

## **CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH LECTURERS IN TEACHING ENGLISH SKILL SUBJECTS IN THE NEW NORMAL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to identify the obstacles faced by lecturers teaching English language skills courses and to examine the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify the study participants from the English Department of LIA University, Jakarta. Data were collected using a researcher-designed interview guide questionnaire. Thematic analysis was conducted to derive emerging themes. The results identified three main challenges faced by English teachers: challenge is to find a medium of teaching that is user friendly, lack of student's participation, and challenges in designing tasks appropriate to students' cognitive levels. Respondents reported several coping strategies, including updating with the latest technology, particularly the newest features offered, is crucial in improving the effectiveness of teaching English skills, keeping up with the latest advance and being committed to professionalism as an educator to give the best for the students. The study suggests that English teachers should continue to uphold their enthusiasm to provide quality education and make learning more accessible and interactive.

**Key words:** English skills; new normal; teaching strategies; teaching English

### **ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi hambatan yang dihadapi oleh dosen yang mengajar mata kuliah keterampilan bahasa Inggris serta untuk mengeksplorasi strategi yang mereka terapkan untuk mengatasi tantangan ini. Teknik purposive sampling digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi partisipan penelitian dari Departemen Bahasa Inggris Universitas LIA, Jakarta. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan panduan wawancara berbentuk kuesioner yang dirancang oleh peneliti. Analisis tematik dilakukan untuk menemukan tema-tema yang muncul. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi tiga tantangan utama yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa Inggris: sulitnya menemukan media pengajaran yang ramah pengguna, kurangnya partisipasi mahasiswa, dan tantangan dalam merancang tugas yang sesuai dengan tingkat kognitif mahasiswa. Responden melaporkan beberapa strategi penanganan, termasuk memperbarui diri dengan teknologi terbaru,*

*khususnya fitur-fitur terbaru yang ditawarkan, yang sangat penting dalam meningkatkan efektivitas pengajaran keterampilan bahasa Inggris, serta tetap mengikuti perkembangan terbaru dan berkomitmen pada profesionalisme sebagai pendidik untuk memberikan yang terbaik bagi mahasiswa. Studi ini menyarankan agar para guru bahasa Inggris terus mempertahankan semangat mereka untuk memberikan pendidikan berkualitas dan membuat pembelajaran lebih mudah diakses dan interaktif.*

**Kata Kunci :** Keterampilan berbahasa Inggris; Normal baru; strategi mengajar

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the landscape of education has undergone a seismic shift, compelling educators worldwide to adapt rapidly to the demands of remote or hybrid teaching environments. Educators need to understand the approach to learning in the new normal to carry out learning while still avoiding COVID-19 exposure (Mertayasa & Indraningsih, 2020). Among the academic disciplines significantly affected, English language instruction stands out as a focal point of challenge and innovation. This research delves into the experiences of English lecturers grappling with the intricacies of teaching English skill subjects amidst the "new normal." From navigating digital platforms to maintaining student engagement, educators face an array of hurdles in delivering effective instruction. However, amidst these challenges, emerges a narrative of resilience and adaptation, as instructors develop and employ coping strategies to navigate this unprecedented terrain. This study seeks to illuminate the multifaceted dynamics of teaching English in the digital age and explore the innovative approaches employed by lecturers to overcome obstacles and foster meaningful learning experiences for their students.

The sudden shift in the teaching and learning process due to the global pandemic has introduced numerous challenges for both English language teachers and learners. According to Atmojo and Nugroho (2020), English language teachers in Indonesia faced difficulties in designing materials and providing feedback. Additionally, English teachers struggle with implementing effective methodologies and activities to enhance engagement. Teaching English at the high school level is particularly challenging due to the complexity of English concepts. In an online classroom setting, teachers encounter obstacles such as internet connectivity issues, which hinder the teaching process. Teachers now require students to complete activities and exercises at home, with online assistance guiding them through the learning process. The preparation, discussion, and execution of these activities pose significant challenges for English teachers. An article concluded that re-orienting the curriculum towards student-centeredness positively impacted student performance, learning experience, and subject evaluation. Specifically, student-centered strategies fostered a strong social context for learning and provided students with a shared experiential framework to explore the technical aspects of the curriculum (Barraket, 2005).

The theoretical framework for this research topic, drawing upon Social Cognitive Theory, posits that the challenges faced by English lecturers in teaching English skill subjects in the new normal are influenced by their cognitive processes, observational learning experiences, self-efficacy beliefs, and coping mechanisms. According to Social Cognitive Theory, individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling of others' behaviors, as well as through their own direct experiences.

In the context of teaching English skill subjects in the new normal, English lecturers observe and learn from their own experiences as well as those of their peers and colleagues. Their self-efficacy beliefs, or their confidence in their ability to successfully perform teaching tasks, play a crucial role in how they perceive and respond to challenges. English lecturers with high self-efficacy are more likely to perceive challenges as manageable and to employ effective coping strategies to address them, while those with low self-efficacy may experience greater difficulty in adapting to the new normal and may be more prone to stress and burnout.

Moreover, the modeling of coping strategies by experienced colleagues or mentors can serve as a valuable source of support and guidance for English lecturers facing challenges in the new normal. Observational learning and social modeling processes enable English lecturers to learn from the successful coping strategies employed by others and to adapt these strategies to their own teaching contexts.

Overall, Social Cognitive Theory provides a theoretical lens through which to examine the cognitive processes, observational learning experiences, self-efficacy beliefs, and coping mechanisms of English lecturers in the face of challenges in teaching English skill subjects in the new normal. By understanding these factors, educational institutions and policymakers can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms to enhance the resilience and effectiveness of English lecturers in digital learning environments.

## **METHOD**

This is a narrative inquiry inspired research design that allowed for participants to share their teaching experiences in English without much input on questions from the researchers as they partook of it. This technique will give the participants a lot of time to share their experiences.

The researchers conducted open-ended interviews as the main data collection instruments using a structured questionnaire. [In this case, an open question was used to make it so that people could take part in the survey and get their opinion across Porst 2011] To keep respondents on track, interviewers prompted them with brief clarifying statements and asked further questions to get at specific details (Dillman & Christian, 2005). The interviewers recorded responses, which means that researchers had to note down answers for each respondent in the questionnaire. An open and semi-structured interview guideline was designed by the research team comprising a few question items directly related to challenges under consideration.

**Tabel 1**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Male/Female</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Level of students</b>
P1	M	Master	.>10 years	32	All levels
P2	F	Master	> 10 years	35	intermediate
P3	F	Master	>10 years	46	intermediate
P5	F	Doctor	> 10 years	44	All levels

The data for this study were collected through interviews using a semi-structured approach, with questions concentrating on their experiences during teaching in class. The questions were asked to the lecturers and the researcher took note and summarized the answers. Data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns or themes (Braun, 2006). Figure 1 illustrates the process of analyzing data through thematic analysis. Initially, the interview data were transcribed

verbatim and thoroughly reviewed to develop initial focus codes. Coding involves labeling and organizing the interview data to uncover different themes. An inductive coding approach was used, where codes were derived directly from participant statements.

The researcher initially labeled words or phrases that indicated significant and frequently repeated themes. Subsequently, the codes were categorized based on the identified patterns. The categories identified in this study include challenges related to large class phenomena and actions taken to address these issues. Each label was assigned a different color to represent a broadly defined category. The process continued with integrating categories using selective coding to identify themes that answer the research questions. Conclusions drawn from the final themes were then compared to existing theories and research. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data analysis, researchers conducted triangulation and member checking with all participants to achieve validity based on data saturation (Creswell, 2015; Rifah et al., 2021). Triangulation, by examining a single phenomenon from multiple perspectives, helps establish a reliable level of truth. Researchers verified information from informants through in-depth interviews and then filtered the data to extract key information.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Teaching in the new normal significantly differs from previous practices. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered lifestyles across various aspects, including educational approaches. Lecturers in English classes, particularly those focusing on

skills, have found teaching increasingly challenging. They must adapt to the evolving learning patterns of students, which differ markedly from those of previous cohorts.

In this research, participants shared the challenges they have faced in teaching English language skills classes since the onset of the new normal period.

Participant 1

**“The biggest challenge is to find the media of teaching that are user friendly. Several media were supposedly set to do a video call only, and did not include relevant features for teaching.”**

From the interview, user-friendly instructional materials appear as one of the main sticking points in digital education. This creates a problem where technology limitation, inconsistency of the instructor and students are influencing its quality, alignment with digital learning outcomes

Technological Limitations: Zoom and Skype, established with a business meeting in mind provide limited educational features such as breakout rooms for group work and integrated assessment tools & interactive whiteboards (Hodges et al., 2020). In order to offer a practical learning environment, teachers often have to be multifaceted in technologies, this is why the tedium and futility. Even worse, teaching with poor instructional materials can compromise the quality of education. Without it, teachers might start losing the interest of their students.

Participant 2

“The transition from traditional classroom settings to online platforms such as Zoom has brought about significant challenges for educators. One prominent issue is the awkwardness and reduced engagement that occur when students turn off their cameras and microphones during online sessions. This shift can adversely affect the quality of teaching and the overall educational experience.”

The other difficulty relates to the Online Environment. One of the fundamentals in a physical classroom is face to face interaction hence teaching and learning go hand-in-hand. Nonverbal cues are critical because they allow for teachers to observe student facial expressions, body language (Borup et al., 2014). But these are often non-existent when displayed in an online setting - especially if we log on to remote sessions with cameras off and microphones muted. Without these cues, teaching becomes more a monologue of the wind through your hair and at worst leads to an awkwardly transactional experience.

Concerns about the decreased participation in online learning are serious. It gets harder for teachers to establish an engaged learning environment when students are not actively participating. According to Chen et al. (2010), engagement is essential for learning because it fosters critical thinking, deeper comprehension, and information retention. Lower levels of engagement and interaction can result from the passive character of online classes, where students may stay mute and invisible. This lowers the quality of the educational experience as a whole.

Student involvement and teacher quality are directly related. Students that are actively involved in their education are more likely to cooperate with classmates, ask questions, and take part in discussions—all of which improve the learning process (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005). On the other hand, ineffective teaching occurs when students lack interest in the material. Instructors could find it difficult to maintain student interest, address individual needs, and provide timely feedback.

Possible Solutions to address these challenges are to encourage Camera Use by establishing norms and expectations for camera use can help recreate the sense of



presence and connection found in physical classrooms. Encouraging students to turn on their cameras can facilitate better interaction and engagement (Bedenlier et al., 2020). The second one is interactive tools. Leveraging interactive tools and features available on online platforms can enhance engagement. Tools such as polls, breakout rooms, and chat functions can make online sessions more interactive and participatory (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

### **Participant 3**

#### **“The main difficulty is how to increase engagement between teacher and students”**

One of the main difficulties highlighted in the interview is how to increase engagement between teachers and students. Engagement is a critical component of effective education, influencing students' motivation, participation, and learning outcomes. In both traditional and online educational settings, fostering a high level of engagement requires deliberate strategies and practices.

Engagement refers to the level of interest, curiosity, and involvement that students exhibit towards their learning. High engagement is associated with improved academic performance, deeper understanding of the material, and greater satisfaction with the learning experience (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Conversely, low engagement can lead to disinterest, lower achievement, and higher dropout rates (Fredericks et al., 2011).

Some challenges in Increasing Engagement such as distractions and multitasking, in both classroom and online settings, students may face numerous distractions that compete for their attention. The second is lack of Interaction: Engagement often suffers when there is insufficient interaction between teachers and students. In online settings, the absence of physical presence and non-verbal cues can

make it harder to create a sense of connection and community (Borup, West, & Graham, 2012). The third is monotonous teaching methods: Traditional, lecture-based teaching methods may fail to capture students' interest and imagination.

To address these challenges and enhance engagement, educators can implement several strategies:

1. Active Learning Techniques: Incorporating active learning techniques such as group discussions, problem-solving activities, and hands-on projects can make learning more interactive and engaging. Active learning encourages students to participate actively in their education rather than passively receiving information (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).
2. Use of Technology: Leveraging technology can enhance engagement by making learning more interactive and accessible. Tools such as interactive whiteboards, educational apps, and online collaborative platforms can provide diverse and engaging learning experiences (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012).
3. Building Relationships: Building strong relationships with students can foster a sense of trust and belonging, which is crucial for engagement. Teachers can create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment by showing interest in students' lives, providing personalized feedback, and encouraging open communication (Cornelius-White, 2007).
4. Interactive Content: Utilizing multimedia resources such as videos, simulations, and gamified learning experiences can make lessons more dynamic and appealing. Interactive content can capture students' attention and cater to different learning preferences (Mayer, 2003).

5. Formative Assessment: Regular formative assessments can help keep students engaged by providing ongoing feedback and opportunities for improvement. Techniques such as quizzes, polls, and peer reviews can make assessment an integral part of the learning process (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

6. Student-Centered Learning: Adopting a student-centered approach that allows for more student autonomy and choice can increase engagement. By involving students in decision-making processes and giving them a say in their learning paths, teachers can foster a greater sense of ownership and motivation (Weimer, 2002).

#### **Participant 4**

**“ Technology is not something new to me, I could adapt to it easily, but the most difficult thing was their participation during lecture”**

Lack of student participation in class is one of the big problems in the new normal era. Maybe this is because they have been studying passively online at home for a long time. This makes learning difficult in skills classes. Meanwhile, in the English skills class, the requirements for student participation are quite high because they have to practice a lot and produce the language actively.

The reasons to the lack of student’s participations are found by Sanchez (2019) in their research which are diversity of the students , physical barriers, underuse of existing resources, as well as an educational response lacking in organizational and didactic strategies, and the lack of teacher training of various teaching method that can be adopted.

Technology has really helped make classes more interactive and attractive, but more participation is expected from students, such as expressing opinions, thinking critically, asking questions or providing answers, which are expected in skills classes. Some teaching strategies that can be implemented to increase student's participation in class, such as discussion, peer-teaching, interview, role play, debate, and presentations.

### **Coping Strategies**

#### **Participant 1**

**“I tried to ask students picked randomly to participate in the learning activities, such as asking their opinion about the materials discussed. This way may help me monitor students who fully attend the lecture/class.”**

During interviews educators discussed the useful approach they uses to improve student engagement randomly picking students to join in learning tasks. This technique promotes active involvement and helps in monitoring student focus during lectures or classes. To keep all student engage and ready to participate, teacher can involve randomly chose student in sharing their thought on the topic under discussion.

This method breaks the routine of traditional lectures, encourag passive audience member to become active contributors. Moreover, it aids in pinpoint individual who may need extra assistance by offering a prompt feedback based on their input.

Engaging students randomly in education activities enhances active learning inclusive nature responsibility and allows for the development of critical thinking and expression of their ideas. It creates a classroom where everyone is motivated to be attentive and get ready for discussions. Yet instructors have to find equilibrium between this approach with motivation and affirming feedback to establish environment that supports learner comfort. While engaging learners without warning can prove quite

effective it's essential for educators to nurture an atmosphere where all feel at ease contributing even when they might feel anxious about unexpected participation, thus balancing the approach with encouragement is crucial.

## **Participant 2**

**“We learned a lot and fast to try adapting with the teaching activities.”**

The conversation focuses on the rapid learning and adaptation process teachers have had to go through in order to stay up with the changing nature of the classroom. This quick flexibility has proven essential in keeping up good instruction while adapting to new problems in education.

One of the most distinctive aspects of contemporary educational experiences has been the necessity of swiftly adjusting to new technologies and instructional approaches. Teachers now need to quickly become up to speed on digital technologies, online resources, and cutting edge teaching methods. This rapid learning process has been necessitated, especially in reaction to disturbances like the COVID-19 epidemic.

Numerous obstacles were brought about by the quick change, such as technical issues, the requirement for new skill sets, and the necessity to preserve instructional quality (Hodges).

But it also offered great chances for advancement and creativity in the field of education. Instructors become more adaptable and resilient, which are important qualities in the continually changing field of education.

Quick adaptation has enabled teachers to carry on providing high-quality instruction in spite of extraordinary conditions. Students now have a better, more

interesting educational experience because of teachers' capacity to incorporate new technology and approaches into their lesson plans (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

### **Participant 3**

**“Technology is not something new to me, I could adapt to it easily, but the most difficult thing was their participation during lectures. the best way for me was calling their names one by one to ensure they’re listening”.**

According to the interview, while the teacher found it easy to adjust to new technologies, getting the students involved in lectures proved to be the most tough element. The teacher discovered that calling each student by name was a useful tactic for resolving this problem and ensuring their attention and participation.

The teacher's technological comfort made the switch to digital teaching resources and platforms easy. This competence was a big help in keeping the teaching flow because it freed them up to concentrate on the lesson material rather than troubleshooting technological issues (Bennett & Maton, 2010). Even if utilizing technology was simple, getting students interested and making sure they participated actively in lectures remained the main challenge. Students may be more easily distracted and less likely to actively participate in an online setting without explicit guidance (Hrastinski, 2008).

To combat this challenge, the educator implemented a strategy of calling on students by name. This approach serves multiple purposes: It holds students

accountable for their participation, making them more likely to stay focused and attentive.

#### **Participant 4**

**“I think updating myself with the latest technology, particularly the newest features offered, is crucial in improving the effectiveness of teaching English skills. Also, it’s a good idea to explore types of devices that have trusted quality. “**

This interview emphasizes the importance of updating the latest technical achievements as well as the use of high-quality equipment to increase the effectiveness of teaching English language skills. This active approach to incorporating new tools and features can greatly improve the training experience and outcomes. Maintaining most of the technology is also a valuable task for teachers who aim to improve one of their teaching methods.

New technical equipment is often introduced with innovative features that can make teaching more interactive, interesting and effective. For example, applications for advanced language training, virtual reality (VR) environments as well as artificial intelligence (AI) can provide deep and personalized learning experiences for students (Godwin-Jones, 2015).

Updated technology relays a direct sign of providing good English learning skills ‘How the Use Effects in Teaching Interactive Grammar Material, a good Pronunciation guide as well as Instant Feedback Mechanics can help and assist students to enhance their language skills with effective practice (Chapelle 2001). In addition, multimedia like videos and podcasts provide students with extended learning material

so they can refine their listening skills along the way closely approximating real-world language use.

Discover more from qualified quality devices In this respect, the reliability of high-performance devices helps ensure that extremely favorable technological tools are continued without interruption or technical limitations to maintain a smooth teaching flow.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, locating instructional materials that are easy to use continues to be a major obstacle in the transition to online learning. Through prioritizing the creation of all-inclusive, user-friendly platforms and offering sufficient guidance and assistance, the education industry may surmount these obstacles. In the end, these initiatives will raise the standard of education in the digital age by fostering the development of a more productive and interesting learning environment. Transitioning from traditional classroom environments to virtual ones poses distinct problems that may affect the caliber of instruction. Teachers can maintain the effectiveness and fulfillment of online learning for both themselves and their students by addressing issues related to engagement and interaction. The transition from traditional to virtual learning environments can be facilitated by embracing a mix of technology resources, encouraging classroom practices, and focused training programs.

Increasing engagement between teachers and students is a multifaceted challenge that requires a combination of strategies and practices. By incorporating active learning techniques, leveraging technology, building strong relationships,



utilizing interactive content, implementing formative assessments, and adopting student-centered approaches, educators can create more engaging and effective learning environments. Ultimately, enhancing engagement is crucial for improving educational outcomes and fostering a lifelong love of learning.

Updating oneself with the latest technology and using high-quality devices are crucial steps for educators aiming to improve the effectiveness of teaching English skills. These practices enable the integration of advanced features and tools that enhance interactivity, engagement, and learning outcomes. By staying technologically adept and selecting reliable devices, educators can provide a more enriched and effective educational experience for their students.

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