INCREASING THE INDONESIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' LEARNING MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS SYNCHRONOUSLY

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to determine how to increase Indonesian high school students' motivation for synchronous English learning in EFL classes. The dynamics of an online class were distinct from those of an offline class. Therefore, many students in the EFL class were unprepared for the synchronous meeting, which harmed their motivation to learn. This paper addressed a single research question, namely, how to increase the learning motivation of Indonesian high school students in EFL class during the synchronous meeting. This paper used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model as its methodology. This study followed four steps: 1) Planning, 2) Action, 3) Observing, and 4) Reflecting. In conclusion, various learning dynamics render some students unprepared for this, which affects their motivation to learn. Two factors can contribute to students' motivation to learn. First, the learning aid used in the synchronous meeting, a PowerPoint presentation, should be more engaging. Second, by incorporating Mentimeter, class activities should become more interactive.

Keywords: CAR, Indonesian EFL class, online learning, students' motivation

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all countries have shifted their teaching and learning activities from offline to online. Due to the forced closure of schools and universities to contain the spread of the coronavirus, traditional classroom instruction was shifted to an online format (Heng & Sol, 2020). Indonesia was one of the countries that adopted online education. In Indonesia, almost all levels of education, including high school, utilize online learning. Online education is a subset of distance education in which the learning process is mediated by technology, and all instruction is delivered entirely online (Siemens et al., 2015). Distance education or learning is structured similarly to online education. It can be synchronous (happens simultaneously) or asynchronous (occurs independently) (Offir et al., 2008). The educational sector underwent a dramatic transformation, resulting in a slew of difficulties for students, teachers, administrators, and even

parents (Heng & Sol, 2020). One of the difficulties they face is the unique learning dynamics associated with online learning. Online learning dynamics are unmistakably distinct from those of offline learning. While offline learning enables direct face-to-face interaction, online learning allows virtual interaction, which overcomes issues such as internet connectivity. Additionally, the difficulties students face while engaging in learning activities are likely to diminish their motivation to learn a second language. If their motivation to learn a second language is low, their L2 achievement will undoubtedly suffer (Subekti, 2018).

Additionally, synchronous and asynchronous learning utilizes a customized platform to meet the unique needs of each school. Zoom and Google Meet have frequently used media for synchronous learning, while Moodle, Google Classroom, and various other platforms are commonly used for asynchronous learning. Additionally, teachers frequently use Powerpoint as a learning aid during synchronous meetings (PPT). As a result, all materials will be written in PowerPoint slides, and teachers will share their screens via the platform chosen. Several previous studies examined PPT use in synchronous teaching and learning (e.g.: Lari, 2014; Ozaslan & Maden, 2013). They discovered that teachers face difficulties when it comes to PPT. One of the difficulties teachers face is motivating students to pay attention to the materials from the start to the end of the class.

Given that PPT slides are being used as a learning aid, teachers must create something unique in the PPT slides. Additionally, not only for teachers, one of the challenges for students is maintaining focus and motivation during synchronous meetings. Thus, the difficulties faced by teachers and students were inextricably linked.

Moreover, due to the dynamic of the synchronous meeting being different from the dynamic of offline meeting or offline class, the learning activities must be adjusted. An interactive class is a class that carries out discussions, namely questions and answers when teaching and learning activities take place. The use of PPT in teaching and learning activities may not be enough to make an interactive class and make the students' motivation increase. Therefore, the addition of a learning aid is highly recommended, one of which is Mentimeter. Some previous studies investigated the use of Mentimeter in teaching and learning activities (e.g.: Ozaslan & Maden, 2013; Vallely & Gibson, 2018). They found that Mentimeter was highly recommended for teaching and learning activities, especially at the high school level, because Mentimeter can increase students' attention, engagement, and motivation in learning.

L2 motivation for EFL students in online learning

Motivation is a necessary component of the learning and teaching processes as an internal drive that compels someone to do something (Dörnyei, 1994). Success or failure in English learning is inextricably linked to the student's motivation to learn the language. However, the motivation of EFL students to learn can fluctuate at any time, depending on their mood, particularly in synchronous learning environments (Alizadeh, 2013). Numerous researchers pioneered four concepts of motivation, one of which is intrinsic and extrinsic. Dörnyei (1994) introduced intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the desire to participate in an activity solely for intrinsic motivation is defined as actions taken to achieve a goal, such as earning a reward or avoiding punishment. In terms of

students' extrinsic motivation for learning a second language, teachers can play a role in increasing students' motivation, particularly during synchronous meetings (Alizadeh, 2013). Due to the critical role of motivation in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning, EFL teachers must look after their students' motivation, pique their interest in learning, and sustain this state of excitement, particularly in synchronous learning (Thohir, 2017).

Method

This paper was under one research question, i.e., how to increase Indonesian high school students' learning motivation in EFL class during the synchronous meeting? The participants in this study were two EFL classes, and each was more than 20 students. The students who participated in this study were first-grade students from social classes in a private high school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The study employed the CAR model by Kemmis and Taggart (1988) This study was conducted in four steps based on the CAR model by Kemmis and Taggart (1988). First, this current study showed planning. In planning, the needs analysis of the students during the synchronous meeting was conducted. Second, this present study conducted action. In this step, I implemented the planning. Third, this current study was conducted observing. In this step, the observation was assisted by an English teacher who taught that class. Then, the last step was reflecting. In this step, I reflected on whether the implementation in the "action" step could be continued or need to be revised.

Findings and Discussion

A CAR model by Kemmis and Taggart (1988)was used in this study. CAR was designed in four steps, and it was conducted through a cycle. The steps were **1). Planning, 2). Acting, 3). Observing, 4). Reflecting**. The following figure illustrates a cycle of CAR by Kemmis and Taggart (1988).
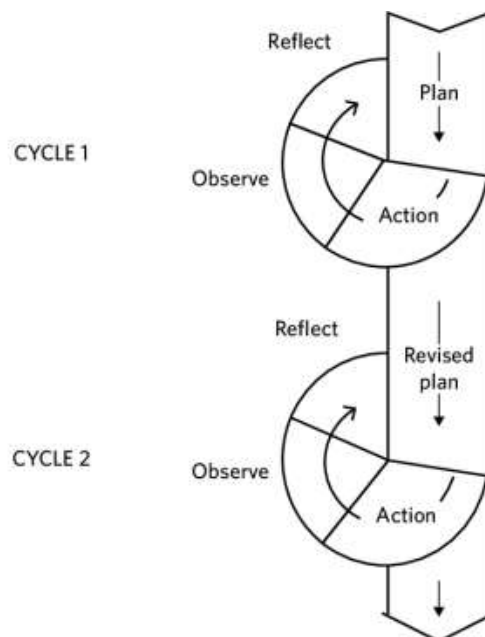

Figure 1. CAR Model by Kemmis and Taggart (1988)

1. Planning

Planning was the first step that was conducted before doing an action in the CAR model. In planning, this study needs analysis to know more about the students' learning needs synchronously to increase their motivation while learning a second language. The needs analysis was conducted by observing the English class activities synchronously through Google Meet. Through the observation, the present study found two students' needs related to their motivation in learning. First, the learning aid, which is PowerPoint (PPT) slides used in the synchronous meeting, should be more interesting. Second, the class activities should be interactive and not boring. By knowing the students' needs, lesson plans could be made. For example, the lesson plans that were designed to focus on reading skills were because I continued the teaching and learning activities carried out by the English teacher who taught that classes. So, I adjusted the class activities based on the students' needs, which increased the students' motivation while learning a second language synchronously.

First, the need of the students was related to the learning aid used in the synchronous class. They usually used PPT slides during the synchronous meeting. Based on the observation, the English teacher was writing the materials of the day in the PPT in sentences without any images and only used two colors: black and white. Then, the present study found no students asking the English teacher related to the materials taught. Also, there were no students that are answering the question given by the teacher. It further indicated that the students were silent, and the classroom was not interactive. Therefore, the more interesting PPT slides were made to increase the students' motivation in learning and make the classroom more interactive. PowerPoint (PPT) is a presentation program developed by Microsoft and a part of Microsoft Office. PPT is usually used by educators, students, and trainers for specific purposes (Lari, 2014). Almost all of the education levels used PPT as a learning aid, one of which is the high school level. PPT was an effective pedagogical tool in English classes, particularly during synchronous meetings (Lari, 2014). However, the monotonous PPT slides might make students bored. Therefore, they need a suitable learning aid to learn a second language (Lari, 2014). Then, I chose www.slidesgo.com to design the PPT slides. The further explaining would be explained in the "acting" step. The following figure illustrates the screenshot of the website of www.slidesgo.com.

Figure 2. The screenshot of the Slidesgo website *(source: https://slidesgo.com/)*

Second, the students' requirement was related to class activities. The current study discovered that no other platform was used in addition to Google Meet and PowerPoint slides. Additionally, there was no class discussion. As a result, the current study adds another platform to support synchronous teaching and learning, namely Mentimeter, to this planning step. Mentimeter is a type of Student Response System (SRS) frequently referred to as a voting tool system (Little, 2016). Mentimeter-based learning or activity-based learning refers to teaching and learning activities that incorporate Mentimeter into the middle of the lesson (Vallely & Gibson, 2018). The purpose of using Mentimeter was to increase students' interest and motivation in synchronous language learning. This is because SRS, also known as Mentimeter, has increased students' engagement, attention, and interaction in EFL classes (Musliha & Purnawarman, 2020). The following illustration depicts a screenshot of the Mentimeter website.
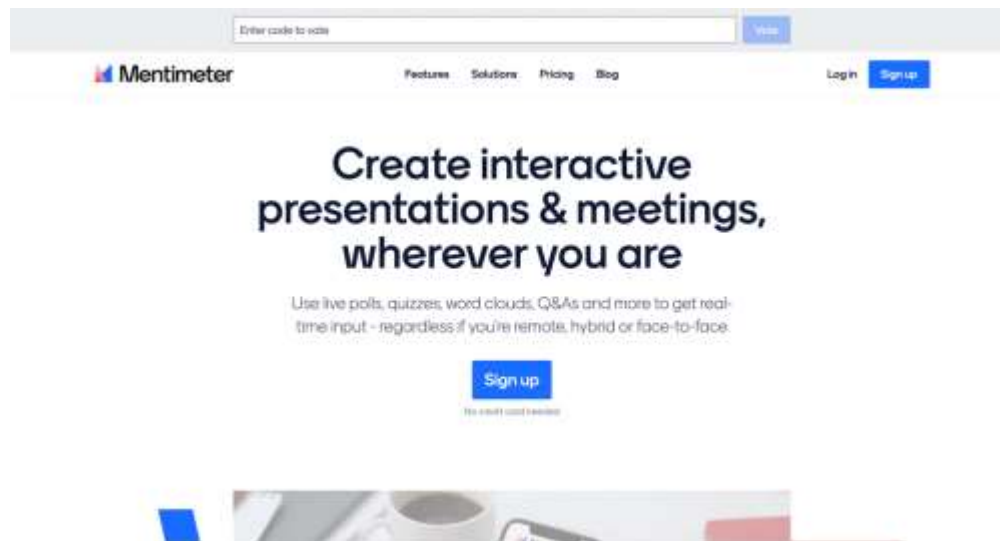

Figure 3. The screenshot of the Mentimeter website
source: https://www.mentimeter.com/

According to Vallely and Gibson (2018), one of the benefits is that Mentimeter is extremely easy to use as a discussion tool in class. This was because teachers' questions written in Mentimeter would appear visually on students' screens, and students could efficiently respond anonymously to the questions. In addition, responding anonymously to questions may increase students' motivation to contribute responses, as no one knows their identity (Hill & Fielden, 2017; Vallely & Gibson, 2018).

2. **Acting**

The second step was acting. The acting was the implementation of the planning (Kemmis & Taggart, 1988). Thus, two implementations in teaching and learning activities synchronously based on the planning step I made.

To begin, the intriguing Powerpoint slides were created. To begin, I conducted some preliminary research on how to create engaging PowerPoint slides. There was once a website called www.slidesgo.com. There are over a thousand PPT templates available for free use on slidesgo. Additionally, numerous themes could

be incorporated into teaching and learning activities by adjusting the day's theme. Then I chose one of the templates available. The following images depicted a screenshot of the PPT slides created with www.slidesgo.com.

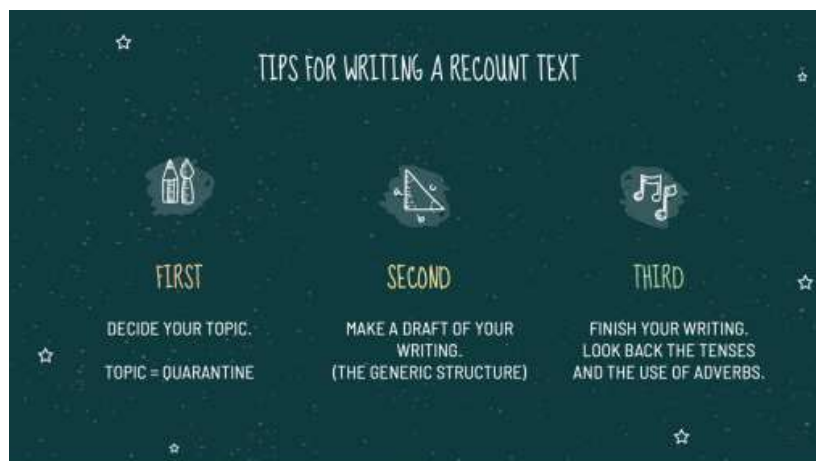Figure 4. The screenshot of PPT slides (1)

Figure 5. The screenshot of PPT slides (2)

Figure 6. The screenshot of PPT slides (3)

On the day of teaching activities, I began sharing my screen by displaying the topic they were required to learn that day and waiting for the rest of the students to join the Google Meet room. After all students had joined the Google Meet room, the day's main topic was discussed. Then, before starting the teaching and learning activities, I greeted the students by saying, "Good Morning, students," and almost every student responded. I was creating interactive PowerPoint slides to capture students' attention and increase their motivation to learn a second language (Ozaslan & Maden, 2013). As illustrated in figures four and five, certain factors increased students' motivation. To begin, the slide was more colorful, incorporating colors other than black and white but not excessively so. It implied that if the slides were colored, students would be more receptive to paying attention to the screen and viewing the slides displayed by the teacher (Jones, 2003). Second, the writing is entirely in the form of bullet points rather than paragraphs. Additionally, it indicated that materials written more concisely and clearly would increase students' motivation to learn (Jones, 2003). Thirdly, there was an image to accompany the text on the slides. The illustration was created to provide a more visual explanation of the materials covered in class (Ozaslan & Maden, 2013).

Second, the Mentimeter was used synchronously in teaching and learning. The lesson's topic was reading activities. The students were given two to three minutes to read and annotate the brief reading text attached to the PPT slides. Following that, the Mentimeter codes were displayed on the PPT slides, and students were instructed to enter the codes to join the Mentimeter room. Almost every student gathered in the Mentimeter room. Only three students did not join the Mentimeter due to a lack of internet access. They could, however, continue to learn via Google Meet. The following illustrations depict the Mentimeter design.

Figure 7. The screenshot of the Mentimeter design (1)

Figure 8. The screenshot of the Mentimeter design (2)

Figure 9. The screenshot of the Mentimeter design (3)

As illustrated in the figures, there was a multiple-choice question. The question referred to the reading text that was displayed on the PPT slides. The Mentimeter showed a screenshot of the pointed text. The objective was to help students retain information from the text and reduce their confusion when answering the question. After all of the students had completed their Mentimeter responses, a discussion session was held. Mentimeter, as Vallely and Gibson (2018) stated, was extremely simple to use as a discussion tool. This was because the correct and incorrect responses would appear after the students responded to the question. Thus, by examining the answers, a discussion session about why the answers were wrong and why the answers were correct could be conducted.

3. Observing

The observation was the third step in this current study. During this step, the English teacher observed my teaching and learning activities. The observation

yielded some results when the interesting PPT slides and Mentimeter were implemented in synchronous classes. To begin, almost every student responded to the greeting before the class started. Second, some students inquired about the materials. Thirdly, students and I engaged in a discussion or question-and-answer session about the materials and assignment. Fourth, almost all students joined the Mentimeter, except three students who could not join due to a lack of internet access. Fifth, the classes were interactive because students and I, the teacher, interacted. Additionally, based on the current study's findings in this observation step, it indicated that students were more engaged and responsive in EFL class, indicating that an interactive EFL class occurred in synchronous meetings following the implementation of interesting PowerPoint slides and Mentimeter as a discussion tool (Musliha & Purnawarman, 2020; Rudolph, 2017).

4. Reflecting

Reflecting was the last step in this current study. In this step, I reflect on whether all of the action step implementations continue or need to be revised. First, an interesting PPT in the EFL synchronous class could be continued by the English teacher. It was due to, by using interesting PPT slides, the EFL learners' motivation could increase. Second, the use of Mentimeter in teaching and learning activities synchronously also must be continued. Again, it was because by using Mentimeter, the EFL class could be more interactive. It further indicated that the students would not get bored, and their motivation to learn a second language synchronously could increase.

Conclusion

Indonesia is one of the countries affected by the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. Education is one of the sectors affected. Online education was available at almost every level of education. This change presents a unique set of difficulties for teachers and students. The challenge for students is to remain focused and enthusiastic about synchronous learning. The challenge for teachers was to ensure that students are always paying attention to the material being taught and increasing students' motivation for synchronous learning. The two difficulties encountered were related. Two factors could help students become more motivated during synchronous teaching and learning activities. To begin, engaging PowerPoint slides must be used to capture students' attention during online learning. Second, the Mentimeter must be used as an online discussion tool so that students did not feel self-conscious about expressing their opinions, even if they do so anonymously.

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