American Corner Webinar and Its Impact on Indonesian English Teachers to Their Professional Development

Nur Alifah Annisa Jumrah
Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Hasanuddin University
Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia

Hamzah A. Machmoed
Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Hasanuddin University
Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia

Abidin Pammu
Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Hasanuddin University
Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia

Abstract:- This study aimed to examine the webinar features, characteristics of professional development activities on the webinar, and the perceptions of English teachers and lecturers towards the webinar and their professional development. The data were collected by observing five webinar sessions of the American Corner of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta. The data collection of this research also used questionnaires administered to 15 experienced and novice English teachers and lecturers from state and private schools and universities in Indonesia as the webinar participants. In addition, nine of the participants were interviewed to gain more insight into their perceptions. The data were then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results showed that the webinar sessions were supported by online presentation, live chat, Q&A session, and sharing session as its features. Professional development activities on the webinar facilitated English teachers and lecturers in content focus, coaching and expert support, collective participation, and sustained duration. The perceptions of English teachers and lecturers towards the webinar and their professional development showed positive perceptions based on several indicators. Furthermore, the results revealed that the participants had varied responses towards the most influential part of the webinar to their teaching skills. Topics of webinars related to their current and expected teaching practice, preference on professional development activities on the webinar to their teaching practice, and suggestions for webinar improvement.

Keywords:- English Teacher, Perception, Professional Development, Webinar, American Corner.

I. INTRODUCTION

A continuous development of knowledge, skills, and behavior is required for teachers in their lifetime of teaching. In teaching English, particularly, teachers should not only have the language ability, but also the subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and decision-making ability[1]. Professional development can be used as a key motivator for teachers to develop their professional skills and knowledge in teaching. According to Smith and Gillespie[2], professional development allows teachers to renew themselves. Teachers can benefit from different professional development activities. Since the advent of technology, it allows teachers to get mostly free and instant access for the purpose of their professional development in online formats.

Many teachers have used a webinar as the alternative way for their professional development which can be a presentation, discussion, demonstration, or other instructional sessions. A webinar, a short form of a web-based seminar, is a seminar, lecture or workshop which is held over the internet and presented a live virtual event or web using video-conferencing software. Pluth[3] stated that webinar is an online seminar that enables people to access a virtual classroom and share information through the internet from around the world. A webinar allows presenters and participants to meet virtually since it overcomes barriers related to travel time and expense required for in-person professional development[4]. It provides the interactive means of professional development that break the limit in terms of cost, time and place for continuous learning opportunities [5].

Several institutions and organizations have developed webinar for different levels and purposes. One of them is the webinar organized by the American Corner of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta. Considering the webinar differences on its features, it is crucial to be examined as one of the object analyses of this study. Furthermore, regarding to its purpose for professional development, it should be known widely to examine types of professional development activities on the webinar.

Finally, this study is also particularly important to assess the perceived values, input, and crucial evidence from teachers' thought and feeling towards the webinar and their professional development for a particular English skill. Again, this study is expected to give valuable input for the development of educational pedagogy on the use of webinar for professional development in English language teaching skills[6]. Practically, this study can help English teachers and lecturers to use webinar as the opportunity for developing and supporting their professional skills in teaching and implementing the latest trends of English language teaching and learning in their classroom. It is also expected to help professionals or experts from other educational institutions and organizations to design and organize more webinars on a variety of topics related to English language teaching and learning as one of technological innovations for novice teachers and lecturers according to the standard view of their needs and levels[7].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Webinar

A webinar has become a powerful tool in supporting online learning with the emergence of information and communication technology and online learning. Generally, a webinar is defined as an engaging online event in which a presenter or small group of presenters deliver a presentation to a large participant by responding to polls, submitting questions and using the available interactive tools[8]. The webinar is not all the educational videos appeared on the web. It should fulfill several elements to be categorized as a webinar. Those are live event, online participants, interaction and participation, streamed video of a presenter, slides, audio, and webinar software [9]. It can be varied among the available webinar tools in which some tools provide additional features, for example recording of the meeting, screen sharing, and mobile phone compatibility [10]. There are differences between the most bare-bones webinar and modern webinar which has separated streams for audio and slides with presenter video, slides, integral social media, live feedback from participants in the form of polls, questions, idea storming, and others [11].

B. Professional Development

Teachers need professional development by learning and refining instructional strategies for 21st century skills which are expected to bring changes on their practices and give impact to the students' learning outcomes[12]. Guskey[13] stated that professional development should support teachers with specific, concrete, and practical ideas related to the daily operation of their classrooms in a direct way and considered as a process instead of an event to be successful. According to Bachtiar [14], several characteristics of effective professional development are content focus, active learning, coherence, collective participation, form of activity, and duration of activity. First, content focus is "the degree to which the activity focused on improving and deepening teacher's content knowledge, including subject-area curriculum and assessment" [14] [15]. Second, active learning is defined as the opportunity of teachers for active engagement and participation in the meaningful process of teaching and

learning. Third, coherence refers to "incorporating activities during learning activities that are consistent with teachers' goals" [14]. Fourth, collective participation is related to "the degree to which activities emphasize collaboration among teachers in exploring teaching problems and facilitate on-going discussion of concepts in professional development activities" [14]. Fifth, form of activity is concerned on the way of organizing the activities, for example study groups, teacher network, coaching, mentoring, and/or teacher research as the innovative forms, while seminars, one-shot workshops or conference as traditional forms [16]. Garet et al. [17]. Sixth, duration of activity gives enough time for teachers to learn, discuss, and reflect about the way of students learned. So far, this is one solution in academic of school during the pandemic.

In addition, Darling-Hammond, et al. [18] and Junaidi et al. [19] identified content focus, active learning, collaboration, use of models and modeling, coaching and expert support, feedback and reflection, and sustained duration as several characteristics of professional development. The points that they can be elaborated in the following characteristics:

The first characteristic is content focus which concerned on teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content as teacher support in their classroom contexts.

Secondly, characteristic of active learning enables teachers for opportunity to design and practice new teaching strategies, participate in the same style of learning for their students, use real examples of curriculum, student work and instruction.

Thirdly, collaboration in professional development provides space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning related to new instructional strategies to teachers' students and classrooms which in turn bring positive change to the culture and instruction in the communities. For the reason that, each country has its own culture and uniqueness, including Indonesia[20].

The fourth characteristic is use of models and modeling which provide teachers with a clear vision of practices regarding to lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of peer teachers, and video or written cases of accomplished teaching.

Next, principle of coaching and expert support cover sharing of expertise about content, practice focused based on teachers' individual needs, sharing of experts a specialized knowledge as one-on-one coaches in the classroom, facilitators of group workshops, or remote mentors using technology to communicate with educators with master teachers or coaches based in universities or professional development organizations. Another characteristic is feedback and reflection about built-in time on thinking, receiving input, and making changes to teacher's practice in which feedback may offer in analysis of lesson plans, demonstrations of lessons, or videos of teacher instruction, and reflection provides opportunities to refine, retain, and reinforce.

The last characteristic is sustained duration which gives adequate time for teachers to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies related to the changes of their teaching practice which commonly held over weeks, months, or academic years rather than only one-off workshops.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this article are formulated as follows 1) to show how the webinar has generated some possibilities alternative to maintain academic presentation to share idea as a solving problem to a specific topic of discussion, and 2) to reveal the perception of the participants and their responses towards the most influential part of webinar to their teaching skills.

This research was inspired by the features of webinar offered by the American Corner of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta for professional development of English teachers and lecturers. What intending to reveal is the types of professional development for teachers and lecturers provided on the webinar. And this is the reason why the perceptions of English teachers and lecturers on the webinar for their professional development should be investigated.

The significance of this research is expected to contribute to theory and practice. Theoretically, it is expected to give valuable input for the development of educational pedagogy on the use of webinar for professional development in English language teaching skills. It is also to provide useful information and clear scenario for further research on the use of webinar and professional development of English teachers and lecturers.

Practically, this research can help English teachers and lecturers to use webinar as the opportunity for developing and supporting their professional skills in teaching and implementing the latest trends of English teaching and learning.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employed the mixed methods design which involved quantitative and qualitative approaches. The data were collected using observation, questionnaire, and interview. Five webinar sessions of the American Corner of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta were observed to find out the features of webinar and characteristics of professional development activities on the webinar. While, the questionnaires were administered to 15 experienced and novice English teachers and lecturers from state and private schools and universities in Indonesia as participants of webinar and distributed through Google Forms in investigating their perceptions towards the webinar features, professional development activities on the webinar, and the relationship between them. In addition, the semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 9 of questionnaire participants by telephone to provide more information about five general questions: a) the most influential part of webinar to their teaching skills, b) the topics of webinar related to their current teaching practice, c) the topics of webinar related to their expected teaching practice, d) preference on professional development activities on the webinar to their teaching practice, and e) suggestions for the improvement of the webinar. The observation and interview data were then analyzed qualitatively, while the data from questionnaires responses were analyzed based on its frequency and percentage for each category, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

This section provides the description of the features of webinar that were observed. It was intended to give pictures of what and how the webinar conducted during the session for professional development of English teachers and lecturers. As outlined in the previous statement, the webinar of the American Corner of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta used Zoom as its instructional tool. It is one of the webinar providers available online. The webinar of the American Corner of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta were attended by 200 teachers and invited professionals or experts on English language teaching from some countries in the world and some members of Indonesian Extensive Reading Association as presenters and panelists in which eight webinar sessions were conducted from May to June 2020. However, for the purpose of the research, the researcher only observed five webinar sessions. The topics, presenters, and panelists of the webinar during the observations are shown in Table 1.

TABLE I. TOPICS, PRESENTERS, AND PANELISTS OF THE WEBINAR

No	Topics	Presenters	Panelist
	Webinar Sessions		
1	Extensive Reading Activities to Support Reading Fluency	Paul Goldberg, Ed. (United States of America) and Pratiwi Retnaningdyah, Ph.D (Indonesia)	Anesti B. Ermerawati (Duta Wacana Christian University) Rusiana (Muria Kudus University) Evi Puspita Sari (Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta)
2	Online Source for Extensive Reading	Dr. Rob Waring (Japan) Dr. Fransisca M. Ivone (Indonesia)	Fenty Siregar (Maranatha Christian University) Henny Herawati (Sanata Dharma University) Maria T. Ping (Mulawarman University) Susilowaty (Sampoerna University)
3	Extensive Reading in Limited-Source Setting	Assc. Prof. Ann Mayeda (Japan) Hugo M. Figueroa, M.Ed (United States of America)	Erni Dewi Riyanti (Islamic University of Indonesia) Christina L. Anandari (Sanata Dharma University) Rusiana (Muria Kudus University) Evi Puspita Sari (Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta)
4	Teachers as Readers: Why We Should Become the Role Model	Anita Kurniawati, M.Hum (Indonesia) Christina L. Anandari, M.Ed. (Indonesia) Truly A. Pasaribu, M.A (Indonesia)	Chris Asanti (Mulawarman University) Irfan Rifai (Bina Nusantara University) Athriyana Pattiwael (Krida Wacana Christian University)
5	Extensive English Exposure in Digital Environments	Ju Seong Lee, Ph.D (China) Flora D. Floris, M.A (Indonesia)	Anita Kurniawati (Satya Wacana Christian University) Henny Herawati (Sanata Dharma University) Fenty Siregar (Maranatha Christian University)

Table 1 shows that all the five webinar sessions discussed a variety of topics in extensive reading. The webinar was particularly organized by Public Affairs Section of the Embassy of United States of America – Jakarta and Indonesian Extensive Reading Association that were collaborated in promoting extensive reading program for English teachers and lecturers in Indonesia.

V. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. The Features of Webinar

The webinar facilitated four features: online presentation, live chat, Q&A session, and sharing session. In the feature of online presentation, it was delivered using video and audio input features and screen and document sharing features for PowerPoint and PDF documents and involved professionals or experts as the presenters of webinar which invited senior lecturers and teachers in the field of extensive reading from some countries in the world, i.e. United States of America, Indonesia, Japan, and China. While, live chat feature enabled the participants to interact with each other and the presenters of webinar by asking questions without disturbing the course of the meeting or making noise during the webinar presentation. The participants can use chat box to send their question while listening to the presentation which is very practical for crowded webinar meetings.

Another feature is Q&A session. This feature was benefited by participants to ask questions directly to the presenters using "raise hand" button while waiting the host to allow them and unmuted their audio using "question and

answer mode" to give them opportunity to speak and ask questions.

Lastly, the feature of sharing session was used as the opportunity to get additional knowledge from the sharing of expert related to presentation and their teaching experiences which also used "question and answer mode" as in the Q&A session to unmute and give the floor to any panelist to speak.

B. Characteristics of Professional Development Activities on the Webinar

Regarding professional development on the webinar, several characteristics of its activities found in terms of content focus, coaching and expert support, collective participation, and sustained duration. The results related to content focus indicated that the webinar sessions provided the opportunities for participants to learn specific teaching strategies in extensive reading which in turn increased their understanding and improved their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge on some principles of extensive reading in order to implement it to their students in a variety of contexts. The reason is because the objective of this webinar was to promote extensive reading movement in teaching and learning English in Indonesia.

In terms of coaching and expert support during webinar session, the important finding is that the presence of experts as the presenters and panelists from some universities and shared their knowledge about content and practice to the participants during online presentation and sharing session of the webinar. While, the results of facilitating collective participation indicated that the participants benefited several features of the webinar, such as live chat and Q&A session, in continuously providing opportunity to explore related teaching problems, discuss concepts, skills, and problems, and learn from one another by asking questions directly and in written form to the presenters, the hosts, and panelists.

The last result of professional development activities on the webinar was about sustained duration. The participants could participate on the webinar over weeks because it was conducted for 8 weeks during 90 minutes to 120 minutes in each session. It can be stated that the participants have adequate time to learn new strategies about the webinar topics for development of their professional skills on teaching because it was not conducted as a one-off seminar only.

C. Perceptions of English Teachers

One way to measure the response of respondents is by asking their perceptions of the webinar of the American Corner. Here the respondents are English teachers and lecturers. Based on questionnaire, perceptions of English teachers and lecturers toward webinar and their professional development were positive. These were interpreted based on the result of analysis on the questionnaires and interviews. Based on the result of questionnaires with five-point Likert scales, all participants thought that webinar of American Corner of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta was a good idea for their professional development because it was easy to use (86.7%), thus the majority of participants were pleasant to use it (80%). The majority of participants also

argued that their professional development activities become more interesting by joining this webinar (80%).

TABLE II. INFORMATION ABOUT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Demographic Information	
Participants of the research	15
Gender	
Female	12
Male	3
Age	
20-30 years	2
31-40 years	4
41-50 years	6
51 years and above	3
Educational Background	
Bachelor's Degree	3
Master's Degree	10
Doctoral's Degree	2
Teaching Experience	
1-5 years	4
6-10 years	2
11-15 years	3
16 years and above	6

The findings of the research also indicated perceptions of English teachers as participants of webinar in terms of webinar features and professional development activities on the webinar. In terms of webinar features, all participants stated that the webinar presentation was delivered interactively because the presenters could keep the participants alive during their presentations. Furthermore, the majority of participants thought that the presentation duration has managed effectively (93.3%) and presentation material was the most influential part of webinar towards their teaching skills (86.7%). Regarding the usefulness of the features, all participants benefited from live chat, Q&A session, and sharing session. From these webinar features, the majority of participants claimed that live chat was effectively used because it was actively responded by host or co-host during webinar (86.7%) and sharing session has enhanced their knowledge about the topic (93.3%). While, for Q&A session, all participants argued that it was effectively managed because the presenters responded well in this session.

In addition, the majority of participants thought that the effective duration of a webinar presentation was about 30-40 minutes session (46.6%) or 20-30 minutes session (33.3%) which means that the webinar of the American Corner of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta has organized effectively in terms of its length of duration and most of them indicated that the quality of webinar were very good (60%).

All participants believed that they can acquire necessary skills around the topic to implement it in their teaching practice. Personally, the majority of participants also thought that the use of webinar was significantly affected their own learning (93.3%). In terms of professional development

activities on the webinar, all participants argued that the webinar could increase their understanding toward content focus related to the way of teaching content being taught, the way of the participants learned the content, and the way of the participants implemented the content. The majority of participants stated that the webinar was good because its collective participation during webinar session (93.3%) and its sustained duration (80%). However, all participants thought that the webinar has facilitated them very well in terms of coaching and expert support during webinar session and recognized the importance of webinar on those four types of professional development activities (content focus, coaching and expert support, collective participation, and sustained duration).

In addition, a wide range of opinions also emerged from the results of interviews which investigated five issues. Firstly, regarding the most influential part of webinar to teaching skills, the majority of participants thought that it was about materials delivered by presenters. While, other participants preferred Q&A session and sharing session. Next, in the results on topics of webinar related to current teaching practice of the participants, most of them mentioned that they have implemented it before in their class with a variety of techniques, while the rest of them said that they have never implemented before. Thirdly, when asking about the topics of webinar related to expected teaching practice, most of participants will adopt the techniques further and other participants are still unsure. In addition, regarding to preference on professional development aspect on the webinar to participants' teaching practice, the majority of them preferred coaching and expert support. While, other participants preferred collective participation during webinar session. Lastly, the suggestions of participants for the improvement of webinar were varied on four types of suggestions in which some of them suggested about further topics, more applicable materials, social movement related to webinar topics, and sharing of books and other references. While, the rest of them thought that there was nothing to improve on the webinar.

VI. CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that the webinar has general features as other webinars, such as online presentation, live chat, and Q&A session, but it is particularly different in terms of sharing session. In addition, professional development activities on the webinar fulfilled several characteristics to be categorized as an effective and high-quality professional development for the presence of content focus, coaching and expert support, collective participation, and sustained duration. Lastly, both experience and novice English teachers and lecturers positively responded towards the features of webinar, professional development activities on the webinar, and the relationship between them.

More studies are suggested to conduct: 1) testing of webinar participants before and after its use in order to see the effectiveness of webinar towards their comprehension of particular skills, 2) the study of initial perceptions compared to perceptions after webinar exposure on other language skills, 3) the comparison of the impact of webinar to the professional development of experienced and novice English teachers, and 4) perceptions of pre-service teachers who still have no teaching experience in the field since this research involved experienced and novice English teachers.

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