THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON YOUNG STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH

Chelsea Victoria Martan ¹, Alfiyah Wahidah ², Elvina Penarik ³
Department of English Language Education, Faculty of Education, Esa Unggul University, Jl. Arjuna Utara No.9, Kb. Jeruk, Kec. Kb. Jeruk, Kota Jakarta Barat, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta 11510
chelseavictoria69@student.esaunggul.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a matter of serious concern for the world, it impacts all aspects of societies, one of them being the education sector. This can be seen from the closure of schools in various regions in Indonesia. Given the importance of education, the government has issued a policy to implement online learning so that education can continue even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The practice of online learning can certainly be a solution during the COVID-19 pandemic because there is no need to go to school, there is no crowd, or direct contact. But globally, more than 635 million students remain affected by this disruption to education. Up to 70% of 10-year-olds from low- to middle-income countries are unable to read or understand a simple text, up from 53% pre-pandemic according to an article written by UNICEF. English is an important subject to many Indonesians and Covid-19 made a large impact on young students who haven't had much understanding of this language, unlike the more mature learners. Although wearisome, there are some benefits from online learning to learn English. This paper highlights the positive and negative impacts of Covid-19 on learning English as second language for young learners.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, English as Second Language, Online Learning, Young Learners

Introduction

As we know English was the first spoken language in the early century and it is now the most common language in the world, that's why it is called the international language. This has, of course, several reasons why English is an international language; English is widely spoken when communicating, especially in English speaking countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and New Zealand. Later, the British nation itself had a history of taking over many countries in the world over such a long time that the spread of English was spreading so rapidly. But in Indonesia, English is made into a foreign language.

In a modern era like this, English would be a great necessity, both in education and in career. Many people from an early age, young age, to adulthood learned English. In this study, we will be researching for young students, particularly those from kindergarten. There are actually some opinions that learning English is better taught in elementary school or in middle school. But that opinion comes back to the child and the parent who supports them in learning English. At a young age children's brains easily digest lessons given by teachers, then their powers of thought and memory are faster and easier to receive lessons. Especially if the teacher presents it using an interesting learning method, it will add enthusiasm to the child. At kindergarten in English materials on the basis includes skills such as reading, speaking, writing, and listening. This was done so that the students could master the English asa whole

Indonesia is now back to normal after about 2 years of COVID-19. This outbreak had affected many sectors such as the economy, business, and many more. In the discussion of this journal, it will be particularly from one of these sectors, the education sector. The education sector is one of the most affected. The government decided its policy for all teaching learning activities was accessed online by means of zoom meetings, Google meet, Google classroom, and e-learning. Students are learning with a *PJJ* (remote learning) system that is accessible anywhere and at any time. Early in this online learning activity students are still eager to carry out the activity, but because the COVID-19 outbreak took nearly 2 years, it caused students to become bored and tired of carrying out online studies. This of course

impacts the student who performs education online.

Through the foregoing exposure, the study was prepared to answer statements regarding:

1. What positive effects that online learning gave to kindergarten students?
2. What negative effects that online learning gave to kindergarten students?
3. How are we going to sustain the positive effects of online learning?
4. How to make learning English online fun for young students?

Method

This research method employs qualitative descriptive research methods. Moleong (2007:6) who employs qualitative research as a purposeful study to understand phenomena experienced by the research subject. More appropriate and suitable are used to examine matters relating to the study of the subject's behavior, attitudes, motivations, perceptions, and actions. Hence, the use of qualitative methods because the study described how this affects young English students. This research's goal is to find the effects of COVID-19 and online learning for young learners who are learning English as second language (ESL). Young learners that this research covers is kindergarten, ranging from the age of 5 to 6 years old, from Santa Laurensia Suvarna Sutera. The pandemic was felt by all of us no matter our background, this is why there are many studies and articles that have been made surrounding the impacts of COVID-19 in each aspects and sectors of our lives. Therefore, using a qualitative method where the source of its thinking will be derived from journals, papers, and websites, made sense. The instrument that this research use is from observation during the height of online learning, from the period of 2021 to 2022.

Result And Discussion

COVID-19 was and still is the biggest disease that attacks our immune and respiratory system. As of 2022, the whole world is trying to live with this type of flu and go back to normal. But our way of living has changed since the pandemic started. People are more socially aware of hygiene and health. But the other aspects have also changed such as education.

Kindergarteners, are considered young and still new to the world, different with the older students who have developed self-regulation and attention control skills as well as technological skills and finding solutions to problems. That is why, kindergarten students should also be paid attention amid pandemic. Surely, it impacted them, during and after online learning life. Here is the discussion about online learning for young students.

A. What positive effects that online learning gave to kindergarten students?

Online learning hasn't always been a popular choice, but it became a necessity during the pandemic and now a popular method after the 2 year self-isolation life. The impacts can be positive and negative from the researcher's observations.

The positive impacts of online learning using E-learning media for young students are:

1. Improves ICT skills from a young age

ICT skills are crucial for today's day and age. We almost do everything online nowadays, from shopping to talking with others. Having online classes pushes students to use these skills and implement them on everyday lives. Back then, it is good enough to be able to type on keyboards, but now young students can learn how to operate their laptops and internet which we couldn't do when we were at their age. All in all, it is a great way to train and practice their ICT skills from an early age. Many of the KGB students in Santa Laurensia Suvarna Sutera was able to understand how to change their Google meet's background without their parent's help. It became a fun game for the teachers and students.

2. Improve students' independent learning abilities

Online learning depended on independent learning because there are no teachers or authoritative figures to help them throughout lessons. They will learn to take personal responsibilities and even increases their curiosity with the help of the internet. One student called "C", could tell her parents that there is a homework and she will upload her own assignment online.

3. The students can have more attention from the parents.

At the same time, since they are staying home more often, the parents can have more attention for their children which offline classes couldn't give. In some way, it is another form of bonding with the parents.

4. E-learning saves more time and money.

The tools that a student need for online learning are only a good internet connection and a laptop or phone. No matter where they are, they can always access classes as long as those tools are available. So, no need long commuting or refueling one's motorcycle to be able to study. For example, a student called F, was able to attend class when his parents are working out of town. This benefits both the child and parents.

5. Students can be more equipped thanks to the vast world of the internet.

Internet has been our source of information and ideas, it is especially useful For English learners. Learning English will be greatly sharpened if educators can use the right kind of content for the students. Usually in learning you have to bring in native speakers directly to be able to learn the correct English pronunciation, but now it can be done online through online English learning sites. Many of the KGB of Santa Laurensia Suvarna Sutera were able to follow many of the English teacher's online activities, especially online games.

B. What negative effects that online learning gave to kindergarten students?

In addition to the positive impacts of online learning using e-learning media, of course, there are also negative impacts. The negative impacts are as follows:

1. Academic difficulties

Technical, practical, and social issues can hinder the learning experience. For example, when one of the participants (teacher or student) have unstable internet connection that made it hard to communicate to each other.

2. Engagement Issues

This is because of the nature of online interaction that makes it hard for classes to be engaging. Offline classes gives us the opportunity to have a 2 way communication, see expressions, and many more. Online interactions tends to feel more "robotic" and this can also hinder the learning process. After all, learning is a very human thing.

3. Impact on mental health

There is evidence that online learning made a huge toll on mental health. Humans are social creatures, it is logical to understand why this deeply impacted their wellbeing.

4. Environment

It is no secret that young students are sensitive to environment. Not only the teacher-student interaction that was lacking in online learning, but also external stimuli that distracted them when learning because there were no teachers to remind them during class. Not only that, but unsupportive family environment can lead to worsen academic competencies and weaken student's satisfaction in online learning. A lower happiness level at home can result from child abuse and domestic violence, worsened parent-child relationships, and restricted personal space. Students that are exposed to domestic violence and are in an abusive household would hardly gain a positive online learning experience. A student called "Y" was abused during online learning and it exposed abusive actions towards the other children that hasn't seen one.

C. How are we going to sustain the positive effects of online learning?

Effective learning must also provide an abundance of ways for students to be able to use language that is appropriate for their age. Kids are kids, not mini adults. They are not adults like us. Children have characters, aspirations, needs and desires that are with adults and that is something natural. So based on these conditions, the basic implications and principles of learning English in kindergarten level, it is best if learning is

carried out based on the following principles:

- The teacher must provide a fun learning experience and give students a position to be active.
- Teachers must be able to help students develop and practice using language through a series of collaborations.
- Teachers must be able to use learning activities that are planned, organized, multi-dimensional and developed based on themes.

- Teachers must be able to provide meaningful learning input with actions that support learning (scaffolding).
- Teachers must be able to make English lessons and Indonesian language lessons as well as their culture that complement and strengthen each other.
- Teachers must be able to integrate English with other knowledge according to the age of the students.
- The teacher must provide an understanding of the ongoing learning objectives clearly and if students have shown success, the teacher needs to provide adequate feedback.

D. How to make learning English online fun for young students?

English education at kindergarten level is synonymous with teaching a baby the mother tongue. In general, children at school do not know English yet, so this will have an impact on the pattern of teaching English at kindergarten level which is more introductory.

English as well as Indonesian is a communication tool that contains several characteristics, namely systemic, arbitrary, spoken, human and communicative. It is called systemic because language is a system consisting of a sound system and a meaning system. *Manasuka* because there is no logical relationship between meaning and sound. It is called speech because in language the most important thing is sound, because even though some are found in written media, in the end they are read and produce sound. To achieve communicative goals, an appropriate and good approach is needed in the learning process. One approach that is appropriate to use is the communicative approach. Approach is the level of assumptions or attitudes about language and language teaching.

It can be concluded that the communicative approach is one of the appropriate approaches to be used in learning a foreign language, because this approach emphasizes the function of language as a communication tool so that learners can communicate in a good target language, and facilitate the process of receiving the language. The three-aspect view in learning this language, namely the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects have been applied for quite a long time in the practice of language learning in our schools. Another cognitivist view states that learning a language must integrate what it learns, namely knowledge which includes knowledge that is factual, conceptual, procedural, and knowledge that one already has (metacognitive) with the ability to think gradually starting from the ability to remember, understand, apply, analyze, assess, and build what he learned into a single unit or into a new form/structure. The basic principles of learning English in elementary schools are as follows:

- Ability to understand surroundings
- Learning indirectly (Indirect Learning)
- Development of imagination
- Activation of all senses
- Learning activities that change every time
- The need for reinforcement through repetition
- The need for an approach to students individually

Effective learning in children should remind the occurrence of language acquisition (Language Acquisition) instead of language learning (Language Learning). This language acquisition mechanism is carried out by providing an abundance of opportunities to use language as a tool for creating meaning and sharing meaning and by providing reinforcement (scaffolding) to help children function communicatively during their growth. Therefore, effective teaching and learning must involve natural communication between students and teachers, between students and students and also based on activities in the form of learning activities.

Here are a few things that educators can do to make learning English a fun experience for young students:

1. Get to know your students

Research shows that focusing on student's strengths and interests can help them thrive. Being supportive is vital for a successful online learning experience. We also need to keep in mind the student's learning styles. Some students learn better visually, some learn better with auditory, and many more.

2. Equip yourself with ICT knowledge and use online tools to your advantage

It's not just students that needs to learn about the technology, but also teachers. If teachers are

not well equipped with the main tools for teaching (online classes), it will make the whole learning process boring and even unbearable for the jumpy and easily distracted young students. There are many online tools that teachers can use to make online learning fun. Use online games or colorful videos about English to get their full attention.

3. Engage students with asking and communicate more.

It is crucial than ever to engage them during an online class. If the educators fail to engage in such way, young students will distract themselves elsewhere.

Conclusion

COVID-19 made a huge impact on all sectors and areas of life, education is one of them. Since the pandemic started, many schools decided that online learning would be the best choice. English is an important subject to many Indonesians, but like many schools, it had to be taught with online learning. Young students that this research covered was kindergarten students. They are still very young and people need to give more attention to them and their struggles with online learning. There are many positives with online learning, like Improving ICT skills from a young age, Improving students' independent learning abilities, The students can have more attention from the parents, saving more time and money, and students can be more equipped thanks to the vast world of the internet. However, the negatives of online learning affected their academics, engagement, mental health, and environment. Ways to sustain the positives can be done by providing a fun learning experience and give students a position to be active, helping students develop and practice using language through a series of collaborations, using learning activities that are planned, organized, multi-dimensional and developed based on themes, providing meaningful learning input with actions that support learning (scaffolding), making English lessons and Indonesian language lessons as well as their culture that complement and strengthen each other, integrating English with other knowledge according to the age of the students, and lastly, providing an understanding of the ongoing learning objectives clearly and giving feedbacks. In addition, get to know the students,

educators must be equipped with ICT knowledge and online tools to their advantage, and be engaging with students to make learning English more fun and enjoyable for the young students.

References

Zheng, X.X, Zhang, D.X., Lau, E.N.S., Xu, Zj., Mo, P.K.H., Yang, X., Mak, E.C.W., Wong, S.Y.S. 2022. *Primary School Students' Online Learning During Coronavirus Disease 2019: Factors Associated With Satisfaction, Perceived Effectiveness, and Preference*. 13. 1664-1078.

Vanbuskirk, Sarah. 2022. The Impact of Distance Learning on Kids. *https://www.verywellfamily.com/the-impact-of-distance-learning-on-kids-5118430*. Accessed at 3 December 2022.

Supriyanti, Umi. 2022. Dampak positif bagi pembelajaran bahasa inggris di masa pandemic. *https://joglojateng.com/2022/05/30/dampak-positif-bagi-pembelajaran-bahasa-inggris-di-masa-pandemi/*. Accessed at 3 December 2022.

Pereira, Alli. 2020. How to make English teaching interesting online: 5 little-known tips. *https://www.teachaway.com/blog/make-english-teaching-interesting*. Accessed at 3 December 2022.