Strategies of Teaching and Learning for Young Learners during the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the strategy and activities in the teaching and learning process during the pandemic in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten and to investigate the teachers' problems during the process of teaching English to Young Learners during the pandemic. This research used a descriptive qualitative method, i.e., case study. The research data are derived from observation, interview, documentation, and document analysis. The subject of this research was 3 classes (with 18-21 students each class) in B level (age 5-7). The interview is semi-structured with three teachers and a school principal as informants. The theory used in this research is the teaching and learning theory from Brown (2001). This study concluded that Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten applied blended learning and applied both synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning during pandemics. Besides, to support the teaching and learning process, the school has a special program namely, orientation and induction programs, and reflection and follow-up programs. In addition, the problems of teachers are mainly about the adaptation, emotional bonding, limited time allotment, students' mood, and focus, students' social skills and characters, teachers' preparation, parents' involvement, lack of facilities, and technical skill and cost. The results of this study have important implications for classroom practice as it can be used as a resource and as the foundation for a more detailed information strategy of the teaching and learning process during the pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been changed by covid-19 in terms of the way of its process. All formal schools, as well as non-formal schools, needed to be closed and schools should apply online learning. The schools should know how to make sure the quality of their student's learning activities during the online classroom (Zhao et al., 2020; Yao et al., 2020). Furthermore, Tukan (2020) stated that

teaching English using an online application is the best method for the time being. Therefore, finding the best strategy to solve the problem during teaching the students should be created by the teacher (Rosalina, et al., 2020). The teacher should make sure each student has good learning during the online classroom. However, during the process of the teaching and learning process during the pandemic, many problems appeared especially in the early stage of education (Rasmitadila, 2020; Wood et al., 2021). According to Prihatin, et al. (2021) teaching young learners is entirely different and more challenging compared to teaching adult learners. While adults are much more independent, mature, and knowledgeable, children are just kids who like to play, have fun, and need extra attention. Moreover, teaching English to young learners, particularly during a pandemic is a kind of a big challenge for many teachers and schools for young learners.

This study had been conducted in one of the bilingual kindergartens in Buleleng regency, Bali province. That kindergarten is Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten. According to the school principal and the information from some teachers in elementary schools in Buleleng regency, this kindergarten has been known by people for 15 years for the success in teaching the students with many achievements and the student's readiness to continue the study to a higher level of education. From the information gotten by the authors from the preliminary observation, Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten has been running a special online learning strategy during the pandemic which is different from other kindergartens mostly have in the Buleleng regency. From that fact, the authors studied deeper and conducted research about strategies of the teaching and learning process for young learners during the pandemic in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten. This research aimed to investigate the process and activities of teaching and learning English conducted during the pandemic and the problems faced by the teachers during the process of teaching during the pandemic.

From the preliminary observation, Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten applied blended learning, orientation, and induction as well as reflection and follow-up procedures to deal with challenges and problems in running the teaching and learning process during the pandemic. The process and activities, as well as the teachers' problem in teaching and learning English to young learners during the pandemic, were revealed in this research to be used for teachers and other schools to prepare, conduct, and evaluate the process and activities during teaching and learning process in English teaching to young learners during the pandemic. It also might help other researchers to conduct other research related to this topic. The theories that were used in this research are (1) teaching and learning theory from Brown (as cited in Heriansyah, 2012), (2) Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) theory from Pinter in 2006, and Cameron in 2001 (as cited in Juhana, 2014), (3) modes of learning, Synchronous and Asynchronous learning (as cited in Riwayatiningsih & Sulistiyani., 2020). The studies that had been conducted by Putri (2021), Artini (2013), Lapitan et al. (2021), Orlov et al. (2021), Hikmah et al. (2021) related to the strategy in the teaching and learning process for young learners and their challenges during the pandemic, it was found those two topics were separately found. In this study, these two topics were explained and investigated deeply.

METHODS

This type of research was a qualitative descriptive study, i.e., the case study. The descriptive research method was used to obtain information about existing conditions and has been widely used in educational research (Ary et.al as cited in Arifin, 2020). Descriptive research is aimed at describing "what exists" concerning variables or conditions in a situation. In detail, a case study is defined as a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) that the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibits) the operation of some identified general theoretical principles (Mitchell as cited in Rhee, 2004).

This study chose Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten as the setting of the study. The subject of this study was B1 Class with 21 students, B2 Class with 18 students, and B3 Class with 21 students and the teachers of each class. The age of students was 5 until 7 years old. The authors used the data collection technique as observation to the teaching and learning process and activities of B1, B2, and B3. The observation was done when the teacher did virtual teaching via zoom to each class and when face-to-face learning was conducted. Besides, the interview technique was also done with 3 teachers of B level individually one by one and one school principal to get some information about teachers' problems. The interview process had been recorded by a voice recording application. In addition, to get some information to support the main data the technique of documentation, note-taking, and document analysis were also conducted toward syllabus, lesson plan, and the health protocols that Aura Sukma Insani had. The instrument used were a guided observation sheet, interview guide, field note, smartphone and laptop, and the researcher as the key instrument.

The qualitative data theory by Miles & Huberman in 1994 (as cited in Hashimov 2015) was used to analyze the data. The process of data analysis is data collection when the interview and observation, data reduction was when the data gotten selected and classified into the related topic with this study, data display was when the data showed on the result and discussion and data verification or conclusion drawing. Data triangulation was used also because the method triangulation involves the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon (Polit & Beck, as cited in Salvador, 2016). This type of triangulation, frequently used in qualitative studies, may include interviews, observation, and field notes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Findings
Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten applied blended learning during the pandemic for the process of teaching and learning. Blended learning in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten means the students learn online and offline. Online learning means the students and the teachers have an online class conducted virtually via Zoom Meeting App and instruction video from students and the task given by the WhatsApp group. On the other hand, offline learning means the students learn at home from a learning package (task books, worksheets, a magazine, stationery, etc.).

As the authors presented in the previous chapter, the subject of this study is B class students who already know about literacy. It means they can write and read at least words and simple sentences already know numbers. B level has three classes, namely B1 Class with 21 students, B2 Class

with 18 students, and B3 Class with 21 students. Each class has divided into three clusters or small groups that consist of 6-7 students. Those groups are Group A, B, and C. The online class is conducted for five days, from Monday to Friday, 3 hours per day. It is divided into 90 minutes for each cluster/small group. The online class is started from 9.00 am until 12.00 pm on Monday until Thursday and from 9.00 am until 11.30 am on Friday. So, the teachers teach two small groups via Zoom meeting per day. For the rest of one group on that day who do not have a class via Zoom meeting, they are taught from the instruction video which is sent on WhatsApp group. The video contains guidance for students to learn the same material as their friends in the different groups so that they have the same chance to learn even though they do not meet via Zoom.

The Process and Activities of Teaching and Learning

The process of teaching and learning in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten during the pandemic has 3 main procedures, they are: 1) orientation and induction, 2) the teaching and learning process itself, and 3) reflection and follow-up. The following is presented the table of teaching and learning processes during the pandemic in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten.

Procedures in Teaching and Learning Process	Activities/Sub Steps	Description
Orientation and Induction	1. Parents' interview (early stage) 2. Parents' meeting in a small group 3. Limited orientation 4. Parents' interview (advanced stage).	In the first stage, parents are invited to come to the school for an interview session or discussion with the teacher before the academic year starts. It aimed as an introduction with teachers and the school. In the second stage, the parents were invited to listen and discuss the teaching and learning scenario during the pandemic. Then, in the third stage, the students were invited to come to school to know the school. It aimed to make the students feel the atmosphere and the situation of their school. The last stage is the parents' interview (advanced stage). It aimed to discuss with parents and teachers to know the development and all things about their children's education during their study for several months in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten during the pandemic.
Teaching and Learning Process	1. Introduction 2. Main Activity 3. Closure	For the introduction, in general, all of the teachers and students greeted each other to start the class, then the teachers checked the student's preparation (worksheet and tools needed for the learning process). After that, the students and the teachers sang several songs together, then prayed led by the students in two languages (Bahasa Indonesia and English). The teachers then checked the students' attendance and explained the activities that they would have on that day. For the last, the teachers asked the student's readiness to start the class.

		In the main activity, there were mostly 3-5 activities that students had. Usually, the activities were colouring, sticking, cutting, recognizing the name of the things, etc. are the main activities. Then the students were always asked to do reading and counting while the students were doing the main activities. Teachers mostly communicated with the students in English because, in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten, they taught English by instruction and using English vocabulary unconsciously during the teaching and learning process. All of the students were given chances fairly by the teachers to do reading and math practices. The teachers regularly checked the students' progress. The class was communicative with positive interaction during the teaching and learning process. The teachers always facilitated the students during the class. When the students finished their work, the teachers gave comments and feedback to the students' work. In the closing part, the teachers reviewed once again what they had learned together with the students. The teachers also thanked and praised the students for their good work. Then the teachers explained for the next meeting and announced something if there was. Students with the teachers said goodbye together.
Reflection and Follow-up	1. Memo book 2. WhatsApp feedback 3. Task books 4. Final semester report	A memo book is used as a letter to the parents about the students' performance at school or during their study every two weeks. Teachers also give feedback to students who learn from instruction videos. Parents submit the students' work on WhatsApp group, and the teachers always give feedback towards it. The other follow-up activity that teachers gave is task books. They are a square line book, a sticking book, and a drawing book for the students to do the assignment that the teacher gave, and it is submitted together with the portfolio of their task or homework. The last one is the final semester report as a complete report about the students' development and achievement in one semester.

Table 1: The procedures of teaching and learning process during the pandemic in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten

According to the table above, there are brief explanations about the description as well as the aims of each sub-stepson the three main procedures of the teaching and learning process during the pandemic.

Besides the process of teaching and learning, the kind of activities involved in students in English learning in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten during pandemic has been investigated. English learning is taught directly in the teaching and learning process as a kind of lesson. However, English is taught indirectly in communication and direct instruction. The activities that students had during the teaching and learning process are varied, such as colouring, sticking, cutting, reading, counting, and recognizing the name of the things. While those activities were conducted in the teaching and learning process, the teachers taught English indirectly by using English vocabulary and instruction to communicate with the students. The syllabus and lesson plan that Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten has a theme and sub-theme that is needed to be delivered with several materials. The lesson plan also has five areas that every meeting needed to be achieved, namely: (focus lesson, art area, math area, drama area, and language area). Thus, English learning is being taught to the students unconsciously to fulfil the five areas mentioned. From that fact, it can be concluded that based on the document of syllabus and lesson plan, English learning is not taught directly, but indirectly.

Problems that Teachers faced in English Teaching to Young Learners during Pandemic
The problems of teachers have been divided into two parts namely general problems and specific problems (problems about students, teachers, parents, and facilities). The problems, in general, are mainly about adaptation, emotional bonding, and limited time allotment. Moreover, the specific problems are about students' mood and focus, students' social skills and characters, teachers' preparation, parents' involvement, lack of facilities and technical skills, and cost.

General Problems
Adaptation
The adaptation among teachers, students, and parents became a big problem for teachers in teaching. Teachers and students usually meet and conduct the teaching and learning process face-to-face, however during the pandemic, they need to have an online class (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). Thus, make teachers and students are not used to be. The teachers need to learn about new technologies and have more preparation. The students also adapt to learning online. Moreover, the parents also have a new role at home to accompany their children during online class and as a teacher at home while their children have offline learning.

Emotional bonding
Online learning weakened the emotional bonding between students and teachers because they could not meet directly (Hikmah et al., 2021). Face-to-face learning usually can make students and teachers have direct interaction such as physical touches, direct eye contact, etc. By the indirect interaction, it is more difficult for teachers to build an emotional bonding which can affect the difficulties in teaching character to students toward the teachers and the learning process itself. It is supported by a statement of the teacher who said:

> *"There is a thing called emotional touch, so even though the lowest child in ASI (Aura Sukma Insani) here if we see directly, make a direct interaction, he will change. So we cannot build that emotion."*

Limited Time Allotment

The time allotment for online learning is only 90 minutes for each class per day. There is more struggle for teachers in delivering the material by that limited time (Nugroh et al., 2021).

> "*Our difficulty during face-to-face learning is honestly there is no because in terms of learning hours we have covered. Then in semester 2 full of preparation for elementary school, even we are also preparing the preparation. But if it is online, it is felt that we are chasing the material to get to the elementary school preparation because we cannot force the child, for example, the signal is broken, the main thing is having problems because the children cannot fully sit still on the camera but thankfully, class B that I hold, maybe we can teach it slowly, for example, if we look at A's camera, he is bored for example, we will tell him to pick up a toy, later, I'll call him back.*"

Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten has a program in preparing the students to be ready in facing elementary school. The material in the second semester must finish the program for elementary school preparation can be delivered. However, the teachers tried to maximize the teaching and learning process through instruction video and offline tasks.

Specific Problems

Students' Mood and Focus

The characteristics of young learners are easy to be bored and have a short time to be focused. Sometimes, the problem of connection and time waiting for their friends made them easy to be bored and lose their focus. Sometimes their mood also can be not good and easily change in a short period. This makes the teachers need to be more patient and have the creativity and innovative ways to make the students' mood and focus better (Mwinsheikhe, 2009). The teacher also stated:

> "*In the beginning, they might get bored quickly, so we will work it out ourselves. If we see that they are not focused, not enthusiastic, sometimes I ask questions about them, so children like to tell me anything about them, sometimes, like buying a new toy. So, they are up in the mood again, so we have to monitor the mood. But now that I am used to it, no one is in a mood or bored.*"

Students' Social Skills and Characters

Students usually can meet their friends and teachers to interact during face-to-face learning. However, during the pandemic, they could not meet many people like going to school to meet their friends and teacher. It made their social skill is lower than before (Hikmah et al., 2021), like what the teacher said:

> "*What I am more concerned with is how children socialize, whether it is with their friends or with other teachers. Because sometimes, for example, another teacher greets my students, and I ask them whether they know the teacher or not, they say they do not know. So they only know who their homeroom teacher is, so we have a lot of teachers here, but while online because that is the only teacher who appears on the camera, that is all they know. During PTM (face to face learning), every morning routine all the teachers gather, so from toddler to class B we tell the students all of the teachers here, so they become more aware of their surroundings.*"

They also can learn some good value from teachers and friends at school before the pandemic. Some good habits, such as waking up earlier, preparing themselves before going to school, sleeping earlier and, having a discipline in studying at home could not be applied during the teaching and learning process virtually in line with the statement of the teacher:

> "*So, it is a little difficult for the children now to wake up early, full of cellphones, activities are only followed at that time, if the class finished then they have finished studying, if they go to school they are full from Monday to Friday.*"

Teachers' Preparation

There is a difference between the preparation before teaching during the pandemic and before the pandemic. Teachers need to prepare many things such as media and worksheets to teach virtually (Holisoh & Fitriani, 2020). The teachers need to make sure the media and worksheets they use must be interesting. Thus, the students can be focused and motivated to study. When they can go to school before the pandemic, they can meet their friends to keep them motivated. However, keeping them to be motivated during online learning is hard. So, the teachers must prepare many things to get the students' interest. It is in line with this teacher's statement:

> "*It is more difficult to prepare. Very difficult. One is, how online it is very interesting, the first is the worksheet, the second is the supporting media to introduce the topics being taught, and the third is when there is such a thing as an enrichment program. We go to school, online, we are here oh, for example, there is colouring, we cannot just finish it, colouring is just waiting, no, we cannot. So, there is an enrichment program, so we have prepared a lot for this.*"

Parents' Involvement

During online learning, parents accompanied their children to join the online class. It made the parents see other students' performance and competence. Sometimes, parents compared their children to their friends. Thus, the students felt uncomfortable and did not want to join the class anymore. In addition, parents also felt that the teaching and learning process of their children is a competition. It made them tell their children or maybe did the students' tasks to make their children were seen to be smart. It affected the teaching and learning process because the teachers could not see the real students' competence.

Lack of Facilities and Technical Skill

The problems that come from parents are the technical skill that the parents have and also the facilities that they have. Facilities became the big issue that appeared in the problems of the teaching and learning process during the pandemic. Not all parents understand all of the technologies used in the teaching and learning process during the pandemic in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten. Some online applications were not familiar to the parents because some of them are specially designed for educational purposes. The parents have a different background of knowledge, circumstances, and area of work, thus making not all of them understand, have adequate facilities, and know-how to operate some kinds of educational apps (Wood et al., 2021). For that reason, the principal and the teachers of Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten did socialization in induction and orientation programs to inform about the application and other technologies that parents need to prepare before their children study. Parents need to have those apps, if they do not understand those applications or technology, they need to learn themselves

from some sources or can be helped by the school, but the key is handled by the parents themselves.

Cost

Teachers need to spend more cost to support online learning for buying the internet quota. The school has provided free Wi-Fi for the teachers. On the other hand, several problems came when the teachers together used it at the same time. Sometimes, the connection was lost, the signal was weak enough too, and the other reason is that often the quality of the picture and voice was bad so the teaching and learning process was disturbed and did not run smoothly. For those reasons, finally, the teachers decided to use the internet data that they bought themselves to make the teaching and learning process run smoothly. By that fact also, it makes the teachers need to spend more money to buy the internet quota. It became one of the teachers' problems related to themselves.

According to the data answering the first research question of this study, the theories that were used in this study were (1) Teaching and Learning Theory from Brown (as cited in Heriansyah, 2012), (2) Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) Theory from Pinter in 2006, and Cameron in 2001 (as cited in Juhana, 2014), (3) Modes of Learning, Synchronous And Asynchronous Learning (as cited in Riwayatiningsih & Sulistiyani., 2020) were connected each other with the result obtained. In addition, there were three procedures applied by Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten during the pandemic as their special strategy. They were orientation and induction, the teaching and learning process itself, and reflection and follow-up. Those procedures were integrated to make the parents support their children's studies, especially in the teaching and learning process. In addition, by giving feedback, reflection, and follow-up, the whole process of teaching and learning would be sustainable. The teaching and learning process during the pandemic in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten also applied both online and offline learning, which implemented synchronous and asynchronous learning as the type of online learning. Some findings of previous research from by Putri (2021), Artini (2013), Lapitan et al. (2021), Orlov et al. (2021), Hikmah et al. (2021) related to the strategy in the teaching and learning process for young learners and their challenges during the pandemic. So, in this study, the finding of teachers' challenges in teaching and learning process to young learners during the pandemic were new as data result to answer the second research question of this study. Several challenges were connected; however, several findings were not the same as the main problem or challenge found in the previous studies about the teaching and learning process but more detailed and united.

CONCLUSION

The result of the study revealed two findings, namely: (1) the process and activities during the teaching and learning process during the pandemic in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten; (2) the problems faced by teachers in teaching English to young learners during the pandemic in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten. For the first result, it was found that three procedures were applied in Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten as the process of teaching and learning during pandemic namely: orientation and induction, the teaching and learning process itself, and reflection and follow-up. In the second procedure, there are 4 stages in orientation and induction, are: 1) parents' interview (early stage); 2) parents' meeting in a small group; 3) limited orientation and 4) parents' interview (advanced stage). The second procedure is teaching and learning itself. It was divided

into three parts, they are the introduction, main activity, and closure. Moreover, the third procedure is reflection and follow-up. It has 4 parts, they are memo book, WhatsApp group feedback, task books, and final report. That result was connected to the main theory and supported each other. However, this result found was also different from the usual strategy that was used by other schools. So, it can be categorized that Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten has a special strategy for its teaching and learning process during the pandemic. For the second result, the problems of teachers have been divided into two parts they are general problems and specific problems (problems about students, teachers, parents, and facilities). The problems, in general, are mainly about adaptation, emotional bonding, and limited time allotment. Moreover, the specific problems are students' mood and focus, students' social skills and characters, teachers' preparation, parents' involvement, lack of facilities and technical skills, and cost. This result was described in detail which was not found in any other studies.

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