Stabilizing Student Engagement in Teaching English at Sdit At-Taqwa Surabaya

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic situation that occurred over a long period of time had quite an impact on student learning methods. These emerging learning innovations greatly impact the involvement of students, especially elementary school children. This study aims to identify the relationship between engagement strategies and student's involvement in a hybrid-based English class at SDIT AT-Taqwa Surabaya. This research is a descriptive qualitative study. Data were collected through a process of observation and questionnaires that focused on the types of engagement strategies used, as well as the responses shown by grade 1A and 1B students at SDIT AT-Taqwa Surabaya. The results show that the students' engagement strategies used by grade one English teachers at SDIT AT-Taqwa are varied. These strategies are socio-affective, design, and organization engagement. Teachers strongly emphasize the use of socio-affective engagement strategies, especially in order to increase students' emotional involvement. The teacher understands that to create an active, collaborative and conducive hybrid class, the teacher must build a sense of comfort among the students in the classroom. In other words, the teachers realize that emotional involvement is the foundation in triggering cognitive and behavioral engagement. It can be stated that the hybrid-based English classes at SDIT AT-Taqwa are being conducted successfully and wisely in a very balanced online and offline approach using the available resources.

Keywords: Hybrid Learning Model, Student Engagements, Engagement Strategies

Abstrak: Situasi pandemi COVID-19 yang terjadi dalam jangka waktu yang lama cukup berdampak pada metode belajar siswa. Inovasi pembelajaran yang muncul ini sangat berdampak pada keterlibatan siswa, khususnya anak sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi hubungan antara strategi engagement dan keterlibatan siswa dalam kelas bahasa Inggris berbasis hybrid di SDIT AT-Taqwa Surabaya. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui proses observasi dan angket yang difokuskan pada jenis-jenis strategi engagement yang digunakan, serta respon yang ditunjukkan oleh siswa kelas 1A dan 1B SDIT AT-Taqwa Surabaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi keterlibatan siswa yang digunakan oleh guru bahasa Inggris kelas satu di SDIT AT-Taqwa bervariasi. Strategi ini adalah sosio-afektif, desain, dan keterlibatan organisasi. Guru sangat menekankan penggunaan strategi social-affective engagement, terutama dalam rangka meningkatkan keterlibatan emosional siswa. Guru memahami bahwa untuk menciptakan kelas hibrida yang aktif, kolaboratif dan kondusif, guru harus membangun rasa nyaman di antara siswa di dalam kelas. Dengan kata lain, para guru menyadari bahwa keterlibatan emosional adalah dasar dalam memicu keterlibatan kognitif dan perilaku. Dapat dikatakan bahwa kelas bahasa Inggris berbasis hybrid di SDIT AT-Taqwa dilaksanakan dengan sukses dan bijaksana dalam pendekatan online dan offline yang sangat seimbang dengan menggunakan sumber daya yang tersedia.

Kata kunci: Model Pembelajaran Hibrid, Keterlibatan Siswa, Strategi Keterlibatan

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology has an impact on various sectors of life, such as teaching English. Technology as a means of fulfilling human needs takes an important role in human life. Especially in education, technology is used to optimize the quality of teaching which is expected to be a solution to the obstacles faced (Barbour, 2018; Siemens et al., 2015;

Taylor et al., 2018; Wang, 2021). With the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been several shifts from offline learning to online learning. However, with the COVID-19 transition period and the decline in COVID-19 cases, various schools are starting to consider combining online and hybrid classes. It is proven that online and hybrid classes are becoming popular and growing rapidly at all levels of education (Doering, 2006). Online and hybrid classroom modalities are considered for several reasons. Both methods have many benefits in terms of flexibility including freedom of time and space for both parties - students and teachers. Thus, teachers and students can still interact with all obstacles (Doering, 2006). ICTs pave the way for building active, independent, stable and effective learning (Daskan & Yildiz, 2020; Vaughan, 2014).

SDIT At-Taqwa Surabaya applies the use of online class combined with hybrid classes during a pandemic. The hybrid class is considered realizing that the Covid-19 case is going down. In this paper, researcher will focus on the engagement strategies used by the teacher in the hybrid class. One of the facts that need to be considered in analyzing student engagements is that student engagement is strongly influenced by context (Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Manwaring et al., 2017). Thus, it is necessary for researchers to choose a specific context (Manwaring et al., 2017). In this paper, the researchers chose hybrid classes. Hybrid classes are chosen given that the hybrid class is a combination of offline and online classes (Doering, 2006). So, this context will be challenging.

Hybrid learning method is one of a technology-based learning strategy, which has so many advantages, especially in its flexibility and multidimensionality. Hybrid learning greatly helps the teachers and the students in dealing with time constraints and many other obstacles. Hybrid online-offline learning is one of the efforts that can effectively cover the shortcomings of traditional English classroom teaching (Hentea et al., 2003; Wang, 2021). The concept of hybrid teaching method combines face-to-face and virtual teaching – about half of the classes are in offline classes and the other half are in online classes (Drysdale et al., 2013; Hentea et al., 2003; Wang, 2021).

Hybrid class is created due to the several reasons. Hybrid class recognizes that online courses are not good enough to provide an experience for students to directly discuss what they want to explore with their classmates or teachers. Besides, traditional learning still has many shortcomings in terms of its flexibility and technology utilization (Hentea et al., 2003; Wang, 2021). However, by maximizing online-offline classes, hybrid learning provides flexibility for students to meet face-to-face or discuss online with their teachers and their classmates. The teacher here acts as a facilitator. There is a lot of planning that must be considered by the teacher so that the hybrid class can run successfully. To keep the class optimal, teachers as facilitators and instructors must be familiar with offline classes and online classes considering that the online-offline class must be combined at the same time for a long time (Drysdale et al., 2013; Hentea et al., 2003; Wang, 2021). Hybrid online-offline teaching design generally includes several sections including course introduction, activity organization, teaching support and teaching evaluation. In online teaching, teachers can maximize various kinds of web-based media to support English language teaching. Teachers are expected to be able to adjust the time in a balanced as well as maximally provide feedback to the students (Wang, 2021).

Hybrid classes are one form of effort to maximize student engagements (Doering, 2006).The researcher realizes that there is only a little literature that discusses student engagement in the hybrid class, especially at the elementary school level. The topic of student engagement is an important topic regarding the uniqueness of the hybrid class, which provides a varied learning experience with the help of ICT, but unfortunately there is very little literature on related topics. Many researchers identify that student involvement in hybrid classes, online classes and blended classes (advancement of the education system) will be a future research avenue (Drysdale et al., 2013; Halverson et al., 2014; Heilporn et al., 2021; Henrie et al., 2015; Siemens et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2018).

The success of the hybrid class has a close relationship with the selection of engagement strategies by educators. Engagement strategies are aimed at fostering student involvement in the classroom. Some of the expected goals of the instructional strategy are various student

engagements such as encouraging contact between two parties (students and teachers), increasing communication and collaboration between students, active learning, exchange of feedback and so on (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). A lot of scientific literature is presented in the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) strategy. This research group revealed that student involvement is a form of student participation in quality educational activities. The student engagement strategy used must consider several factors including academic challenges, creating reflective and integrative learning. The strategy used must involve students in active and collaborative interactions between students and teachers. Most important, the strategy should target students' motivation and agency by encouraging students' self-confidence. Teachers can use enrichment activities in order to challenge students' enthusiasm or students' involvement (Heilporn & Lakhal, 2021).

Student involvement is a process that belongs to a multidimensional psycho-social process. The word multidimensional arises because student involvement is constructed in three important dimensions including emotional, cognitive and behavioral involvement (Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2018; Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Li & Lerner, 2012). Emotional involvement can be seen as an emotional reaction of students that arise during the teaching and learning process. Those emotional reactions of students can be in the form of interest, boredom, happiness, sadness and anxiety. Whereas, cognitive involvement refers to students' psychological investigations in understanding the ideas or information conveyed. Last, behavioral engagement is student involvement that can be seen in three ways. First, behavioral engagement can take the form of several positive behaviors including student attitudes in obeying class rules and norms. Also, students do not engage in negative attitudes such as making trouble or skipping classes. Second, it concerns the involvement of students in fulfilling academic obligations such as completing assignments and attending classes diligently, concentrating, and contributing actively. Third, involving students' involvement in various school-related activities including athletics, school governance and other activities (Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004).

Learning success can be assessed from the three dimensions of student involvement above. In addition, it should be understood that the three dimensions of student involvement cannot work individually but work interrelated. Positive emotional dimensions can support the occurrence of successful cognitive and behavioral engagement. Cognitive engagement includes behavioral engagement (Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2018; Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Li & Lerner, 2012).

This study aims to investigate the engagement strategies used by the teacher used in teaching English for first grade Hybrid classes in SDIT AT-TAQWA Surabaya and how those strategies fostering emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement of students. The results of this study are expected to provide knowledge regarding the most effective engagement strategies to be used for first-year elementary school students.

METHOD
Research Design

This study aims to identify the relationship between engagement strategies and student involvement in a hybrid-based English class at SDIT AT-Taqwa Surabaya. The researcher adopts descriptive qualitative method supported by observation and questionnaire towards the related teacher. The data will be interpreted, classified and presented in the form of a report. According to the descriptive qualitative method, the data will be presented along with a detailed analysis description to provide in-depth knowledge to the reader (Atkinson, 2017b, 2017a).

Research Subjects

Of the six grade levels at SDIT-At Taqwa Surabaya, researchers focused on two classes at the first grade level (1A and 1C). Total students per class are in the range of an average 30 students. The researcher also considers the teachers who teach English in the selected classes. There is a teacher who is willing to participate in this project. The teacher already has quite a lot

of experience related to teaching hybrid classes. Also, the teacher has two years of experience in teaching elementary school students. Hybrid learning in English course is carried out at least once a week with one hour duration per class. The system used is an online class on a week and hybrid class in the next week.

Instruments

Observations and questionnaires are the important instruments in this study. Observations were held on December 16 and 23, 2021. Observations were carried out for two days, a total of four meetings of English courses. Two meetings are online classes and the other two meetings are hybrid classes. Then, the questionnaire was given to the teacher via a Google form. A total of 12 questions were asked regarding personal data and related topics.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data analyzed are data from observations and also teacher perceptions obtained through questionnaires. The data is then analyzed and coded to capture repetitive data patterns. Findings related to key points as well as repetitive data patterns are then interpreted to capture the relationship between engagement strategies and three types of engagements - emotional, behavioral and cognitive engagements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the questionnaires and observations showed that the student engagement strategy was adapted to the conditions and characteristics of the students in the class. It can be said that teachers place more emphasis on strategy on one or two dimensions of student engagement. Data analysis reveals that there are three categories of engagement strategies including, socio-affective, design, and organization.

Socio-affective engagement strategies

Socio-affective engagement strategy is a strategy that focuses on increasing students' emotional involvement. This strategy is one of the strategies used by teachers 1A and 1C SDIT AT-Taqwa in English courses. By using this strategy, the teacher hopes to create a cheerful learning atmosphere for students who attend online and offline classes. The following are some examples of strategies that teachers use to maximize students' emotional involvement:
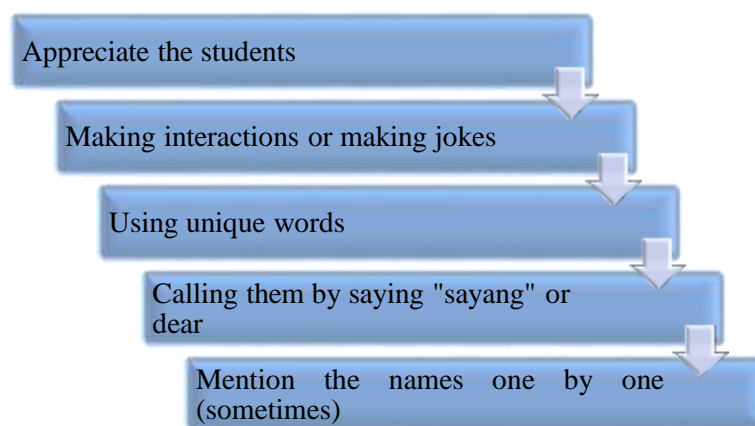

Figure 1. Efforts to Increase Emotional Engagement

The above are some examples of strategies used to increase students' emotional involvement. First, the teacher uses some words of praise that can increase students' enthusiasm and interest, such as the words *"Very good", "good job!", "well done"* and so on. In addition, by praising students, students become more confident and become more active in class. Second,

The teacher is aware of the unstable mood of the students. To solve this problem, several times teachers were found to use interactions such as asking how are you, making jokes, or asking *"attention!!"* so that students enthusiastically answered *"ready!!"*. Third, the teacher adopts unique words to keep students focused. Adopted from the Harry Potter films, the teacher says *"Hokus! Focus! Trulala!"* which is then enthusiastically imitated by the students cheerfully. Last, regarding the mention of names, there are two strategies used by the teacher. Teachers are often seen calling students "Dear". With this students feel closer to students. In addition, teachers sometimes call students' names specifically one by one in online and offline classes. This creates a feeling for students that they are connected to their teacher.

Teachers recognize that by keeping young students emotionally stable, it can also encourage student engagement both behaviorally and cognitively. This can be seen in an example below:

Table 1. The Relationship Between the Strategies Used and Student Engagement Strategies

Strategies	Time	Emotional	Cognitive	Behavioral
Color Claps Game	8:00	The use of color claps game really helps students in increasing students' positive emotions. Children are very closely related to games. With this the teacher can share experiences with students to laugh and have fun together	The color claps game triggers students to stay alert and focus on coding the number of claps and colors. This can help to improve students' memory.	With a pleasant atmosphere, students show their comfort by obeying the instructions of the teacher. All students are involved in the games that are held.

Design Engagement Strategies

The design engagement strategy emphasizes strategies that seek to increase students' cognitive engagement. First, the teacher offers a relevant professional and personal English learning experience. Professionally, students can understand the material as "students". Personally, students can implement the material presented in everyday life.

Figure 2. Distribution of Relevant Materials

The teacher builds delivery of material that triggers students to interpret the intent of the questions posed. So the selection of the theme becomes an important aspect in maintaining the quality of the relevant material. Below is the English course material taught at SDIT AT-Taqwa Surabaya:
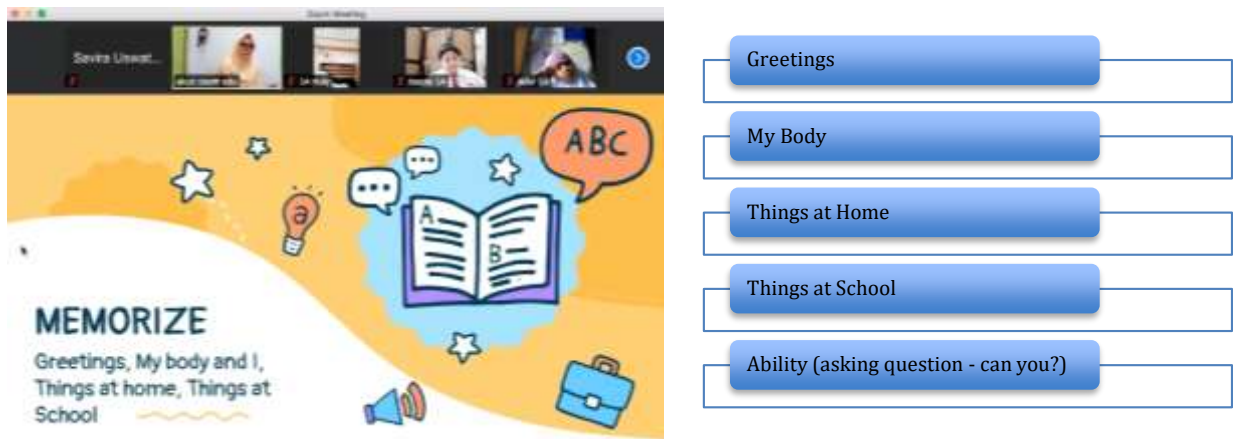
Figure 3. List of Topic Discussions (Relevant Materials)

Measured from the relevance of the material, the teachers at SDIT AT-TAQWA have chosen the right themes and are related to everyday life. The themes of greetings and abilities are two themes that can be instantly applied in real life by students in grade one. With that, related to reasoning, students are expected to be able to adjust the context of the conversation and choose the response to be used. Students are also expected to actively hone their speaking skills by applying greetings and questions related to the ability in daily conversation.

On the other hand, the selection of the theme my body, things at home, and things at school is expected to make students more aware of themselves and their surroundings. In terms of memorization, students are expected to be able to increase their English vocabulary from simple and close things to students. Of course, these themes are relevant themes that can be reasoned by students in grade one. Not only learn about the naming of body organs and objects. The teacher also enriches the discussion about the shape of the nouns mentioned.

Second, besides of its relevance, engagement design strategies on the other hand also consider triggering students' critical attitudes. Students are placed in positions where they have to reason questions with a variety of possible answers. The teacher presents the material in the form of questions and answer choices accompanied by pictures. Pictures help students to reason and choose the right answer.

Figure 4. Critical Questions

In addition, the teacher also put two correct answers. Some students realized and immediately asked *"Mam, is it true that there are two answers?".* This indicates that students begin to think logically and critically in answering the questions that are displayed.

Third, teachers offer active and collaborative teaching. In both online and offline classes, teachers offer individual assessments as well as student-teacher discussions. The teacher also does not forget to give feedback equally between online and offline classes. In general, teachers maximize the use of ICT to make learning interesting and easy to understand so that students actively and enthusiastically participate in class. The use of slides, pictures, games, videos are some examples of maximizing the use of ICT in teaching English.

Organization engagement strategies

The English teacher at SDIT AT-Taqwa Surabaya clearly does not only act as a teacher but also as a good discussion partner outside and inside the English course. Given that hybrid classes in schools are only provided for one hour per subject, the main problem faced by students and teachers of course is time constraints. Some students were left behind during the lesson and asked the teacher. Taking into account the limited time, the teacher offers students to re-study at home using the files that have been uploaded in e-learning. This is one of the teacher's efforts to increase student learning autonomy so that students become more independent since grade one. However, on the other hand, the teacher also continues to provide supervision by continuing to provide answers or feedback for students who have difficulty understanding the material, even though not during the English course hours.

Discussion

Many of the findings have been presented in the previous section. The findings show that the English teacher at SDIT AT-Taqwa, especially in grade one, has maximized the use of various student engagement strategies. The strategies used may belong to familiar strategies, not new ones. This is due to the wealth of knowledge on related topics that have been published previously. However, this cannot escape the fact that the engagement strategies used by teachers have succeeded in encouraging emotional, cognitive and behavioral student involvement in the hybrid classroom.

The student engagement strategies used by the teacher are then divided into three types, namely, socio-affective, design, and organizational. Interestingly, given that the learning target is students at a young age, which is typical with an unstable mood, the teacher then emphasizes his strategy on the emotional approach strategy. The strategy that dominates the teaching of English in a hybrid way is the socio-affective approach. The implementation of socio-affective strategies can be seen from the way the teacher offers a fun and comfortable learning experience. Teachers also build relationships and trust with students, including providing feedback that has a positive personal effect. Teachers understand that emotional involvement is the foundation for triggering cognitive and behavioral engagement.

Furthermore, the design engagement strategy is implemented in the form of relevant, active and collaborative learning. By utilizing the use of ICT in hybrid classrooms, teachers present interesting learning so that the goals of an active and collaborative class can be achieved successfully. Teachers also offer learning that triggers students to think logically and critically. The relationship between students' emotional and cognitive closeness are interrelated and strongly influenced by the perception of the importance of certain activities.

Lastly, the organizational engagement strategy clearly provides a balanced hybrid learning structure between offline and online classroom services. The teacher emphasizes the autonomy of student learning so that students are expected to be responsible for themselves from an early age. Independent learning can lead students to be more active in exploring more deeply about topics related to English courses. In other words, the autonomy of learning in the hybrid class plays an active role in improving students' cognitive abilities.

The teacher has tried to keep the students' enthusiasm with various strategies, but the teacher also realizes that not all students can be kept emotionally stable. With the same strategy, but in different classes, there was even a difference where class 1A was more active than class 1C. This is in line with the claim that children are unique creatures because they have diverse characters. So it can be concluded that, when teachers apply student engagement strategies in online, offline, or especially hybrid classes, teachers need to adapt the strategy to the conditions and character of students. Thus, teachers can achieve maximum learning targets.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the student engagement strategies used by grade one English teachers at SDIT AT-Taqwa are very varied. Teachers strongly emphasize the use of socio-affective engagement strategies, especially in order to increase students' emotional involvement. The teacher understands that to create an active, collaborative and conducive hybrid class, the teacher must build a sense of comfort in the classroom. In other words, the teacher realizes that emotional involvement is the foundation for triggering cognitive and behavioral engagement. In general, the hybrid-based English class at SDIT AT-Taqwa runs successfully and wisely in terms of balancing services in online and offline classes.

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