Teacher strategies in online learning to increase students’ interest in learning during COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT
Interest has a very important role in learning. This interest leads to motivation in learning and it can improve learning outcomes. This study focused on understanding and exploring the strategies used by teachers of SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup to increase student's interest in learning and to express students' responses in Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach in which the principal, the vice-principal of curriculum, the teachers, and students were the informants of this research. The data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews which were analyzed by using the Miles and Huberman model. The results showed that the strategies used by the teacher to increase students' interest in learning were to provide students with an understanding of the importance of learning, to make learning material brief, clear, and interesting, to use simple and interesting media, and to conduct regular and continuous evaluations. Online learning, students get something fun, but they lack togetherness with their friends.

Keyword: COVID-19, Interest in Learning, Online Learning, Teacher Strategy

Introduction
The learning strategy is a special method or approach that is applied by the teacher both in organizing students, materials, methods, media, equipment, and time so that the learning process can be carried out well (Ragin, G et al., 2020; Santosa, D. S. S et al., 2020). Learning strategies are also meaningful as patterns or sequences that are carried out by the teacher consciously and systematically to make the learning process run effectively (Jovanović et al., 2017; Rosari, I, 2019). Implementing a learning strategy that can still help the learning process run effectively (Cleveland et al., 2017; Hasan, M. S. R & Chumaidah, N, 2020).

Interest in learning is a very important aspect of learning (Cheung, 2018). With interest in learning, it will raise students' attention in learning (Kayalar & AR1, 2017; Lin & Huang, 2016), and in turn, it will affect learning outcomes (Isnani, 2017). Three important aspects can generate interest in learning, namely attention, goals, and intensity of learning (Cheung, 2018). Someone who has a high attention to something, usually he has an interest (Laine et al., 2017). Interest in learning does not arise spontaneously or suddenly, but interest arises because of experiences, habits, and participation in learning (Nugroho, 2020). Interest is also closely related to comfort and needs (Iqmaulia & Usman, 2019).

At the beginning of 2020, the world was shocked by a deadly virus called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Yuzar, 2020). Many Wuhan residents and citizens of other countries, including Indonesia were infected with this virus, and some even resulted in casualties (Siagian, 2020). The spread of the coronavirus changes all human activities, including in the learning process (Aji, 2020). The learning process is carried out...
in the classroom by direct interaction between teachers and students. Yet, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning process was carried out at home with an online system or online (network), offline (outside the network), or with other systems (Darmalaksana et al., 2020). In Indonesia, nearly 25 million school-age children participate in studying at home (Daheri et al., 2020; Purwanto, A et al., 2020). The policy is based on the Circular of the Minister of Education and Culture dated March 24, 2020. Learning at home is learning that is done at home by utilizing various existing media (Wijaya et al., 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning process is carried out at home by utilizing online media and other media. Studying at home has several advantages including saving on transportation costs, reducing stress due to congestion on the highway, and having lots of free time (Purwanto, A et al., 2020). On the other hand, studying at home has several shortcomings, including causing boredom, reducing work motivation, and increasing electricity costs or internet quota (Nurhasanah, S & Sobandi, A, 2016). Learning at home during the COVID-19 pandemic was very different from previous student learning habits. This could lead to boredom. As a result, student's interest and learning motivation decreased (Siagian, R. E. F, 2015).

On the other hand, learning at home is one of the alternative ways, so that the learning process continues during the coronavirus pandemic. But, it also can have an impact on a student's interest in learning. The task given by the teacher is not done; students are more likely to do play activities than to learn at home. Even in certain areas, students take advantage of their study time at home to play together at their friends' houses, play games, and so on. As a result, the learning process at home does not run effectively (Setyorini, 2020).

The Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) Rabbi Radhiyya Curup is one of the many schools in Indonesia that is carrying out the learning process from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the preliminary study that the researchers conducted showed that “the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic can run well, character building such as habituation of tahsin, tahfiz, worship practices, memorizing prayers and selected hadiths run smoothly. Student interest is still high in following the learning process with the Online system. Every assignment given by the teacher is done by students (Apridiansa, personal communication, 16 May 2020; A. Pradana, personal communication, 15 May 2020). The question arises, what strategies are used by teacher SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup to increase student's interest in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic? How are the students respond to learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Studies related to learning strategies have been widely studied by previous researchers, but these studies only discuss strategies in face-to-face learning. Several previous studies have shown that the learning strategies used by teachers greatly affect student learning outcomes (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016; Nasution, W. N, 2018; Solihatin & Syahrial, 2019). Learning strategies can also influence student interest in learning (Kristiyani, E & Budiningsih, I, 2019; Ugwu, 2017), and can influence student' learning motivation (Fitri, S. R & Saenab, S, 2019; Yu, 2019). Even so, each teacher has different strategies in increasing student's interest, motivation, and learning outcomes (Chan et al., 2019; Guido, 2018). This depends on the student's condition, the conditions during the learning process, the materials to be delivered, and the learning resources used (Padli Nasution, M, I, 2016). Therefore, when teachers are faced with different conditions, even though the material presented is the same, the strategies used will be different. Online learning strategies in fostering student interest in learning have never been done by previous researchers. Meanwhile, online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many problems, one of which was the difficulty of teachers in fostering student interest in learning. The results of this study are expected to be used as a reference for teachers in fostering student interest in learning, especially in online learning.

**Method**

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research with a phenomenological approach is research that investigates to understand and explore a phenomenon carried out by a person or group of people (Creswell, 2016; Moleong, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). In this context, understanding and exploring the strategies used by the SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup teachers in online learning to increase student interest in learning. The research informants consisted of 1 school principal, 1 vice principal of curriculum, 7 teachers (Ustaz and Ustazah), and students. Research informants were determined by a purposive sampling technique (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). The basis of consideration used in determining research informants is the informant who is considered the most knowledgeable about the strategies used by teachers in online learning to foster student interest in learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
The research data was obtained through semi-structured interviews (Nazir, 2015). The data validity techniques that the researchers used were interview extension and source triangulation. An extension of the interview was used when the data obtained in the previous interview is deemed inadequate, while source triangulation is carried out to check the validity of the data through different sources (Sugiono, 2018). The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman model which consists of three stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion (Sugiono, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Teacher strategies in online learning to foster interest in learning

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a change in the implementation of the learning process at SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup. The learning process previously was carried out in schools with a face-to-face system, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning process was carried out from home through the online system by utilizing existing media (Apridiana, personal communication, 16 May 2020). This is following the Circular of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 4, concerning Implementation of Education Policies in an Emergency for the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), March 24, 2020.

Learning activities from home using the online system began to be carried out a day after leaving the Circular of the Minister of Education and Culture and on the same day, it was followed up with the issuance of the Circular of the Regent of Rejang Lebong (A. Pradana, personal communication, 15 May 2020). Facing this situation, the Head of SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup, and all his staff held a meeting to respond to government policies regarding the implementation of the learning process due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (A. Pradana, personal communication, 15 May 2020). The results of the meeting decided that learning must continue, children must continue to learn, even in the emergency of COVID-19, it's just that the implementation system is different from normal conditions (Apridiana, personal communication, 16 May 2020). The policy was taken based on several considerations: First, learning is a basic right for every child and must be fulfilled. Second, parents have entrusted the mandate to SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup to educate their children, so SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup is obliged to carry out this mandate (A. Pradana, personal communication, 15 May 2020).

The learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic at SDIR Rabbi Radhiyya Curup continues by utilizing online media. In any situation, children must face learning even though the system is different from the usual. This is in line with the basic principles of learning, namely lifelong learning or long-life education (Abuddin Nata, 2016). Many ways can be done so that the basic principles of lifelong learning are carried out, including independent learning (Firdaus, M. D & Sulisty, B, 2018), providing learning experiences to students (Septiani, M, 2015), learning through literacy (Zulaikha, S. R et al., 2015), develop meta cyclical students for learning (Sudarsana, I. K, 2016) and so on. There are several strategies carried out by teachers at SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup in Online learning system to increase students interest in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely:

Providing understanding and attention to students in any situation that they must keep learning.

At SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup during the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning process was carried out at home using an internet network or online (S. Elvina, personal communication, 17 May 2020). So that the learning process can run smoothly, effectively and students remain interested in learning, homeroom teachers and teachers provide understanding to students and parents of students about the importance of learning in any situation (E. C. Ningish, personal communication, 21 May 2020). Giving understanding is done before the learning process takes place (Sumaryati, personal communication, 18 May 2020). Students and parents are given the understanding that learning is a necessity (Alfadli, personal communication, 19 May 2020). By learning you will be smart, by learning you will get a lot of knowledge, by learning you will be rewarded, and by learning you are exalted by God (Yoga, personal communication, 23 May 2020). The school principal instructs all homeroom teachers to provide understanding and understanding to students (Apridiana, personal communication, 16 May 2020) Even though there is a circular we cannot go to school to study together, but learning must continue, it's just in a way that different from usual (S. Elvina, personal communication, 17 May 2020).

Physically, the learning process is not carried out together at school, but SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup children must continue to learn (A. Pradana, personal communication, 15 May 2020). So that children remain enthusiastic and their interest in learning does not decrease, the teacher must provide an understanding that learning can be done anywhere. "The strategy used by the teacher in providing understanding to students to
keep learning in any situation is done directly to students the day before holidays. On the other hand, teachers establish communication and cooperation with parents of students, so that parents always remind, help, and provide guidance to their children so that they continue to study at home. Teachers also always pay attention by remembering students to keep studying at home every time they start the learning process and at night through WhatsApp (WA) messages. Giving understanding to students about the importance of studying at home is done by the teacher repeatedly (Apridiansa, personal communication, 16 May 2020).

The teacher's attention has a very important role in enhancing and providing understanding to students about the importance of learning, both during the process and after learning takes place (Wijayanti, A et al., 2018). This attention can be in the form of verbal or non-verbal, which can be given directly or indirectly (Endriani, 2018). Besides, giving understanding to students can be done by the teacher by providing explanations to students (Barlenti et al., 2017).

Collaboration between teachers and parents also needs to be done to provide understanding to students about the importance of learning. Parents are teacher partners in the success of learning that can support the learning process. Lack of cooperation between teachers and parents can result in the learning process being disrupted (Natsir et al., 2018). Besides, cooperation between teachers and parents of students is also needed in building student character (Pratiningsih, D, 2017).

**Preparation, clear, easy to understand, and interesting learning materials**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategies implemented by SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup teachers to increase student interest in learning include "preparing learning materials that are brief, clear, and easy to understand, interesting, adapted to the media and learning system used. Learning with the online system is very different from face-to-face learning. At school, students can freely ask questions directly about the subject matter that is unclear and has not yet been understood. In online learning, students are not free to ask questions about material that has not been understood. Presenting learning material in a brief, clear, interesting, and easy to understand manner is necessary so that students’ interest in learning remains high, and the students do not get bored and remain enthusiastic in learning (Haniah, personal communication, 13 May 2020)."

There are several ways of SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup teachers in preparing distance learning material to make it easy to understand and interesting, namely summarizing the learning material on each theme and subject, accompanying the material by concrete examples, followed by practice questions, making powerpoints then explained via video learning (S. Elvina, personal communication, 17 May 2020; Yoga, personal communication, 23 May 2020). Related to the theory of development, what SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup teachers are doing is in line with the theory of child development. According to the cognitive development theory of children aged 7-12 years are at a concrete operational development stage. At this age, it is easier for children to understand simple, clear, concrete things, accompanied by pictures and real examples (Dewi Purnama Sari, 2014; Resnick, 2017).

Likewise with learning videos, in addition to attracting students’ attention, these videos can be played many times, so that it can make it easier for students to learn and understand learning material. Learning videos are one of the most effective media used to make learning materials concrete, fun, provide their own learning experiences, and can improve learning outcomes for elementary school students (Hadi, S, 2017). Also, the use of instructional video media can help elementary school students form hard work character, increase interest, motivation, and learning skills of school students (Batubara, H. H & Ariani, D. N, 2019; Wuryanti, U & Kartowagiran, B, 2016).

**Choosing a simple and attractive learning media**

Another strategy used by SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup teachers in increasing student interest in learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic is choosing simple and attractive learning media. Media were simple in terms of affordable costs, easy to use by teachers and students in the learning process. Interesting means not boring and can foster student learning (E. C. Ningsih, personal communication, 21 May 2020). The learning media used are WhatsApp (WA), Classroom, and Zoom. However, using Zoom is considered less secure and requires a lot of internet quota, so Zoom is only used a few meetings (A. Pradana, personal communication, 15 May 2020).

According to the information of one of the SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup teachers, WhatsApp (WA) and Classrooms are used by teachers to send assignments to students, both in the form of a summary of learning materials, practice questions, learning videos and used by students to send completed assignments. Besides,
WhatsApp (WA) was also used to communicate with students and parents to monitor students during the learning process at home (Alfadli, personal communication, 19 May 2020).

Media is an important element in learning (Ekayani, 2017; Qizi et al., 2019). The use of appropriate learning media, not only facilitates the delivery of material but can also increase the effectiveness in achieving learning goals, can increase interest and motivation to learn (Nurdyansyah, N, 2016; Wati et al., 2018). The accuracy of selecting learning media is not determined by the price but is largely determined by the level of efficiency and effectiveness in achieving goals (Maisaroh, T & Abdullah, M, 2018).

Important criteria that must be used as a reference in choosing media in learning are that the media must be following the material to be presented, attractive, affordable in terms of financing, easy to use, available, and useful (Alperi & Handayani, 2019; Ekayani, 2017). Learning media will help achieve learning objectives if the media used has high absorption in delivering material and provides understanding to students (Mawardi, M, 2018), can provide learning experiences, foster student attitudes and learning skills, easy to use, economical, and can create an effective learning situation (Maisaroh, T & Abdullah, M, 2018).

**Conducting regular and continuous evaluations**

Evaluation is an activity carried out to determine the level of progress or development of students after carrying out the learning process at a certain time. At SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup, evaluation activities are carried out periodically and continuously. Evaluation activities are carried out not only to measure the level of progress and development of students after following the learning process but also to evaluate the effectiveness of methods, media, learning strategies applied by teachers, to increase student interest and motivation (Haniah, personal communication, 13 May 2020).

By regular and continuous evaluations, students will always prepare themselves by reading books and learning materials that they have learned (Yoga, personal communication, 23 May 2020). This evaluation can be done by giving several questions to students after carrying out the learning process within a certain time, such as after finishing discussing a topic and theme, after students watching the learning video given by the teacher, every mid-semester, and at the end of the semester (S. Elvina, personal communication, 17 May 2020). "The learning evaluation is carried out in writing and orally. The written evaluation is carried out by the teacher by giving some practice questions to students and asking students to make a short written report after watching a video lesson from the teacher. An oral evaluation is carried out by asking students to make sound recordings related to learning material, then send them to WhatsApp (WA) Ustaz / Ustazah, such as recording Tahsin, Tahfiz, prayer reading, memorizing prayers, and selected hadiths (EC Ningsih, personal communication, 21 May 2020; Sumaryati, personal communication, 18 May 2020) ".

Learning evaluation is very important to do. The main purpose of learning is to improve the quality of learning, both in terms of results and in terms of process (Farida, I, 2017). Evaluations that can improve the quality of learning are evaluations that are always followed up if some deficiencies and weaknesses are found during the learning process. Evacuation of good learning is an evaluation that has consequences, both for teachers and students (Avelino et al., 2017). Learning evaluation that has consequences for teachers is an evaluation that can increase the role and competence of teachers, increase the ability to manage the class, use media, methods, and learning strategies. Learning evaluation is also expected to have consequences for students. These consequences can be in the form of an increase and development of interest and motivation to learn and student learning outcomes, both in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Nuriyah, N, 2016). Therefore, any evaluation results must be followed up so that they have consequences for both teachers and students.

Changing of using the media, methods, strategies, and implementation of learning not only require an increase in teacher competence and material development but also lead to the development of an evaluation instrument (Deeley, 2018). Teachers are required to develop a learning evaluation instrument according to the criteria and changes and developments in the object to be evaluated. If this is not done, the evaluation instrument will not be able to measure the object being evaluated validly.

**Student response to online learning during COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many changes in all aspects of life, including in the world of education. The learning process, which was initially carried out face-to-face in class, has changed to learning at home using the online system or distance learning by utilizing various existing media. At SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya, the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic was carried out by using online media including WhatsApp (WA) and classrooms. Students have different responses. Fathiyya, (personal communication, May 24, 2020)
said, "I am very happy because by learning online from home, I can watch videos from Ustazah, can make videos about Tahsin, Tahfiz, memorizing prayers and practicing worship". The same thing was stated by Zahfran, (personal communication, 25 May 2020) who said "learning with WhatsApp (WA) is also fun, you can watch ustazah’ videos and you can also make videos”.

Luna, (personal communication, 23 May 2020) also stated, “there are advantages and disadvantages of studying at home with WhatsApp (WA). The good thing is being able to study while watching ustazah’ videos, the bad thing is that sometimes it's hard to get a stable signal, studying in a quiet house only with parents. It’s different from studying at school, being able to play with friends, shopping, playing on the lawn, and going to the library”. According to Hasan, (personal communication, 26 May 2020), "studying at home is also unpleasant, sometimes my mother gets angry with her, if the material is not clear, you cannot directly ask the ustazah and you cannot play with friends". According to Asyifa, (personal communication, May 22, 2020), “all the material delivered by the ustazah can understand everything because the ustazah has already provided notes and videos, but there are also discomforts, he cannot play with friends and ustazahs”.

The results of the interview illustrated that there were two kinds of students' responses to learning with an online system, fun and not fun. Students said they were happy with online teaching using WhatsApp (WA). This is because students can carry out learning activities while playing, watch videos shared by their ustazahs and can make videos related to the learning activities carried out. Because of the developmental aspect, elementary school-age children are in the age range of 7-12 years. Children aged 7-12 years are very interested and like everything that is concrete and easy to observe. The SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup teacher prepares the learning material in a concise, clear, and accompanied by concrete example and is uploaded in a short video. This is what makes students feel happy about studying at home through WhatsApp (WA). Delivering learning material using information technology is easier, faster, fun, and very attractive to students (Cuban, 2018).

On the other hand, students also said studying at home was not fun. This is because students cannot play with their friends and cannot meet their ustazahs directly. This is natural because every child tends to play with friends his age. Apart from learning places, schools are also places for children to play and establish communication with friends their age. Elementary school-aged children have started to form new bonds socially with their peers and with their classmates, have begun to adapt, be comparative, and enjoy playing with peers (Tusyana, E & Trengginas, R, 2019). Therefore, during the learning process carried out at home, something he felt was missing from him, namely togetherness with his friends, both togetherness in learning and togetherness in playing.

Conclusion

The strategy used by SDIT Rabbi Radhiyya Curup teachers to foster student interest in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is the first, giving students an understanding of the importance of learning in any situation, either directly or in collaboration with parents of students. Second, prepare learning materials that are short, clear, easy to understand, and interesting. Third, choose learning media that is simple and attractive. Fourth, evaluate learning regularly and continuously. There are two responses of students to learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely, first, some say it is fun because they can learn while watching videos of their ustazahs and can be creative in making video recordings related to schoolwork. Second, some say it is not fun, because they feel that something is missing, such as being together with their friends both in learning and in play.

References


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