USING MICROSOFT TEAMS FOR TEACHING WRITING IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstrak

Pandemi COVID-19 menyebabkan seluruh sekolah di Indonesia harus melakukan pembelajaran *online*. Microsoft Teams adalah salah satu *platform* yang digunakan oleh sekolah untuk melaksanakan kegiatan belajar mengajar secara *online*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan penerapan serta kendala guru saat menggunakan Microsoft Teams untuk mengajar writing di SMP. Fokus penelitian ini adalah materi teks deskriptif yang harus dipelajari oleh murid kelas 7. Penelitian kualitatif ini dilakukan di salah satu sekolah negeri di Surabaya dengan melibatkan dua guru bahasa Inggris untuk kelas 7 dan mengetahui cara mengoperasikan Microsoft Teams dalam kegiatan belajar mengajar. Berdasarkan hasil observasi dan interview, Microsoft Teams menyediakan fitur-fitur sangat bagus untuk mendukung kegiatan mengajar. Hasil observasi dan interview juga menemukan ada beberapa kendala yang harus dihadapi oleh guru dalam implementasi Microsoft Teams untuk kegiatan mengajar seperti tidak bisa menjangkau siswa yang terputus koneksi dengan Microsoft Teams karena mengganti nomor telepon, kurangnya interaksi dengan siswa, dan koneksi jaringan yang buruk.

Kata Kunci: Microsoft Teams, teks deskriptif, mengajar writing

Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic causes all schools in Indonesia have to do online learning. In this case, Microsoft Teams is one of the platforms used by schools to hold online teaching-learning process. This research aimed to describe the implementation and teachers' obstacles while using Microsoft Teams for teaching writing in junior high school. It focused on the descriptive text material which must be learned by the seventh-grade students. This qualitative research took place in one of the public schools in Surabaya by involving two English teachers who teach seventh-grade students and knows how to operate Microsoft Teams for the teaching-learning process. Based on the observation and interview results, Microsoft Teams provides great features to support the teaching process. It also found that there are some obstacles that should face by the teacher such as cannot reach out to the students who have lost connection with Microsoft Teams because of changing the phone numbers, lack of interaction with the students, and have a bad internet connection.

Keywords: Microsoft Teams, descriptive text, teaching writing

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology in the language teaching and learning process is needed for both students and teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The improvement of language learning by using mobile devices is called Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) (Wong et al., 2012). MALL admits the learning process to take place easily and incessantly, in and out of the students' daily life, and connect formal in-class lessons with informal learning outside the classroom (Chwo et al., 2016). Schools have a certain online platform that is used for teaching and learning process in all subjects. Microsoft Teams is one of the online platforms used in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic to support the teaching and learning process. All of the students are helped by the school to have one account to sign in to Microsoft Teams and connect to their teacher. Moreover, they will have a notification when the teacher creates an online meeting or shares the assignment with them. They just have to open the application for attending the online meeting or do the assignment and the teacher can know whether they attend the online meeting or turn in the assignment, even just view the assignment.

According to Irawati (2015) and Nunan (1999), writing skill is the most difficult and complicated language skills to be learned, whether it is for first, second, or foreign language students (Irawati, 2015; Nunan, 1999). Nunan (1999) highlighted that producing a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing is the most difficult thing to do in learning a foreign language. Based on the Indonesian curriculum for junior high school, descriptive text is the first kind of text that should be learned by seventh graders students. In the descriptive text, there are some essential points that should be delivered by the teacher such as the

purpose or social function, the generic structure, and the language features used. In fact, the teaching and learning process about descriptive text material is not always done easily because the students have different difficulties in writing descriptive text.

The previous research conducted by Jayanti (2019) in SMPN 33 Padang found that 91% of students who participated in this research still have difficulties in writing a descriptive text. Jayanti (2019) analyzed the problems based on the following indicators of writing descriptive text, such as identification, description, language features, vocabulary, and mechanics. In identification, 39.1% of students were still categorized as fair to the poor which means that they had a problem identifying the object (things, animals, persons, etc.) clearly. In the description, students were still quite hard to develop their ideas to describe parts, qualities, and characteristics of the object so that they could not clearly visualize the readers. The biggest problem was in the language features. Most students were still poor in understanding simple present tense which encouraged them to have some errors such as in subject-verb agreement (omission of the suffix –s/-es/-ies), the differences between singular and plural, and the use of adjectives. Other problems were vocabulary which was still unsuitable with the context also the punctuation such as putting the commas (,) instead of the period (.) at the end of the sentence.

Based on the students' difficulties described above, Jayanti (2019) suggested the English teacher explain more deeply the generic structure and grammatical features so that the students can have better writing in the descriptive text (Jayanti, 2019). Descriptive text is not only constructed with some rigid rules in the form of sentences, but also composed by considering its purpose and the meaning of each structure, so the teacher needs to have enough knowledge of how those clauses make meaning (Noprianto, 2017). Vocabulary and punctuation are also part of writing descriptive text. Teachers should give explanations and examples of vocabulary, especially adjectives commonly used for describing things, persons, animals, and so on. By involving Microsoft Teams in the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic, it will help the students in learning descriptive text without worrying about whether they can learn from school or not because the teacher is always connected with them through mobile devices. In addition, it helps the teacher to deliver the material and assignment, also assessing the students more practically.

The Implementation of Microsoft Teams in the Teaching Process

Microsoft Teams is one of the applications used by schools for online learning because it has some great features to support the online learning. Microsoft Teams can create an online meeting completed with a recording feature for teachers to explain or discuss the material with students, share the material like teacher notes, create a quiz or assignment to check the students' understanding, a chat relay for direct communication, also give an easier way to checking the students' work by exporting the students' score to Excel (Ismail & Ismail, 2021). Teachers can use these features in each stage of the teaching process starting from pre-teaching until post-teaching.

In Pre-Teaching, teachers usually search the video related to the material for students' brainstorming. Then, teachers can share it through the conversation boards on the channels or create an assignment features in Microsoft Teams complete with adding the link or attaching the video. Next, the teacher asks students to watch the video and then make a summary or short explanation about it. Teacher lets them learn by themselves first before the teacher explains the whole material. Microsoft Teams has a feature to schedule the assignment in the future. It will help the teacher whenever they have another business so they just need to schedule the assignment by the time of schedule in school and Microsoft Teams will post it directly and announce the due date of the assignment. Furthermore, the teacher can also see whether the assignment is already turned in or even viewed and turned in late by the students.

In while-teaching, teachers can hold online meetings with students through Microsoft Teams online meetings for the teaching-learning process. Students can join the meeting through the link shared by the teacher through the conversation boards on the general channel. The features of online meetings in Microsoft Teams allow the host or teacher to share screens, open cameras and voices, even record the meeting while delivering the material (Pal & Vanijja, 2020). Student can also turn on their camera and voice when needed for discussion. In the first session, the teacher usually greets the students, leads them to pray, then asks the students whether they have already learned about the material that was shared by the teacher before or not. Next, the teacher lets them speak about what they have learned from the material and then discusses it. Teachers also ask which words or phrases they do not understand so the teacher can help them to understand it easily. Next, the teacher shows more detail of the material through a PowerPoint presentation and shares the screen so the students can follow the slide show of the PowerPoint presentation. Teachers also should explain how to do the assignment through Microsoft Teams and tell the assignment's due date. The assignment should be related to the materials to check the students' understanding.

Lastly, in the post-teaching teacher gives feedback on students' assignments and checks the understanding of

each student. They can also open discussion through the conversation boards on the channel whether there is a question about the assignment or the material explained before. On the last day of the weekly schedule for learning, students are able to tell about their experiences while doing the activities through Microsoft Teams. So if there are any problems related to doing assignments or discussing the material through Microsoft Teams, other students and the teacher will help them to find the solutions. In addition, the teacher should have a reflection on the teaching process including materials, strategies/activities, assessment, learning model, and purposes whether already implied effectively to the students or not.

Regarding to the explanation above, this study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How is the implementation of Microsoft Teams for teaching writing in junior high school?
2. What are the teachers' obstacles in the implementation of Microsoft Teams for teaching writing in junior high school?

METHOD

This study was qualitative research with a basic interpretative study in descriptive design. The phenomenon in the class when the teacher implemented Microsoft Teams for teaching descriptive text was observed naturally. Furthermore, interviews were held to gain more data about the implementation and teachers' obstacles while using Microsoft Teams in the teaching process related to the research questions.

This study was conducted around a month in one of the public schools in Surabaya which has complete facilities to assist the teaching-learning process during the pandemic. The participants of this research were two English teachers who teach in the seventh-grade class and know how to operate Microsoft Teams for teaching writing, especially in descriptive text material, appropriate to the criteria needed by this study. Both teachers also have already followed the workshop and training about using Microsoft Teams for teaching process.

For collecting the data, observation and interviews were used for this study. In the first week, the researcher asked for school permission to hold this study and made an appointment with the participants to do the observation and interview. In the second and third weeks, the researcher observed the phenomenon that happened in class such as teachers' preparation before the teaching-learning process and teachers' explanation during the teaching-learning process. The approach that was used in this observation was observed as a participant, so the participants already know that they are being observed. The interview focused on the obstacles faced by the teacher during the implementation of Microsoft Teams in

the teaching-learning process from their point of view. A semi-structured interview was used there so the participants had the freedom to answer based on their opinion whether it is different from the prediction. The researcher asked the participants about the challenges or the obstacles during the teaching process and allowed to share their opinion about what factors cause the problem and how to confront the situation and even solve the problem.

The first step to do after collecting the data was transcribing the gathered data into printed words. Re-checked the data was also needed to make sure about the validity of the data gathered from the participants. According to Ary et al. (2010), the data in the qualitative research can be analyzed in three stages, organizing and familiarizing; coding and reducing; interpreting and representing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Implementation of Microsoft Teams for Teaching Descriptive Text in Seventh-grade Students

To describe the implementation and teachers' obstacles during teaching writing by using Microsoft Teams for seventh-grade students, the data of phenomena that happened during the teaching process in class and teachers' opinions about using Microsoft Teams for teaching descriptive text was gathered from the observation and semi-structured interview. Based on the teacher's views, the teaching process during a pandemic is challenging. The first teacher said that she prefers teaching in the classroom (offline) than online teaching by using Microsoft Teams. She said, "It is quite difficult to gain students' attention, deliver the material, and motivate students to be active at the online meetings". On the other hand, the second teacher stated that online teaching is more effective than offline teaching. Online teaching gives a lot of chances for the teacher to develop their learning media. It will improve teachers' creativity and introduce the use of technology for education to the student. However, the second teacher realized that the students in this era still hard to follow the online learning system which was forced to do because of pandemics. In short, both teachers assume that offline learning is better to do if they see the students' needs, but since there is a COVID-19 pandemic, they have to do online learning to minimize the spread of the virus.

Based on the rules from Surabaya education and culture office, Microsoft Teams is a learning management system that must be used for all schools in Surabaya. Microsoft Teams are used in the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic with the following categories of students: 1) have their own

smartphone; 2) borrowing their parents' smartphones; 3) do not have a smartphone at all. If there is a student who does not have a mobile phone for installing Microsoft Teams, the teacher should provide a written material and exercises to support their learning process. In this school, gratefully most of the students have their own mobile phones so the implementation of Microsoft Teams for the teaching and learning process is going well.

For English subjects in seventh-grade students, both teachers have the same way of teaching using Microsoft Teams. The result of observation in pre-teaching can be seen in this table 1:

Table 1. Observation Result in Pre-teaching

What to observe?	Description
1. Lesson plan 2. Learning media 3. Operating Microsoft Teams 4. Giving a brainstorming	1. Has prepared before the teaching-learning process. 2. Using pictures of the famous singer in Indonesia (the first teacher), animals, and common things in daily life (the second teacher) 3. Knowing how to use the features (giving, checking, and assessing an assignment, holding an online meeting) 4. Using one of the YouTube videos related to descriptive text material.

In pre-teaching, both teachers have prepared the lesson plan based on the Merdeka Belajar curriculum that was specifically used during the COVID-19 pandemic and prepared the learning media before holding an online meeting with the students through Microsoft Teams. They shared the link of a video from YouTube related to the descriptive text as students brainstorm through the features of creating an assignment which was completed with the option of file sharing. Teacher can upload any type of files such as word or pdf documents, PowerPoint presentation, videos, or even just the link of the videos (Pal & Vanijja, 2020). Then, they added the instruction to the students related to the assignment. For instance, students are asked to watch and write a summary of the video, then submit a picture of their work through Microsoft Teams and the teacher can check it before delivering the whole material through an online video meeting.

From the result of the observation in pre-teaching, both teachers used a brainstorming technique for introducing the material to the students in a simple way before explaining the whole material. The purpose of giving a brainstorming is to help students in developing their ideas and imagine what they going to learn. So it also helped them to enrich their vocabulary so that they can follow the

learning process easily. This is in line with the previous research by AlMutairi (2015) which stated that using the brainstorming technique helps students in developing creative thinking skills, preparing the elements of the material, and making students ready to follow the learning process as well.

Table 2. Observation Result in While-teaching

Teachers' Action	Description	
	First Teacher	**Second Teacher**
Explaining the social function, structure of the text, and language features that are used for writing a descriptive text.	The teacher explained it after asking the students to describe the famous singer in the picture.	The teacher explained it after asking the students to answer the questions given besides the picture.
Give examples of vocabularies used for writing a descriptive text.	The teacher gave more examples of the pronoun and adjectives that are commonly used for describing a person.	The teacher gave more examples of the pronoun and adjectives that are commonly used for describing things.
Explaining how to use the punctuation correctly.	The teacher explained it while gathering the students' answers and composing them into a paragraph.	The teacher explained it by giving an example of a simple descriptive text (describing things).
Giving an assignment.	About describing the person to be present at the next meeting.	Arrange the answers of the question which guide the students to describe the picture on their worksheet into a good paragraph.

The result of observation during the teaching and learning process through online video meetings shows that both teachers delivered some essential points of descriptive text in their own way. However, the features of Microsoft Teams that were used for the teaching process were also similar to each other. Both teachers created an online meeting 15 minutes before the schedule and then shared the link to the video conference with the student through the conversation boards. The teacher waited for the students to join the meeting and then greeted them after connecting to the audio and turning on the camera. The

teacher took the attendance by auto-generated function of attendance list. Next, the teacher used a share screen feature to deliver the material through a PowerPoint presentation or just show the picture even the video. Microsoft Teams video conference is also completed with the record meeting features so the teacher can record the teaching process (Pal & Vanijja, 2020). This recording file can share with the students who have a bad internet connection or cannot join the online meeting on that day to be accessed on the next day (Muthuprasad et al., 2021).

In delivering the descriptive text material, the first teacher used the picture of one of the famous singers in Indonesia meanwhile the second teacher used the picture of common things in daily life such as a jacket, bag, pen, and doll. To deliver each main point that needs to know by the students before writing descriptive text, the teacher gave some questions which help the students in describing people or things in their daily life. The first teacher directly asked some questions to the students related to the singer and let them share their opinion to describe her by the picture given such as who is her, what she is look like, and so on. Next, the teacher helped the students to gather the answer and arranged them into a paragraph. In this stage, the teacher also delivered about the way of writing a good paragraph with correct punctuation such as the use of capital letters for the name of a person, the use of full stops and commas, also space in the first sentence at the paragraph. Moreover, the teacher gave more examples of vocabulary which will be used in describing a person. It started from the adjectives that are used for describing face (including how to describe someone's eyes, nose, lips, or even cheeks), until describing the height, weight, or even the personality. The teacher also gave them the freedom to ask when they have a problem or another curiosity related to the material so the teacher will help them to solve the problem or answer their curiosity. In the end, the teacher gave the task to describe one of the students' favorite people (can be artists, family, or friends) and submitted their work through Microsoft Teams before the deadline.

On the other hand, the second teacher gave a worksheet for each student with different pictures of common things in daily life completed with 5-6 questions which will help them in describing things in the picture such as what is that, the color, the function, and so on. The second teacher also delivered the way to answer the questions, it should be written in full sentences. For instance, to answer the question about the color of things in the picture, the answer should be, "The color is …". So it would help them to arrange the answers into the paragraph easily. The teacher does not directly give them some vocabulary to describe the things but the questions that were given will help them to find vocabulary used for describing things in the picture. The teacher explained about the use of punctuation by giving an example of a simple descriptive text (describing things) after checking one of the students' worksheets and finding some errors in the punctuation. The teacher helped the student to correct their punctuation and explained how to use the punctuation in writing descriptive text correctly. The teacher also gave the students the freedom to ask a question or share their problems during the learning process. In the end, the teacher asked the students to complete their work and submitted it through Microsoft Teams before the deadline.

The result of the observation during the teaching-learning process above was parallel with the previous research by Noprianto (2017) and Jayanti (2019). They believed that the teacher who taught descriptive text needs to have enough knowledge about each essential point in writing descriptive text such as the social function, generic structure, also grammatical features including vocabulary and punctuation (Jayanti, 2019; Noprianto, 2017). Both teachers used pictures and guided questions in teaching descriptive text. In line with the previous research by Sa'diyah (2017), it showed that using pictures in teaching descriptive text could help the students to be more productive in generating their idea. Students were able to express many ideas through more detailed descriptions such as the colors, shapes, and positions. Sa'diyah (2017) stated that the presence of the pictures made the students more focused and concentrated on their lesson material (Sa'diyah, 2017). Another research, by Wardani, Hasan, and Basir (2014) found that the guided questions technique helped the students to solve several problems in writing descriptive text such as lack of vocabulary for developing the ideas and hard to produce grammatical sentences. By using this technique, 95% of students improved their ability in writing descriptive text after the treatment (Wardani et al., 2014).

In post-teaching, teachers allowed the students to ask about the assignment through the conversation boards in the channel of the English subject if they have difficulties understanding the instruction. Next, teachers checked the students' work that was submitted through Microsoft Teams. Teachers directly gave the score and feedback on students' work. Students can view the feedback so they can know whether their work is already correct or still have some errors. The teacher can add the details of the students' errors or give suggestions to the students' work. With this written feedback, it hopes the students can learn from their previous work and produce a better descriptive text in the next meeting.

Teachers' Obstacles in the Implementation of Microsoft Teams for Teaching Descriptive Text

Based on the result of the observation, it found that not all of the students joined the meeting and completed the task.

There are less than half of students follow the online learning through Microsoft Teams as well although all of them already knew how to use Microsoft Teams for learning process. It was one of the obstacles faced by the teacher during the implementation of Microsoft Teams for teaching descriptive text to seventh-grade students. The causes of this problem are the students changing their phone numbers but do not report it to the teacher. During interview, the second teacher said, "Some of students was changed their phone number with several reason such as buying a new mobile phone, the phone number was not active anymore, and so on whereas we have already gave information before about it. They did not allowed to change the phone number unless report it to the teacher. But some of them still did the same faults." Their connection with Microsoft Teams was automatically ended so they do not receive the notification when the teacher gave the task or held an online meeting because they cannot join the group of their class at Microsoft Teams.

In addition, the teacher stated that some students belittled the learning activities because it takes place at home and no one is monitoring so they have the choice to follow the online learning or not. It was quite hard to gain the students' attention when the teacher delivered some essentials point in writing descriptive text and demonstrating how to write a good descriptive text because the students are not always in a place where it is possible to focus on learning so that their attention may not be fully mobilized in it. This obstacle was in line with the previous research by Muthuprasad et al (2021) which reported that it was difficult to build a comfortable environment for learning and being active during the learning process.

Another obstacle was dealing with an internet connection. In line with the research conducted by Rosyida, Ermawati, and Rozak (2021) which stated that bad signaling was the biggest obstacle for the teacher during the online teaching process (Rosyida et al., 2021). Not all the students have a good internet connection even though the internet quota was already supplied by the government. Students who do not have a good internet connection will have many problems in joining online learning through Microsoft Teams. They cannot use the features of online video meetings through Microsoft Teams (open the camera, connect the audio, share screen, etc) as well or even cannot join it at all. This problem also affected their attendance because when internet was disconnected, they were automatically been signed out from the meeting and their name do not appears on the list of attendance (Ismail & Ismail, 2021). They also might be late to submit the assignment before the deadline that was set by the teacher because they do not receive the notification of the assignment which had been posted. With this problem, the teacher cannot reach all of the students as well and hard to check their understanding of the material.

CONCLUSION

Microsoft Teams is the learning management system that is used for online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides some great features to support the teaching process starting from pre-teaching until post-teaching. In pre-teaching, teachers use the feature assignment boards completed with the option to share files or just attach the link to one of the YouTube videos which related to the descriptive text. Students are asked to watch the video and then made a summary in their notebooks. To submit this task, students need to take a picture of their work then they can upload it to assignment boards. In while-teaching, teachers created an online meeting as a virtual classroom complete with the record meetings, turning on the camera and voice, also sharing screen. Next, teachers explained the whole material and motivated the students to be active in the teaching-learning process by allowing them to share their opinion and ask a question. In post-teaching, teachers used the assignment boards feature again to give an assignment in case of checking their understanding of the material explained before. Next, teachers checked the students' work and gave the score then exported it to Excel. Teachers also can give some feedback related to the students' work and use conversational boards for open discussion.

The implementation of Microsoft Teams for teaching writing in junior high school has several obstacles that should face by the teacher. First, teachers cannot reach out to the students who have lost connection with Microsoft Teams because of changing the phone numbers. Second, teachers have a lack of interaction with the students because some students belittled the learning activities from home. Third, having a bad internet connection causes teachers or students cannot use the features of Microsoft Teams as well.

Suggestion

This study has several suggestions for the English teacher in this pandemic era. First, they have to explore interesting learning platforms that can use for teaching to follow the development of technology in education. Second, they have to use their creativity to design interactive learning media so that the students will not feel bored in the teaching-learning process. Third, motivating the students to follow the online learning as well as they followed the offline learning before the pandemic. Last, keep the collaboration with the parents for minimizing the obstacles

in the teaching-learning process because they can help to control the students while studying from home.

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