TEACHER STRATEGIES THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING SYSTEM TO FOSTER STUDENT READING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

Learning strategies have an essential role in achieving learning objectives, especially in improving students' reading skills. The pandemic made the Government Issue new rules for implementing the learning system in the classroom using a blended learning system. This system also affects the teacher's teaching strategies as a facilitator in the classroom to help the process of students' thinking skills improve reading skills in a text or video. This research was conducted with the aim of; (1) identifying the teaching strategies carried out by teachers through a blended learning system to foster students' reading skills at MTsN 1 Pasuruan, (2) finding out the strengths and weaknesses in teaching reading skills through a blended learning system. In this research, the researcher uses a qualitative approach, and the type of research is a field study using three instruments: observation, interview, and documentation. The data obtained have been processed in several ways. The first is to reduce the data, the second is to displays the data findings, and the last is to describe the conclusions. Participants in this study were English teachers of class VIII and class VIII students at MTsN 1 Pasuruan. This study indicates that three strategies are learning used by English teachers through a blended learning system, namely Question-Answer Relationships, Think aloud, and reciprocal teaching. As for the way the teachers implement strategies for the online teaching stage of the Question-answer relations teacher through WhatsApp and E-learning groups, and during the offline teaching stage, the teacher uses think aloud and reciprocal teaching in the classroom.

Keywords: Teacher strategies, blended learning, reading skill

ABSTRAK

Strategi pembelajaran memiliki peranan penting dalam mencapai tujuan pembelajaran, terutama dalam meningkatkan reading skill siswa. Keadaan pandemi membuat pemerintah mengeluarkan aturan baru dalam penerapan sistem pembelajaran di dalam kelas menggunakan blended learning system. Hal ini juga mempengaruhi strategi pengajaran yang di lakukan oleh guru sebagai fasilitator di dalam kelas untuk membantu proses kemampuan berfikir siswa dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca pada sebuah teks ataupun video. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk; (1) mengindentifikasi strategi pengajaran yang di lakukan oleh guru melalui blended learning system untuk meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa di MTsN 1 Pasuruan, (2) mengetahui kelebihan dan kekurangan dalam pengajaran reading skill

melalui blended learning system. Dalam penelitian ini peneliti menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan tipe penelitian studi lapangan dengan menggunakan tiga instrumen yaitu observasi, interview dan dokumentasi. Data yang di dapatkan telah di proses dengan beberapa cara, yang pertama mereduksi data, kedua memaparkan hasil data temuan dan terakhir menggambarkan kesimpulan. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah guru bahasa inggris kelas VIII dan siswa kelas VIII di MTsN 1 Pasuruan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada tiga strategi pembelajaran yang digunakan oleh guru Bahasa Inggris melalui sistem pembelajaran blended yaitu Question-Answer Relationships, Think aloud dan reciprocal teaching. Adapun cara para guru dalam mengimplementasikan strategi, untuk tahapan pengajaran online guru Question-answer relations melalui group WhatsApp dan E-learning dan saat tahap pengajaran offline guru menggunakan think aloud dan reciprocal teaching di dalam kelas.

Kata-Kata Kunci: Strategi guru, blended learning, skill membaca

INTRODUCTION

English is now the first foreign language required of Indonesian students in the national education system. This condition is inextricably linked to the flow of globalization, in which English is the primary communication tool in interactions between countries and international students. The ability to communicate in English is now highly valued in a variety of fields, both academically and professionally. Every product we see every day has written in English on it. As a result, English language skills must be instilled in students early to follow global trends and have good English skills..

According to Ismail, Syahruza, and Basuki (2017), reading plays a critical role and becomes a significant need in daily activities for anyone seeking information, and reading is a necessary skill for English as a foreign language student. Reading is essential for most learners to master to succeed in learning English and in any classroom where reading in English is required. Learners will progress and develop in all areas of learning as their reading skills improve. Reading is one of the most critical skills for anyone, including students, who want to further their education. According to Mickulecky and Jeffries (2004), reading is essential because it improves students' general language skills in English. It can help sharpen students' thinking patterns in English, expand students' vocabulary size and memorization, and improve their writing. It can be an excellent way to learn about new ideas, facts, and experiences. As a result of this point of view, the reading ability has been considered to help students expand their understanding of English.

The Covid-19 outbreak swept the world in 2020, disrupting activities usually carried out by the community, including learning and teaching. Through online learning classes, it propels the field of education. During the pandemic, the rapid transition to online education encourages teachers to focus on perceived learning outcomes and student satisfaction. Researchers are aware, and many studies have found the transition to online learning coercive. However, online learning has benefits such as self-paced learning (Amer, 2007), interactivity (Leszc-zyski et al., 2018; Wagner et al., 2008), flexibility (Smedley, 2010), and opportunities. After undergoing online teaching and learning activities for approximately a year, the government decided to use a blended learning system as a first step to transition

from online learning to offline and online simultaneously. This system is also the government's preparation for the new normal era. According to Mosa (in Rusman, 2011) explains that blended learning combines two main elements: learning in the classroom and online learning. This online learning uses the internet network in which there is web-based learning. This learning utilizes multimedia technology such as video streaming, virtual classes, and email. The blended learning system has the effect of shifting teaching and learning activities for teachers and students where students and teachers are asked to implement blended learning strategies. However, implementing teaching strategies encountered several obstacles due to blended learning. Teachers and students were required to adapt quickly through the blended learning system.

Based on these problems, the difficulty of learning utilizing the blended learning approach and the complexity of learning reading skills, this transformation will undoubtedly result in new things in different teacher teaching tactics. Many teaching tactics will be used to maximize the process, but each strategy will have its own set of positive and negative attributes. The strategies will be investigated in greater depth through this research. to get the suitable teaching strategies to help teachers improve students' reading skills through a blended learning system.

In previous research, Pitaloka (2020) argued that E-learning offers some benefits like flexible learning, challenging learning, understandable materials, ease of use, and some variations in learning. However, problems such as poor internet connection, limited time in reading comprehension exercises and quizzes, and exact wordings for short answer tests are encountered. In this study, the method used was an interview and observation with the object being studied was the teacher's strategies through a blended learning system. based on previous research, the next researcher is interested in creating updates and conducting research related to the teacher strategies through blended learning system to foster student reading skill.

METHOD

In this study, researchers used a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research is an inquiry strategy that emphasizes the search for meaning, understanding, concepts, characteristics, symptoms, symbols, and descriptions of a phenomenon, is focused and multi-method, natural and holistic, prioritizes quality, uses several methods, and is presented narratively. The type of research used is field research. The researcher will focus on examining the background, interactions, and conditions of particular students and conducting field studies to obtain data from sources by describing the conclusions obtained to be the research results. According to Suryana (2010), field research attempts to investigate the historical context of the current situation and the interactions of individuals, groups, and society.

Meanwhile, the researcher will provide an interview to find detailed information about the object to be studied by asking implied questions to the respondent. Nilamsari (2014) explains that the interview is a process to obtain in-depth information which is carried out between the interviewer and the resource person. For the interview, the researcher used a semi-structured interview. This type of interview is often used in qualitative research, which allows the interviewer to explore new developments in the causes of interviews.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research results are presented related to teacher strategies through blended learning to foster student reading skills at MTsN 1 Pasuruan and to find out the strengths and weaknesses when using the strategies in teaching reading skills through the blended learning system.

1. Finding

To answer the first and second study's objectives, semi structured interviews were performed with an English teacher and two students from MTsN 1 Pasuruan. Teachers use blended learning strategies to teach reading skills, such as online classes or e-learning, as well as in-class instruction. In each blended learning phase, the phases of teaching reading have their unique strategies. Furthermore, the researcher has collected the data using the instrument of this study to indetify the teacher strategies in teaching reading through blended learning.

RC: "*...as our learning system has transformed into blended learning system, so do our means of delivering reading materials, which is both via online and face-to-face offline class. So it's very different from before, we can always deliver reading material face to face...*"

Then, It can be concluded that there are two stages in teaching reading skill in blended learnin, blend of e-learning and in-class delivery. The two main stages/phases have their own strategies. It is tstated in the interview that one of strategies in teaching reading is Question Answer Relationship (QARs) for the e-learning phase, and two strategies, Reciprocal Teaching and Think Aloud in in-class delivery phase, as stated by RC in the following:

RC: "*...For teaching reading itself, in each phase of online or offline learning there are separate strategies. During online learning or e-learning, as a teacher gives the text to students and then asks questions about the topics contained in the text and students answer these questions, meanwhile in in-class learning we will implement think-aloud strategies such as the teacher providing opportunities for students to retell ideas or information they get from reading activities, besides that, reciprocal teaching strategy is also used, students being given material by the teacher then students are asked to return to explain the material that has been given...*"

This is also supported by CIQM's statement as a student, that blended learning transforms the learning system into an online phase through e-learning that also use WhatsApp group as a media as well as through in-class delivery:

CIQM: "*...Learning during the e-learning phase in reading activities in English subjects requires more independent study, so we were asked to answer several questions related to the reading*

that had been given. Quite difficult but we can discuss it with friends via the WhatsApp platform…".

MRA who is also a student of MTsN 1 Pasuruan also stated that a review of learning as well as practice is done orally after they are given reading materials, when the teacher implement Think-Aloud strategy. Besides that students are also asked to re-explain the material or the main points of a texts or other forms of writing that have been given by the teacher to test students' understanding during reciprocal strategy:

MRA: *"...Then during face-to-face learning we are asked to express our thoughts or opinions when we finish reading a text that has been provided, but sometimes we ask the teacher a lot about the meaning of the vocabulary. We were also asked to re-explain the previously learned material orally..."*

The English teacher at MTsN 1 Pasuruan also stated that blended learning at school was carried out within 1 week by e-learning or online, then the next 1 week, the learning was conducted in in-class delivery or face-to-face. This is all in accordance to the school regulations, as stated by RC:

RC: *"...Learning through e-learning and in-class delivery is carried out every week, then so on. So for example, this week the students are given online learning, then next week they will do face-to-face meetings. For this provision, it has been regulated by the higher-ups and regulators so it is up to the teacher who implements and regulates the learning strategy…"*

From the statement above, we can see that the blended learning system implemented in schools within only a week, namely e-learning and in-class delivery alternately are two separate provisions from the school centre, but the teachers are free to use the strategies suitable to the needs of the school, the needs of students as well as the reading ability to be achieved by the teacher to the students. To know the strengths and weaknesses of teaching reading through a blended learning system, the teacher and students aslo give informations as follow:

CL: *"…Through the blended learning system, several strengths can be felt by students and teachers, where learning strategies can be more varied because they can be applied in the classroom and outside the classroom. Another strength is that students can play an active role in deepening the material provided through online teaching. The teacher also provides material in power points and gives quizzes online. Learning time in class is also reduced to reduce the boredom that students have…"*

Researchers realize that learning using a blended learning system provides several facilities for teachers to apply more varied teaching strategies and provides opportunities for students to explore their knowledge more broadly. In line with the RC statement, CIQM said that:

CIQM: *"…Teaching using a blended learning system makes it easy for us, Sis, because we do not always have to come to class. We can also use technology to help us learn, such as filling out questions via Google form and discussing via WhatsApp Group.…"*

In sum, it can be concluded that learning through a blended learning system makes it easy for teachers to use more varied learning strategies to help students easily understand the material provided by the teacher. Students also feel that learning is not boring because it can be done at school and at home so that students can further explore themselves to understand the material that is not given in class. However, the teacher and students also gave statements regarding the weaknesses they experienced when learning through the blended learning system, which made teachers and students have to adapt to the existing system, as stated by RC as an English teacher:

RC: *"…Teachers also experience difficulties through learning with a blended learning system because e-learning often experiences problems and must be maintained first. Sometimes signal constraints also affect teachers in teaching students online, hindering the learning process in the classroom. On the other hand, the problems in blended learning occur more often during online learning. Teachers have difficulty controlling students directly, so they do not know which students are learning and which are not. However, the teacher evaluates the student in face-to-face learning to solve this…"*

Based on the teacher interviews above, the weaknesses faced by teachers when learning through the blended learning system when online learning took place. This weakness is because teachers have to adapt to the existing system and connectivity constraints that interfere with learning in the classroom. It is also in line with student, CIQM said that:

CIQM: *"…Teachers also experience difficulties through learning with a blended learning system because e-learning often experiences problems and must be maintained first. Sometimes signal constraints also affect teachers in teaching students online, hindering the learning process in the classroom. On the other hand, the problems in blended learning occur more often during online learning. Teachers have difficulty controlling students directly, so they do not know which students are learning and which are not. However, the teacher evaluates the student in face-to-face learning to solve this…"*

Based on the interview above, the researcher can be concluded that were still the weaknesses faced both of teacher and students during blended learning system, Most of the weaknesses students face are that the assignments given by the teacher are very different between offline and online, and online learning requires a good internet connection. For teachers, the weaknesses they face are the irregular teaching time because they have to teach in two different systems and internet constraints when learning online.Furthermore, after almost a year of students running the blended learning system, they feel more comfortable than fully online learning because students and teachers are still given time for face-to-face learning

2. Types of Teacher Strategeis through Blended Learning System

In this section, the researcher presents the results of the interview process related to the types of teacher strategies that are use in blended learning system. These results are in line with Isaac (2010), a teaching strategy is a broad plan for a lesson that comprises organization, instructional objectives, and a list of methods that will be used to put the strategies into action.

a) Question-Answer Relations

It is a type of teacher strategy that focuses on the student's knowledge about something they have already read before the teacher asks questions. The question-and-answer relation guides pupils' learning depending on the reader's information to answer questions. This strategy was used by the English teachers at MTsN 1 Pasuruan to ensure that students read the text that they had been asked to read through the teacher's online learning instruction and clarified that they understood the text.

b) Think Aloud

A part of the types of techer strategies that focus on student learning center. Students use the think aloud approach to voice their thoughts while they read. It teaches students to recognize the distinction between reading and comprehending a material by expressing their opinions. Think aloud was used by the MTsN 1 Pasuruan english teacher in teaching reading comprehension strategies. It is used to help students to express their opinion and understanding of the text verbally.

c) Reciprocal Teaching

The reciprocal teaching reading strategy invites students and teachers to share roles by letting both lead the discussion about a given passage. This strategy has four focuses in its implementation to guide the discussion: predicting, generating questions, summarizing, and clarifying. Reciprocal teaching was the last strategy teachers used when teaching reading skills in offline sessions. This strategy is used to provide students opportunities to further explore their abilities in terms of sharpening reading skills to find main ideas and detailed information obtained while reading.

3. The strengths and weaknesses teaching reading skill through blended learning

The strengths of teaching reading skills through a blended learning system include teachers' ability to use various teaching strategies to improve student's reading skills in both online and offline learning. The ability for students to explore their knowledge in broader reading skills online, after which the teacher will evaluate it during offline learning, and the ability for the blended learning system to make teaching and learning activities enjoyable. Furthermore, the weaknesses of teachers controlling student learning when teaching online, signal and network problems when learning online, and complicated e-learning systems are all weaknesses of this system. However, based on the benefits and drawbacks discussed above, the blended learning system gives schools and teachers new options for developing teaching strategies for students using technology.

Based on the results above, it can be concluded that the teacher uses three strategies to foster student reading skills through a blended learning system, (1) question-answer relations in online learning (e-learning), (2) think aloud and (3) reciprocal teaching in offline learning (in-class delivery). Through a blended learning system, teachers still search for the best strategies for teaching reading skills. Furthermore, when teaching student reading skill use a blended learning system teacher faced with several problems such as variety of strategies, learning time, and also the opportunity to use technology. on the other hand, the drawbacks of the blended learning system are internet connection, difficulty controlling online learning, and the e-learning platform that must be upgraded.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above we can conclude that through blended learning system, teacher could not implement as many strategies they are so used to in in-class delivery. Teachers combine several teaching reading strategies during both online and offline to foster students' learning skills. The teachers mostly begin a QARs during online session then reciprocal and Think-Aloud in in-class delivery.

In its implementation, the teachers will deliver the texts to the students via WhatsApp group then initate QARs relating to the text's topic. In Offline learning session, teachers encourage the students to think critically in reading the texts and then rexplain and rewrite the idea that they gain from the texts, teachers also implements reciprocal strategy during offline session in reading class to improve the creativity and the active participation of the student. Although some students still face difficulty during blended learning as they have to adapt to two different teaching-learning systems, online and offline, poor internet connectivity becomes one of the obstacle both for students and teachers. However, this system also provides advantages that can be felt by both teachers and students. Through this system, teachers easily develop reading skill teaching strategies, students are not bored, and also during the online stage students have the opportunity to explore their knowledge independently.

In conclusion, teachers use three different strategies to teach reading skills in Blended learning system. They are QARs during online learning (e-learning), think-aloud and reciprocal teaching in offine learning (in-class delivery).

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