The changing face of university students - and universities.

Globally, the make-up of students who are attending universities is changing rapidly. While previous decades have seen increasing access for students into university (often in the form of student loans or free tuition), more recent changes (Bradley et al., 2008) have indicated that the ‘average’ student is also changing. Instead of being a school-leaver, more and more current students are adults returning to university - or going to university for the first time - at more advanced ages. Of course, this has meant that these students bring with them expectations about their university experience that is different to previous, younger cohorts. They are also more likely to have competing demands upon their time. The Bradley Review (Bradley et al., 2008) recognised this, noting an increased preference for part time university study, and university study directly related to current or future employment. As a result of students with caring responsibilities or work commitments, there have been increased demands for more flexible approaches to study, especially in terms of time commitments and modalities. And increasingly, this has meant more demands for ICT use to enable this to take place. These have been drivers for the increased adoption amongst universities for shorter forms of learning, such as microcredentials, and increasing use of online and blended modalities - although it should be noted that, in some cases, this has always been the dominant approach. It should also be noted that, while it often seems that mobile technology is everywhere, the adoption of these approaches has been unequal between universities, for a variety of reasons, including economic imperatives and decisions related to status and preferred approaches to teaching and learning.

These changes have placed additional demands upon staff - both professional and academic-at universities. In particular, academic staff have been required to develop new skills in the design and implementation of online or blended learning platforms. As universities have embraced the affordances of Learning Management Systems (LMSs), either in blended or online modalities, educators have had to develop new, technologically based skills in managing these sites, as well as reconsidering their pedagogical approaches in order to capitalise upon the opportunities provided. In many universities, especially in developed countries, this has led to an increasing number of learning designers being employed in
central or faculty teaching and learning units, tasked with providing support for academics in navigating this change. It has also led to the development of a range of learning design approaches, with terms like blended, hybrid, hyflex, sync and async entering the common lexicon of university teaching and learning strategies.

**Literature Review**

**The adoption of blended and online learning approaches**

What have these changes meant for the student learning experience? And what about the experiences of academics? This paper will examine these questions from the perspective of English language learners in a developing country. Research on the perceptions of blended learning by teachers and students in this field has identified some advantages and also disadvantages. For example, in Saudi Arabia, blended English courses for students were generally positively received because students valued the extended reading opportunities and the chance to enrich vocabulary (Al Zumor et al., 2013). Another study, looking at Turkish students, noted the dual benefits of both face to face and online learning. Students valued face to face learning for the student-teacher interaction but they also liked online learning for the instant feedback and personalized study pace (Istifci, 2017). Another Saudi Arabian study noted the importance of a well-structured LMS to foster their teacher-student relationship (Mohsen & Shafeeq, 2014). While some studies have indicated an increased student engagement, other studies have questioned the pedagogical basis for blended learning: for example, some researchers have noted that LMSs are sometimes implemented for more administrative issues rather than pedagogical purposes (Godev, 2014; Mohsen & Shafeeq, 2014). Other problems with blended language courses included resolving technical issues, organising student training, and increasing the number of laboratories (Al Zumor et al., 2013). This means that universities are required to establish digital and physical infrastructure to facilitate teachers and students.

In line with the previous studies, some studies on students’ satisfaction with blended language learning have highlighted the implementation of the learning experience being a central factor. Students of Chinese language courses who experienced a blended learning paradigm (combined face-to-face and distance learning) valued the blended learning modality because of the quality of learning, the ability to manage administrative matters, and provide technical support during the distance-learning period. However, they did not value the limited teacher presence during the distance learning part of the program (Hu, 2012). Students of a blended English for Academic Purposes writing course in an Iraqi university argued that the blended course was not as effective as face-to-face learning, although the same study notes that students engaged in course content, making use of feedback mechanisms, open communication and accessing supplementary course materials (Abbas, 2018). There was no correlation between students’ achievement and their satisfaction in a hybrid English course at a university in Thailand; however, there was a correlation between students’ achievement and their participation, although it was negatively correlated with students’ technological comfort (Wichadee, 2015).

There are similarities between the adoption of blended learning and entirely online learning. For example, in an online language course, Chinese students reported difficulties with time management and collaborative work (Sun, 2014). Another study revealed that university leaders were often reluctant to shift into online learning mode because of the additional
investment requirements and challenges involved in accrediting and adapting policy (Natalia, 2017).

Other studies on formal distance education have highlighted factors that influenced its implementation. Students valued interactions in the virtual discussion forums that defined roles of tutors, moderators, and learners in an upper-intermediate Spanish course (Comas-Quinn et al., 2012). Access, interaction and affordability influenced decisions to enrol in a master’s program in English language teaching (Farooq et al., 2012). Clearly, then, the implementation of both blended and online learning is a complex one, at an institutional level, a faculty level, and even at the level of individual teachers.

**Design practice of teachers in higher education**

One key factor that emerges from the research is that the design practices of teachers influence the successful implementation of blended and online learning. Yet this is an area that has been relatively unexplored, especially in the contexts of developing countries. Most academic research in this field has been in the form of self-reported studies. For example, one well known study was based on the self-reflections of a large number of academics from a mix of disciplines within different Australian universities (Bennett et al., 2017). Based on this, researchers have established two important findings: 1) a design process model for courses (Bennett et al., 2017) and for assessments (Bearman et al., 2017), and 2) internal and external factors influence teacher design practices (Agostinho, 2011; Agostinho et al., 2018; Bearman et al., 2017; Bennett et al., 2011; Bennett et al., 2015).

**Design practices of English language teachers**

Even more narrowly, there has been only limited case study-based research upon the design practices of English language teachers in tertiary settings. Grgurović (2010, 2014) has highlighted that participating teachers’ technological knowledge and beliefs influenced their design-decision making during the innovation-decision process. Ozmen et al. (2018) have concluded that a design-decision making made was a result of a collaborative team work between team design, teachers, and students, and indicated the different roles of each actor in the unfolding design processes.

**Research questions**

In summary, then, studies on teacher design practices have thus far been limited, for the most part, to interview based and self-reporting studies. Few studies have investigated the design process and contextual factors that influence experienced teachers who work in blended, online and distance environments. Further research should utilise other data collection methods such as observation to minimise the limitation of a self-report study (Bearman et al., 2017; Bennett et al., 2017). Even more importantly, most of these studies focus on higher education institutions in developed countries. To date, there has been little research based in developing countries and this should be remedied.

This paper examines the design processes used by the Indonesian higher education teachers in online distance learning courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also discusses the impacts of the teachers’ design work on student learning with respect to support that could be accessed by both teachers and students. The research questions is:
1. How did Indonesian university English teachers engage in designing learning during COVID-19?

Methodology

Research design and sites

A case study approach was chosen to investigate the gap described above. It was the most appropriate methodology because the case studies were representative ‘cases’ in a real-life context (Yin, 2018). Eight case studies were integrated into the overall research design. The sites for the case studies were located in five out of six provinces on Java Island. The sites involved were two Schools of English Literature, and the remaining were Schools of English Education. Two public universities from the study were governed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). One public university and five private universities were part of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Participating teachers

Eight full-time English language teachers were voluntarily recruited from the universities using convenience sampling. They agreed to follow all the required instructions in the participant information sheet and gave their informed consent before the data were gathered. The participating teachers were de-identified to safeguard their confidentiality and their names were changed to pseudonyms. The following table (Table 1) shows the distribution of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>University Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joko</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Master of Education</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Master of Education</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bambang</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Master of Education</td>
<td>29 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melati</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Master of Education</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahayu</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herlambang</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Doctor of Education</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudirman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Doctor of Education</td>
<td>21 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kartika</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Doctor of Education</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Profile of the Participating Teachers
Data collection
This study used online research methods such as online interviews, observation and document analysis. The E-Interview Research Framework (Salmons, 2014) was adopted. Due to the mitigations put in place from COVID-19, the data were gathered remotely. The primary data was eight pre-design interviews and eight post-design interviews. The other supporting data were observations (i.e., online classes on learning management systems and social media applications), documentation (i.e., directorial and institutional decrees, university updates via websites, curriculum documents, syllabus and semester lesson plans and teaching diaries of participants).

Data analysis
The Data Analysis Spiral introduced and developed by Creswell and Poth (2018) was used. The analysis was conducted both inductively and deductively and the resulting cross-case analysis showed themes related to teachers’ design processes for remote learning and also the shifting classroom paradigms.

Findings & Analysis
Adoption of online learning design approaches
The governmental mandates on emergency learning to mitigate the pandemic caused by COVID-19 were implemented in Indonesia from March 2020. The participating teachers were immediately required to implement an online distance learning approach. The teachers were forced to modify their course design from blended learning to online distance learning designs. The English language teachers in this study have shown a similar routine as the university teachers in the study of Bennett et.al (2017) regarding the nature of the design problem in that they used a broad to specific design approach and moved through multiple design phases.

The teachers’ design work was an emergency design and was developed by redesigning the syllabus or semester lesson plans. The course plans were originally used for blended learning course designs. They were then redesigned and redeveloped to suit a fully online learning mode. This redesign was undertaken using a broad to specific strategy. The participants worked together with their partners in a team; they discussed the course framework together, or distributed jobs between partners. However, the specific course designs were undertaken individually. The individual design work had three stages. In the planning phase, teachers modified the course framework of the existing syllabus or semester lesson plans. In this stage, most teachers explained that content scopes and learning outcomes were not changed; however, some features were changed such as ideas for activities and assessments strategies to fit the technological affordances and costs. After the teachers finalised the course framework, the design processes moved to a more specific detail approach. Scheduling and descriptions of lesson activities, assessments, and content resources were organised. This concluded the planning stage.

During the implementation stage, the participating teachers taught weekly lessons as planned. This also included updating online classes and content resources in the LMSs. However, some of the planned learning designs were not successfully conducted due to design issues associated with technological affordances, costs, internet connectivity, and device ownership.
issues. Thus, a design-while-teaching approach was undertaken to solve the design challenges. In other words, these teachers undertook another redesign approach during the implementation stage.

The final stage was reflection. Here, the teachers undertook some techniques to reflect upon their course designs. The purpose was to identify areas for improvement. These teachers evaluated the implementation of the course designs, for example lesson activities could not be well delivered because of internet connectivity as the former technique. The last technique was future planning of learning designs for the upcoming student cohort. For instance, refinement of the quality of online modules and video lectures, and better ways to engage students in online discussions.

Unanticipated design issues in Bennett et. al., (2017)’s model

The design process, as undertaken by the teachers, resembled that described by Bennett et.al (2017). However, this design process model for university teachers does not specifically address the design issues that are often present in developing countries but are overlooked in developed countries. Some of these include technological affordances, costs, internet connectivity and device ownership issues. Although a common analysis stage (Branch, 2009) could be captured in the individual case studies, the participating teachers had more complex issues. This study has indicated that these environmental factors influenced teachers’ design practices.

Institutional directives and support

The nature of the emergency online teaching was varied depending on a number of factors as follows:

1) ICT infrastructure influenced how the curriculum was designed and delivered. The teachers were mostly trained to use the institutional technological tools at a technical level rather than being trained to integrate this technology with their pedagogy. Some of the teachers received teacher training from the institutions. Other teachers sought support from other actors (i.e., professional communities outside university, and colleagues). The level of support provided, either internally or externally, dictated their success in designing learning.

2) There was a lack of pedagogical usability for some LMSs. Institutional LMSs could not be accessed by staff or students due to issues associated with the bandwidth capacity (i.e., overloaded servers) and incomplete features (i.e., lack of video conferencing tools, video file extensions). This required creative approaches from teachers, often involving the use of alternative technological tools.

3) Lack of access to appropriate bandwidth. Students and teachers struggled to access sufficient internet bandwidth to allow for all planned learning activities, including video conferencing and live lessons. It required teachers’ efforts to overcome the technological affordances and economic costs.

Teachers’ design practices impacted student learning

Students experienced different levels of readiness following the move to online learning. Senior students were better prepared. They showed independency and autonomous learning. Unlike senior students, junior students had to be carefully guided to follow instructions.
However, both students demonstrated low engagement in online discussions, either synchronously and asynchronously.

**Discussion**

**Extended contextual analysis model**

A new design process for university language teachers, an expansion of that described by Bennett et al. (2017) is a key finding of this research. This new model addresses some factors overlooked in the original model proposed. In this new model, the analysis phase of the ADDIE model (Branch, 2009) is also used to identify and plant to accommodate the contextual factors.

This model is called the *Expanded Contextual Analysis Model* (Figure 1). It has three phases: planning, implementation, and reflection. Each phase includes actions and tasks in order to visualise the tacit design process at each point. The actions are teachers’ design decision-making regarding the environmental factors that should be aligned with course syllabus and semester lesson plans and requires teachers to analyse, design, develop, implement and evaluate their learning designs. The tasks show chronological design activities during design processes.

![Figure 1: Expanded Contextual Analysis Model](image)

**Planning phase**
Participating teachers’ undertook frequent contextual analyses on the environmental factors as they affected their learning designs. This continued throughout the learning experience. To encapsulate that, this model has three actions within the planning phase.

1) Analysis
   An analysis of the environmental factors is taken to understand how they might impact the course framework (general ideas for course designs). The tasks are undertaken by modifying the course framework (i.e., ideas for activities and assessment strategies) and identifying/analysing technological affordances and costs (i.e., ideas of technology used that are suitable with ideas for activities and assessment strategies).

2) Design
   A design phase is broken down into some tasks that require teachers to adjust their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and technological knowledge (TK) into course syllabus or semester lesson plans and document the planned course designs. More specific course designs such as content resources, class and assessment timetables, lesson activities and assessment descriptions can be decided. This task may need teachers to demonstrate their capacity to understand PCK and TK to align with the planned lesson activities and assessment descriptions. Then, documenting the course plan by using the existing template of course syllabus or semester lesson plans is essential.

3) Develop
   Teachers are required to develop weekly online content in the LMSs. Creating new or reproducing content resources that had been used from previous iterations of the subject are some alternatives for the task at this point.

**Implementation Phase**

There are three further actions in the implementation phase. This shows the need to re-design and re-implement, based on the contextual analysis and changing circumstances.

1) Implement
   Teachers deliver the course design as planned; sometimes, there are no obstacles to overcome. The task also includes updating weekly online content in the LMSs. If there are no obstacles, teachers would not need to continue to the next actions.

2) Analyse
   Another analysis should be undertaken because of some recently occurring design issues. Therefore, a design-while-teaching approach is suggested. Obstacles caused by environmental factors may occur. Teachers are required to analyse solutions to minimise these obstacles.

3) Redevelop-Reimplement
   This stage is recommended after teachers have undertaken the previous analysis phase. Teachers would need to redevelop the course designs by modifying or changing the planned courses. After deciding the redeveloped course plan, they need to reimplement it.
Reflection Phase

1) Evaluation
Teachers are recommended to evaluate the course designs to reflect on their teaching experiences. The tasks, such as evaluating the course designs and identifying areas of improvement, are possible strategies of evaluation.

Conclusion

In general, technological affordances and costs influenced the design processes of the adoptions of online learning designs. The new model of the design processes has the capacity to understand the environmental factors influence teachers’ design work as well as impact student learning.

References


Istifci, I. (2017). Perceptions of Turkish EFL students on online language learning platforms and blended language learning. *Journal of Education and Learning, 6*(1), 113-121. [https://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p113](https://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p113)


Salmons, J. (2014). *Qualitative online interviews: Strategies, design, and skills*. Sage Publications.

Sun, S. Y. (2014). Learner perspectives on fully online language learning. *Distance Education, 35*(1), 18-42. [https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2014.891428](https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2014.891428)
