

## Indonesian EFL Teachers' Roles and Challenges in a Virtual Teaching Environment

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### Abstract

Abrupt change into virtual classroom teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic has forced teachers to switch to teaching roles different from the conventional classroom. Facing this unprecedented condition, many teachers have experienced confusion in switching to appropriate roles in order to engage their students in the learning process. This study explores Indonesian EFL teachers' roles during online teaching activities and possible challenges in having teaching practices amid pandemics. Data for this qualitative study were generated from virtual classroom observations, field notes and semi-structured interviews of two high school teachers. Borrowing the lens of Alvarez et al. (2009) and Harmer (2007) for analysis, the study identified different design/planning, social and cognitive roles of Indonesian EFL teachers such as controller, prompter and resource. While exploring more relevant roles, teachers also faced some constraints in running online teaching practices like poor internet connection and the lack of face-to-face interaction during teaching and learning practices. In conclusion, Indonesian EFL teachers can still perform designer/planning, social and cognitive roles. However, their specific roles are limited to controller, prompter and resource only due to the obstacles involved in the virtual classrooms.

**Keywords:** EFL teachers; online teaching activity; teachers' roles

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### INTRODUCTION

The spread of Corona Virus Disease or COVID-19 has affected many aspects of human life, including education. In 2020, The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture began to announce the change in the teaching and learning process and suggested to all educational institutions to conduct an online classroom in order to reduce the increasing cases of COVID-19. To keep the learning process going, digital platforms are used to provide classrooms with online-based learning. Moreover, online learning can be defined as a learning activity that includes a range of technologies such as world wide web, email, chat, new groups and texts, audio and video conferencing delivered through a computer network for educational purposes (Dhull & Sakshi, 2017). Online-based learning can be a suitable and appropriate choice to avoid the absence of teaching and learning activities. Through online-based learning activities, both the students and teachers are able to carry out the teaching and learning process as they do in a conventional classroom. Online classes are possible to be a solution during this pandemic situation due to their flexibility. The flexibility of online-based learning, which is powered by the internet, is also confirmed by Gómez et al. (2013), who state that all objects

connected to the network are able to offer information that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Moreover, Zhong (2008) suggests that learning English through the internet is able to enhance students' efficiency and high-quality achievement, whether it is in personal or mass English learning. Based on this issue, conducting distance learning through a virtual classroom immediately promote a new atmosphere and environment, not only for the students but also the teachers. However, an online-based learning activity may create a new problem. Zounek and Sudicky (2013) believe that the internet connection and the lack of skills in using technology can be some of the obstacles in learning through online equipment. This statement is in line with Adnan and Anwar (2020), who highlight the internet connection as the main problem in learning through online tools based on the students' perspective, while other problems rely on the lack of face-to-face interaction with the teachers, response time and also the absence of offline classroom socialization.

Learning through online platforms still requires the class participants to have a good interaction. Chou (2002) sees interaction as a very important aspect in conducting successful distant learning. Hence, face-to-face online learning platforms are relatively

recommended for the teachers to observe their students during the learning process. Besides, the students can also interact directly (Ahmad & Arifin, 2021). As previously mentioned, the types of teaching and learning activity that allow students and teachers to have a direct, face to face interactions have been temporarily prohibited. This is intended to reduce the spread of the corona virus. To teach in a virtual classroom, it is crucial for teachers to have flexibility and capability to adapt with the new teaching environment. In other words, the ways they play their roles may help determine the continuity of the learning process in order to achieve the learning objectives. The definition of "role" can be seen as an action taken during the process of teaching and learning activity to achieve the standard of learning objective among the students. Several experts have elaborated various roles of the teachers in different teaching context. Harmer (2007) classifies English language teachers' roles when they are in the classroom into five which include controller, prompter, participant, resource and tutor. Harmer explains, as a controller, teachers have to be in charge of all the activities happening in the classroom. Meanwhile, teachers as a prompter can be shown when the teachers' act is to encourage the students to engage in the learning process and being a participant is when the teachers join and take part in the students' activities such as quizzes or games. A teacher also needs to be a resource for the students where it can be done when the teachers provide knowledge to the students. The last teachers' role stated by Harmer (2007) is tutor. Tutoring the students here can be described when the teachers intensively guide the students while they are working on their assignments or projects. In the traditional classroom, many teachers tend to be a tutor by staying briefly in a small group to provide guidance. In relation to factors that influence teachers' roles, Makovec (2018) identifies internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to several aspects that may affect teacher's perception of their roles, whereas external factors revolve around the view and expectation that come from students, colleagues or school leaders.

Teachers are responsible for every activity conducted in the classroom during the process of teaching and learning practice. Moreover, according to Gunduz (2016), responsible teacher is expected to be positively noticed by the students as 'the trust factors' which may lead the teachers and students to have an intense and good communication. Speaking of a responsible teacher, supporting and motivating the students to learn is one of the main responsibilities in the classroom as Harden and Crosby (2000) identify a good teacher as those who are ready to assist the students in the context of learning. Teachers' responsibility also lies on how the teachers select appropriate roles in different teaching purposes to achieve students' learning objectives. Roles performed by the teachers should be considered as an instrument in assisting students' process of learning. In this study, teachers' roles can be defined as

teachers' actions implemented in the classroom in order to support the students to meet the learning purposes.

As a virtual teaching activity becomes the context, a different set of roles might be necessary. Related to this, Alvarez et al. (2010) construct teachers' competencies and roles to be implemented in the virtual context. The competencies and roles are classified into design/planning role, social role, cognitive role, profile domain and technological domain. Design or planning role requires the teachers to carry tasks included in the planning, follow-up and organization of the process of teaching and learning. Moreover, according to Shaikh and Khoja (2012), design or planning covers various roles such as a planner, a designer, an instructional or learning designer and also a programmer. Meanwhile, social roles signify the teachers' behavior which influences student-teacher or student-student relationships. Instructive or cognitive role revolves around teachers' cognitive ability related to their subject matters in presenting content and facilitating learning through the use of ICT. Considering the level of the participants' students, this study reduces the roles and competencies into three aspects which only includes design/planning, social and instructive/cognitive role. In this study, design/planning role refers to how the teachers organize the activities in the virtual classroom which is shown when the teachers play the role of controller. Meanwhile, social role indicate the teachers' interaction with the students in the virtual meeting and the roles are shown in the roles of participant and prompter. Finally, cognitive role here is depicted when the teachers become a tutor and a resource.

In a different learning context, Alonazi (2017) has conducted a study regarding teacher roles in promoting autonomous learning. The result of the study shows that teachers are found to play several roles in order to foster learner autonomy namely a facilitator, a manager, a resource and a counselor. In an Indonesian context, a study conducted by Ayustina, et. al. (2018) classifies teachers' roles in implementing scientific approach in teaching English in a secondary school. This study indicates that teachers play five roles including prompter or motivator, facilitator, controller, organizer and assessor. Also, this study declares that all roles performed by the teachers are able to promote students-centered learning.

Meanwhile, the learning process during pandemic has been explored by many researchers. In Indonesia, Yulia (2020) has conducted a study purposing to investigate the role of pandemic era towards the education system in Indonesia. There are several types of online learning and teaching strategies implemented by the instructors while the university is temporally forbidden to visit. The result shows that traditional teaching and learning activity is no longer conducted. Online learning is also recommended in order to help the government in preventing the spread of virus. Another study has been done by Mathew et al. (2019) which discusses

challenges and implication in conducting virtual e-learning classroom in EFL context. The study used questionnaire to collect the data from 20 EFL teachers to gain their insights and perceptions. The findings reveal that teaching and learning process through e-learning platforms is believed to be potential. This may facilitate students to learn in a good atmosphere and relaxing environment. A related study has been conducted by Bestiantono et al. (2020) examine the secondary students' perception regarding online training amidst the pandemic in Indonesia. The study reveals that web-based learning does not successfully create the intended outcomes in conducting online learning. Meanwhile, most of the students admit that they cannot access the web due to certain problems such as money-related issues. The problems concluded in this study are the lack of face-to-face interaction, reaction time and the absence of traditional socialization among the students. Finally, an online learning practice in Indonesia is also depicted through a study conducted by Amin and Sundari (2020). The study is intended to investigate EFL students' preferences and perceptions in utilizing three digital learning platforms which are Cisco WebEx Meeting video conferencing, Google Classroom as a learning management system (LMS) and WhatsApp as a mobile messenger application. The instrument of the study is a questionnaire and it is responded by 140 Indonesian EFL university students. The result of the study shows that all digital learning platforms indicate a highly positive agreement on all the criteria enlisted in the questionnaire. However, Google Classroom and WhatsApp achieved the highest scores on its language learning potential, meaning focus and authenticity and only WhatsApp that is preferred by the EFL university students in terms of the meaning focus, learner fir, positive impact and practicality.

Finally, based on the related research findings, it can be understood that performing teachers' roles is associated with the learning environment and the learning purposes. However, to immediately adjust and perform appropriate roles in an online-based teaching practice in order to help the students understand the learning materials can be a challenge for the teachers. Furthermore, conducting teachers' roles in online-based learning environment according to the perspective of Indonesian teachers as a topic of the study is limited. Hence, this study explores some different roles EFL teachers in Indonesian high school may assume in their virtual classroom learning and challenges caused by this COVID-19 pandemic.

## METHOD

### Site and Participant

This study is a qualitative descriptive study. Conducting a qualitative descriptive study here is expected to be appropriate in delivering an in-depth exploration of Indonesian teachers' roles in a virtual teaching context. Two Indonesian EFL teachers are selected as participants of the study. Both of the

participants are senior high school teachers who fully depend on a virtual platform for their teaching activities. One of the teachers began her teaching career in 2019, and the other one started in 2018. This means they have experienced both face-to-face and online-based teaching practices. In other words, the participants are selected based on their frequency in conducting a virtual classroom.

### Research Instruments

There are three instruments employed in this study namely classroom observation, field notes and semi-structured interview. A virtual classroom observation is proposed to gain the data regarding the teachers' roles in a virtual environment by monitoring teachers' actions in the virtual classroom. The observation sheet in this study is formed as a checklist observation, which the criteria are adopted from Alvarez, et. al. (2009) and Harmer (2007), along with the field notes to describe the roles performed by the EFL teachers in more detailed and specific ways. Lastly, semi-structured interview is aimed at obtaining in-depth information regarding teachers' roles and the barriers in EFL virtual settings based on the participants' experiences. The observation guideline is the combination of the concept of teachers' roles proposed by Alvarez et al. (2009), which refers to design/planning, social and instructive/cognitive role, and Harmer (2007) which specifies the roles of teachers into certain acts.

### Procedure

As it is mentioned before, recorded virtual classroom observation, field notes and semi-structured interview are employed in this study. The observation is conducted in three meetings for each Indonesian EFL teacher to avoid bias. All of the actions done by the teachers are observed in order to categorize them into several teachers' roles. During the observation section, this study also use field notes to give the detailed information regarding their roles and everything that happens during the virtual teaching practices. Meanwhile, the semi-structured interview is done after observing and taking notes. The questions enlisted in the interview is aimed to reveal an in-depth information based on the Indonesian EFL teachers' perspectives towards performing their teaching roles and the problems they face in a virtual teaching environment.

### Data Analysis

The recorded virtual observation is formed as a checklist observation. The criteria checked in the observation sheet regarding the teachers' action during teaching practice is analyzed and concluded later. In the next step, the checked criteria in the observation sheet are described through the field notes. Later, all of the writings in the notes are analyzed using coding technique as Saldaña (2013) believes that a code in a qualitative research provides a summative attribute for some of language-based or

visual data. Meanwhile, the similar coding technique is also used for the data gained through semi-structured interview as the last instrument in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers' Roles in a Virtual Teaching Environment

Results of classroom observations, field notes and interviews indicate some roles EFL teachers can assume in their virtual classrooms as follow.

#### *Design/Planning Role*

Specifically, based on the teachers' actions during three virtual meetings, it is found that both of the teachers perform all of the main roles which are design/planning, social and cognitive role. According to the result of recorded virtual classroom observation, Teacher 1 (T1) seemed to actively give instruction to

the students. Table 1 displays a summed observation and field notes during three meetings.

This act refers to the role of design/planning and is specified into a controller as Koch (2011) reports that the role of a controller can be played by the teachers in order to correct, instruct, or scold the students. In the virtual classroom where the T1 taught, all of the students understood the instruction very well by doing the intended activities without any significant barrier. Similar acts were also implemented by Teacher 2 (T2). As can be seen in Table 2, he gave instructions for every upcoming activity, and his students seemed to obey him. Furthermore, both of the teachers provided well-organized activities and materials, which could be seen when they indicated no mistake in delivering the materials and conducting the learning activities, including online quizzes and games.

**Table 1**  
*Teacher 1's Design/Planning Role*

Teachers' Actions	Criteria	Designer/Planning Role		Notes
		Yes	No	
Controller	Teacher organizes all the activities, including discussion and tasks in online-based teaching and learning environment	✓		Teacher tells the students about various online learning activities and lets the students know what to do during learning practices. All of the activities are well-conducted.
	Teacher gives instruction to the students in online-based teaching and learning environment	✓		Teacher always gives clear instructions to the students whenever she attempts to conduct new activities. There is no significant barrier; all students seem to understand.

**Table 2**  
*Teacher 2's Design/Planning Role*

Teachers' Actions	Criteria	Design/Planning Role		Notes
		Yes	No	
Controller	Teacher organizes all the activities including discussion and task in online-based teaching and learning environment	✓		Teacher is able to introduce various online learning activities and explain them to the students without any mistake.
	Teacher gives instruction to the students in online-based teaching and learning environment	✓		Teacher always gives clear instructions to the students regarding the upcoming learning activities.

#### *Social Role*

In the meantime, T1 and T2 constantly played the social role which specifically referred to the role of prompter and participant. In T1's virtual classrooms, social role was depicted in being a prompter only as it is depicted in Table 3.

According to Renandya (2012), a prompter is when the teachers are still able to hint or suggest words to the students. T1 performed the role of a prompter by encouraging the students to think during the online discussion.

**Table 3**

*Teacher 1's Social Roles*

Social Role				
Teachers' Actions	Criteria	Yes	No	Notes
Prompter	Teacher suggests the students to do certain actions to make them engage in a discussion in online-based teaching and learning environment	✓		Teacher repeatedly ask the students to answer the questions or do particular actions such as reading the passages by pointing them in virtual classes
	Teacher gives clues or asks questions to encourage the students to think while learning in online-based teaching and learning environment	✓		Teacher sometimes denies to explicitly answer students' questions by giving clues or hints. Teacher asks questions regarding the topic discussed in the virtual classes
Participant	Teacher joins and takes part in the students' activity such as discussion, games or group work in online-based teaching and learning environment.		✓	Teacher did not perform the act of being a participant in the virtual classes

When her students came up with questions, she sometimes did not answer them explicitly in order to stimulate the students to choose the correct answer by themselves. T1 was also found checking her students understanding by asking the students several questions which were related to the topic. In addition, T1 frequently called her students by their names to answer certain questions presented in the screen. This act was considered as a T1's strategy to make the students to engage in the online class because her

students repeatedly gave no response whenever she asked some questions to the students. T1 said:

*I have to point the students personally to answer because one of the difficulties in online teaching activity is that the students did not give respond when I asked all of them to answer*

On the other side, T2 showed the similar pattern as T1. In the virtual classroom, he also mentioned his students' names in order to answer the questions as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
*Teacher 2's Social Role*

Social Role				
Teachers' Actions	Criteria	Yes	No	Notes
Prompter	Teacher suggests the students to do certain actions to make them engage in a discussion in online-based teaching and learning environment	✓		Teacher repeatedly ask the students to answer the questions or do particular actions such as reading the passages by pointing them in virtual classes
	Teacher gives clues or asks questions to encourage the students to think while learning in online-based teaching and learning environment	✓		Teacher sometimes denies to explicitly answer students' questions by giving clues or hints. Teacher asks questions regarding the topic discussed in the virtual classes
Participant	Teacher joins and takes part in the students' activity such as discussion, games or group work in online-based teaching and learning environment.		✓	Teacher did not perform the act of being a participant in the virtual classes

Also, T2 revealed in the interview that he preferred to give his students clues or hints before

stating the answer immediately. He would also confirm the students' comprehension regarding the materials

by giving questions to them. In playing the social role, T2 seemed to only focus on the students' understanding towards the given materials. Unfortunately, both T1 and T2 could not perform the role of a participant. Becoming a teacher as a participant deals with how the teachers voluntarily join their students' learning activities in the classroom.

**Instructive/Cognitive Role**

The last is cognitive role which refers to how the teachers transfer the knowledge in the virtual classroom settings. This role specifies the teachers into becoming a resource and a tutor as they are presented in Table 5 and Table 6.

**Table 5**  
*Teacher 1's Instructive/Cognitive Role*

		<b>Instructive/Cognitive Role</b>		
<b>Teachers' Actions</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Resource	Teacher gives the students any information related to the topic discussed in online-based teaching and learning environment.	✓		Teacher is able to explain the materials briefly.  Teacher frequently answers the students' questions
	Teacher is able to offer the students certain digital learning platforms in online-based teaching and learning environment.	✓		Teacher rarely offers and recommends online learning resource  Teacher does not use various online platforms to support her online teaching practices
Tutor	Teacher is able to stay concisely at small groups or individuals to offer general guidance in online-based teaching and learning environment.		✓	Teacher did not perform the act of being a participant in the virtual classes
	Teacher intensively guides the students when they are required to work on certain projects in online-based teaching and learning environment.		✓	Teacher did not perform the act of being a participant in the virtual classes

**Table 6**  
*Teacher 2's Instructive/Cognitive Role*

		<b>Instructive/Cognitive Role</b>		
<b>Teachers' Actions</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Resource	Teacher gives the students any information related to the topic discussed in online-based teaching and learning environment.	✓		Teacher is able to explain the materials briefly.  Teacher frequently answers the students' questions
	Teacher is able to offer the students certain digital learning platforms in online-based teaching and learning environment.	✓		Teacher seems to regularly offer and introduce several online learning resources  Teacher use various online platforms to support her online teaching practices
Tutor	Teacher is able to stay concisely at small groups or individuals to offer general guidance in online-based teaching and learning environment.		✓	Teacher did not perform the act of being a participant in the virtual classes
	Teacher intensively guides the students when they are required to work on certain projects in online-based teaching and learning environment.		✓	Teacher did not perform the act of being a participant in the virtual classes

Both of the teachers did not come up with being a tutor as it requires more intensive and personal communication between the teachers and their students. Nevertheless, T1 and T2 play the role of

resource adequately. They both were able to deliver the materials very well. In the virtual classroom, T1 was reported to continuously use Microsoft PowerPoint in explaining the topic and shared the screen immediately. Meanwhile, T2 used more various learning media such as NearPod and videos. It can be seen through the observation that T2 was more creative in taking advantage of online learning media to make the students understand the materials. Additionally, the teachers were also capable in answering students' questions which would enrich students' knowledge regarding the discussed topic. Regardless the teachers' ability to provide and transfer knowledge, they did not seem to suggest any online resource to support their students in learning independently at home.

### **Problems Faced by the Teachers in Conducting Virtual Classrooms**

#### **Poor Internet Connection**

Conducting an online-based learning practice gives a new experience for the teachers and students. This authority is seemed to be the most appropriate alternative since corona disease was announced to be a massive health issue in Indonesia as Dhawan (2020) claims that an inclusive education in the time of crisis can be manifested through conducting e-learning and the educational institutions have to develop the online or e-learning system in order to avoid the students from being underprivileged due to their location, social class, and ethnicity. However, the process of teaching and learning activity using online equipments may contain several latest barriers. In the interview section, the teachers agreed that the poor internet connection has created ineffective teaching and learning activities as Teacher 1 said:

*The internet connectivity is quite poor sometimes. It does not support the process of online learning and the learning activity becomes ineffective. There were also times when I needed to work harder because I had been kicked out of my own classroom due to the bad connection.*

In fact, teaching through online platforms requires the teachers to have a good access in using computer and experiencing a good quality of internet connection (Kearsley, 2002). Additionally, while observing teachers' role in the T2's virtual classroom, it is found that the learning process had to be delayed for awhile due to the teachers' unstable internet connection. This problem led the material that had been explained by the teachers could not be delivered on time and caused a poor time management. According to T1's experience in having a bad internet connection during online teaching practice, it gave her difficulty to conduct certain activity which includes speaking practice. Also, she was immediately kicked out of the Zoom Meeting for several times due to the bad internet connection. It took times for T1 to be able to go back as soon as possible because her internet disconnected might leave her students distracted and

unfocused. Consequently, the poor time management is believed to be a result of the lack of internet connection in online-based teaching and learning practice. Beside the internet problem, T1 also mentioned another technical problem caused by her laptop when she intended to use it for teaching purposes.

#### **The Lack of Face-to-Face Communication**

Another barrier found in this study is the lack of face-to-face communication between teachers and students. It is obvious that traditional classroom is able to provide teachers and students in having a face-to-face interaction. This kind of interaction is considered as an essential element in establishing a sense of community within the classroom members (Conole, et. al., 2008). The lack of in-person communication in the classroom did not only distracted the teacher-student relationship only but also between the students themselves. In this case, T1 noticed that her students are less-motivated in the virtual classroom. The teacher indicated her students' behavior when they were discussing the assignment. There was a time when her students refused to complete a certain assignment. It is revealed by T1 that the students did not show any willingness to record their speaking practices which would have submitted to their teacher. In addition, T1 also found that the students did not frequently interact with each other as they used to in the conventional classroom. Furthermore, it is written in the field notes that some of the students preferred to turn their camera off. The lack of unmediated communication between the students in an online-based learning may lower their motivation in learning English as Niemi and Kousa (2020) found in their research that students lost motivation during distance learning activity due to pandemic. Niemi and Kousa (2020) also add that non-authentic interaction and the lack of spontaneity in teaching practice have become the main challenges in an online teaching environment. Moreover, T1 admitted in the interview that the absence of in-person communication in the classroom could be a serious challenge for her to know the students' characteristics and personality. Students' personality can be one of the influences towards their learning style, in which according to Erton (2010), there is a close relationship between students' personality and their styles and strategies in learning purposes. Hence, understanding students' characteristics and personality is possible in allowing the teachers to identify students' learning styles. It can be a fruitful step for the teachers if they are able to analyze their students' learning style, moreover, in the mediated-learning environment. As Sadeghi, et. al., (2012) believe that learning styles are considered as general approaches in learning certain items, the main advantage of noticing students' learning styles refers to how teachers can facilely select teaching approaches and learning media suitable for their students as learning styles and preference. Meanwhile, the students might also feel unfamiliar in

the virtual classroom environment due to the lack of personal interaction in it. In the same learning environment, T2 recognized his students to be less-motivated as well. He said:

*The first problem that I noticed is a decrease in students' motivation to learn. Even though I have already asked them to submit the assignment, some of them still did not do it.*

He explained that the students did not submit their assignment even though he already asked them to submit by the deadline. Several problems were also faced by T2 amid online-based teaching practice which related to the slow internet connectivity. Similar with T1's experience, there were times that T2 also had to extend the time allocation which had been designed in the lesson plan because he had to deal with the unstable internet connection.

## DISCUSSION

This study adjusts the theory concluded by Alvarez et al. (2009) which highlights the tasks and roles played by virtual teachers in university level. The theory actually categorizes the roles and tasks into five aspects which are design/planning role, social role, instructive/cognitive role, profile domain and technical domain. Due to certain considerations, this study concludes three roles namely design/planning role, social role, instructive/cognitive role as the guideline in observing Indonesian EFL teachers' roles. In more detailed acts, Harmer (2007) prescribes the roles of teachers in the classroom which revolves around controller, participant, prompter, tutor and resource. In the perspective of design/planning role, the teachers performed the role by giving instruction to the students which refers to being a controller of the virtual classroom. In addition, the activities were properly organized. Meanwhile, the social role could be discerned when the teachers and their students were having interaction in which the teachers asks several questions or encouraging the students to answer correctly by giving them clues. These actions signify the teachers as a prompter. At last, cognitive roles require the teachers to be a resource in which the teachers explained the materials or suggested any online learning resources.

Furthermore, both of the teachers in this study taught their students using virtual platforms. Teacher 1 (T1) made use of Zoom Meeting to pave the process of teaching and learning activity during the pandemic. Meanwhile, Teacher 2 (T2) preferred Microsoft Team to provide him and his students a virtual classroom.

According to the general observation, the virtual teaching and learning activities were all well-conducted and both of the teachers were successfully play the three main roles conducted in this study. However, the teachers tended to perform limited specific roles due to the constraints of conducting online classes. As it is discussed before, they were observed to mostly give instructions, explain the

materials to the students, encouraging the students to answer particular questions related to the discussed topic and there were few times when the teachers seemed to stimulate their students to state the correct answers by giving hints or clues. These performed acts can still be adjusted in online-based teaching practices to support students' learning progress. Therefore, other roles which refer to being a tutor and a participant were seemed to be absent because both of the teachers seemed to be more focused on explaining the learning materials and keeping the students engaged in the online learning section. It can be implied that the students may experience less activities than they used to do in the traditional classes. Besides, both of the teachers seemed to force the students to answer some questions by calling out their names in the virtual learning activity. This act could lead the students to be less-initiated because the teachers seem to be over-controlling and too adamant (Harmer, 2007).

The teachers participated in this study were still enlivened and eager to teach their students even though they were lack of conventional pattern of communication as Tichavsky, et. al. (2015) declare that online classrooms do not allow teachers and students to replicate the usual interaction presented in the traditional classrooms. As a matter of fact, it is very important for both teachers and students to have a face to face interaction that provides teachers with more opportunities to assist the students (Edginton & Holbrook, 2010). It is also in line with Paechter and Maier (2010) who found that in the communication purposes, students tended to prefer face-to-face learning where they were able to share the understanding and build interpersonal relations. Moreover, the teachers recognized that their students were lack of motivation during the virtual learning. This problem is possible to be caused by the feeling of dissatisfaction and boredom since students' boredom is associated with their academic motivation (Tam, et. al., 2009; Tze, et. al., 2015).

In transmitting traditional classes into online classes, internet plays a fundamental role. A good quality of internet connection helps the teachers to maximize their potential roles during the process of teaching and learning activity in order to successfully achieve the students' learning objectives. As it was stated before, both teachers admitted that the unstable internet connectivity is one of the barriers in online teaching practices. The low speed level of internet has become a common issue in an online-based learning. In the field of education, many conducted studies refer to the internet connection as one of the obstacles in conducting online classes (Cakrawati, 2017; Hermanto & Srimulyani, 2021; Wijaya, et. al., 2020).

## CONCLUSION

There are various teachers' roles in the virtual-based teaching practice played by Indonesian EFL teachers. There are three main roles proposed by Alvarez et al.



(2009) which revolve around design/planning role, social role and instructive/cognitive role. These main roles are divided precisely into several actions according to the perspective of Harmer (2007) namely controller, participant, prompter, tutor and resource. The first result shows that both of the teachers were still able to manage design/planning role, social role and instructive/cognitive role. In design/planning role, the teachers seemed to frequently give a clear instruction to their students when the teachers were planning to conduct certain activity. In addition, the activities in the virtual classroom were all well-organized.

Meanwhile, social role is specified into being a prompter. It is also found that both teachers in this study encouraged their students to engage in the learning process through a virtual classroom by asking them several questions related to the lesson material. This act leads the teachers to perform the role of a prompter. In the context of becoming a prompter, the teachers also admitted that they sometimes refused to answer students' questions directly and preferred to initially give them clues which would stimulate the student to think deeper. The last main role in this study is instructive/cognitive role which deals with teachers' actions in transferring knowledge and explaining the materials. In the case of cognitive role, both of the teachers served as a resource in the process of learning in a virtual classroom. It can be found when the teachers explained the materials and the activities conducted in the classroom. Furthermore, they also assessed their students by answering students' questions and giving information to the students which was related to the topic.

As the second research question focuses on the problems in a virtual teaching practice, there are two problems perceived by the EFL teachers. The first one deals with the internet connection. Both of the teachers in this study agreed that they experienced an ineffective teaching activity through online equipment which was caused by the unstable internet connectivity. Moreover, it is also revealed the impact of the unstable internet connection which resulted in a poor time management because the teachers definitely needed to extend the time allocation in an online-based teaching practice. Another problem is in the lack of face-to-face communication. The teachers admitted that making a good teacher-student relationship through a virtual platform could be a challenge. One of the teachers could not easily identify their students' characteristics and it created difficulty for her in being familiar with her students' learning style. Meanwhile, the other revealed that he was not capable to immediately help his students whenever his students were facing difficulties in comprehending the materials.

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