learning loss suffered by students.

Keywords: Learning loss; Learning recovery; Learning strategies; TEFL.

INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of Covid-19 pandemic has impacted 180 nations, tainted more than 6,5 million people, and killed more than 383,000 people (as of June 2020). Additional to this health implication and failure of time. This epidemic has strained healthcare organizations, and the schooling system, wreaked havoc on jobs and economics, ran to job losses, and disrupted social life with lockdowns. However, now we have come to a post-pandemic era.

Post-pandemic is a state where people have passed the pandemic era and try to get back to normal life. The government had launched some policies related to this condition, one of them being a policy to reopen schools to have face-to-face learning. Distance learning or online learning during the pandemic had caused students to face difficulties in understanding learning materials. Moreover, students who lived in rural areas or students who come from lower socioeconomic circumstances suffered greater learning loss because of the limited internet access for online learning, so online learning became very challenging. As a result, many students in Indonesia experienced learning loss. Nowak shows that there is a difference in students' evaluation for their instructors between distance and traditional classrooms. The distance get lower scores in terms of instructor enthusiasm, helping with problems, presenting the courses, preparation, discussion, and explanation of the topic (Nowak, 2015).

Learning loss means a condition in which the students have little or no progress in their learning. It is also called learning poverty. It happens not only in Indonesia but also in several countries in the world. In the Netherlands, learning poverty increased up to 60% during the school closure in 2021. (Engzell, Per, Frey A., D Verhagen, 2021). In Mexico, learning poverty increased from 15,4% to 28,8% (Hevia, Felipe J, Calderon, 2022). Meanwhile, Indonesia lost 11 points on the Program of International Students Assessment (PISA) reading scale from March to July 2020 (Butcher et.al, 2021). It means that the students cannot achieve the learning objectives because of some limitations during online learning or learning from home.

Learning loss caused by the Covid-19 pandemic needs to be recovered since there were gaps in competencies that haven't been achieved by the students during the school closure. Learning recovery is concerned with restoring the teaching and learning environment after an incident. It is the process of healing physical and mental health in educating community members, as well as restoring personal facilities to re-establish a supportive learning environment. Its purpose is to improve and apply programs to ensure that the educational environment is restored.

The previous research mostly focused on the students' competencies and satisfaction or motivation during online learning. However, this study seeks information on the causes of learning loss and how lecturers effort to recover the learning loss. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze the determinant of learning loss, especially in EFL teaching and learning during the pandemic, and what learning strategies are used by the lecturers to mitigate the learning loss and accelerate learning recovery in TEFL. This study focuses on the learning loss suffered by university students after online learning, especially in English subjects.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is the descriptive qualitative method. According to Miles and Huberman,(Miles & Huberman, 1994), in qualitative research, the key informant is the researcher him/herself. Therefore, the researcher should be able to dig up data as deeply as possible for his/her research. Nassaji suggests that descriptive research is well suited for examining and understanding behavior and experiences in language teaching and learning.(Nassaji, 2015) . In this research, the data was collected through in-depth interviews with three English lecturers who were then called as lecturer A, lecturer B, and lecturer C. The interview is a semi-structured interview in which the researcher had prepared several main questions based on the research questions then some questions are added conditionally. The interview was conducted through

Whatsapp Chat and video call. The data from the interview then analyzed by reducing the data, displaying the data, and drawing a conclusion. Besides, the researcher also uses documentation, the document used in this research is teaching journals and task or assignment records. To validate the data, the researcher used the data triangulation technique. The triangulation technique used to validate the data is a triangulation of sources. According to Lemon and Hayes, the goal of triangulation is to help reduce bias and enhance the credibility of the data. Therefore, the trustworthiness of the data could be established (Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

From the interview, the data shows that most EFL students experience learning loss because they did not take the lecture seriously. The following are the description of students' condition in online learning.

Table 1. students' condition in online learning

Lecture	Students' condition in online learning
A	Students are too relaxed, students are often late in submitting assignments, and students complete tasks by googling without paraphrasing.
B	Students have low learning motivation, only a few students keep their cameras on during Zoom meetings,
C	Students have difficulties in speaking, writing, and grammar accuracy.

Lecturer A said that the students were even too relaxed while joining online learning even though they did not understand the essence of what they were learning. Further, she mentioned that the students were often late in submitting the assignment, and they mostly searched for the answer by *googling* without reading and paraphrasing.

Lecture B also mentioned that most of her students had low motivation in online learning, she said that during the lecture, only a few students opened their cameras. The reason for switching off the camera is to minimize the data use so that they will not spend much data joining lectures. However, this condition is not real since some students admitted that they switched their cameras off to do other activities, such as working, cooking, and even lying in bed while listening to their lecturers. This reality proves that most of the students were not interested and less serious about joining online learning. Meanwhile, Lecture C added that EFL learners suffer a lot in speaking and writing, especially in lexical resources and grammatical accuracy. Both aspects seem difficult to do maximally in online learning.

Determinant of Learning Loss

According to the data, learning loss was caused by several factors, such as limited control and assistance from the lecturer and limited activities. The data from 3 lecturers are displayed in the following table.

Table 2. Determinant of learning loss

Lecture	Determinant of learning loss
A	Lack of motivation, indiscipline.
B	Limited activities in online learning, difficulties in doing assignments individually.
C	Limitation of online learning, students cannot do pair-work and group discussion.

Lecturer A said that in online learning, the lecturer had often told the students to be active in learning, to ask what they did not understand, and to do the assignment on time. However, the reality showed that the students had a lack of motivation, they kept silent when they did not understand, and they were often late in doing the assignment. When this condition happened, the lecturer could not do anything because of limited control. The lecturer only could give the students motivation and little punishment such as reducing scores for the students who were late in submitting the task.

Furthermore, lecture B said that limited activities in online learning could also become one of the determinants of learning loss. In online learning, especially in teaching English as a foreign language, there should be various strategies and activities. However, the reality showed that only particular activities could be done through online platforms, such as explaining lessons, having presentations, and doing exercises. However, for speaking practices in pairs, it was difficult to be done through video conference. As a result, the lecturer gave the students a project to make a video of speaking practice, upload the video on Youtube, and send the video link in the class to *Whatsapp* group. But in fact, most of the students did not practice their speaking, instead, they read a text. These limited activities surely could be determinants of learning loss. Lecture C also added that practicing dialogue, and doing a presentation cannot be done maximally in online learning so students' speaking competencies are getting worse.

Learning Strategies in TEFL

In higher education in Indonesia, English is determined as a compulsory subject or called as MKDU (General Basic Subject) which is taught in all departments or study programs (BSNP, 2010). However, English is still considered a foreign language. In this case, teaching English becomes very challenging since the teacher or lecturer not only teaches the structure of the language but also motivates the students to use the language properly. Some learning strategies that are commonly used by lecturers are group work discussion and presentation. However, these activities seem improper in nowadays conditions since students suffer learning loss during online learning.

New Learning Strategies for Accelerating Learning Recovery

There are four strategies for learning recovery: *First*, having variation in learning. By having variations in teaching strategies and approaches, teachers could find and improve the students' weaknesses. In online learning, the duration of learning is very limited, only thirty minutes per credit, so the English subject only has sixty minutes for each meeting. This duration is used by the lecturers to explain or give instructions for assignments without any feedback. Therefore, after the pandemic, in offline classes, the lecturers used Drill and Practices strategy to improve the students' vocabulary mastery. By applying this strategy, the students could repeat dan practice particular vocabulary related to the topic of study. These activities help them to remember vocabulary, practice pronunciation, construct sentences based on rules of structures, and communicate them orally.

The *second* is designing more interesting instruction for learning. Online learning seems monotonous and boring, therefore lecturers should make an interesting activity in their teaching and learning process. The joyful activities of teaching and learning could increase students' learning motivation which will lead to the improvement of their competencies.

Third is promoting students' autonomous and cooperative learning. The lecturer should be able to motivate the students to do autonomous learning to catch up with what was missing from online learning. The lecturers provide several platforms and learning resources that are accessible and free of charge which can be used by the students to improve their English competencies individually. Besides, they also do activities of

cooperative learning such as group-work discussion, text analysis, and error analysis. Those activities are done in groups, then they get feedback directly from the lecturers.

Fourth is Project-based learning. This method could also help the EFL students to recover from their learning loss since the lecturer and the students could meet directly, and do a project on a certain topic. The lecturers could control the learning process, and facilitate some interesting practices in using the language

Discussion

After the government launched a policy to reopen schools, teachers should identify the learning loss suffered by the students and design strategies or instructional which match the student's needs. Teaching based on the students' needs and competencies could help the students who suffer learning loss. Page et al. suggested that effective teachers are a crucial part of supporting learning recovery. (Page et al., 2021)

The schools and universities in Indonesia have been opened about two years ago. The process of teaching and learning has been conducted offline and online, even some universities have conducted offline classes. However, it is still challenging to have the students active in the classroom since the atmosphere of active and joyful learning still needs more effort. The students had missed some competencies that they should achieve. Therefore, lecturers need to redesign the materials or curriculum to suit the student's learning needs and basic competencies. According to UNICEF, an unmatched curriculum when children start entering formal schools also causes many children unable to reach the learning objectives at their education level because the curriculum and instruction do not align with their learning needs (UNICEF, 2019).

Besides, English subject which weighs 2 credits is insufficient to make students proficient in English. According to Rokhyati, it is caused by a lack of exposure to the learning environment. English in Indonesian higher education focuses on academic purposes such as reading and writing scientific English texts (Rokhyati, 2013). Therefore, to enable the students to communicate In English, lecturers should provide various activities that improve the students' speaking proficiency. Based on the result of the study, the lecturers used some strategies to catch up with the learning loss, such as having various learning activities for each meeting, using more interesting instruction, using both autonomous and cooperative learning strategies, and project-based learning strategy. The lecturers must have different types of students and teaching experiences, therefore their strategies vary. Those strategies are applied as a form of remediation and effort to recover from the learning loss. Angrist et. al suggest that the students should get sufficient remediation to help them recover from learning loss, or they will continue suffering the learning loss even after they back to school. (Angrist et al., 2021)

CONCLUSION

Many students experience learning loss as an effect of school closure. This study aims to describe the English lecturers' perspective on the determinant of learning loss and what learning strategies are used by the lecturers to mitigate learning loss and accelerate learning recovery after the pandemic era. The data which was gained from the interview shows that there are several options that lecturers could choose to accelerate learning recovery for EFL learners, they are teaching using more interesting and various teaching strategies, such as drills and practices as an exposure to vocabulary mastery, promoting autonomous and cooperative learning, designing joyful learning activities, and implementing project-based learning. To summarize, new learning strategies are very essential to mitigate the students' learning loss and accelerate learning recovery in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

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