# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE DISCUSSION AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**ABSTRACT**

Synchronous online learning in the midst of a pandemic raises several points of view such as the perception of students carrying out online learning with the Zoom application. In this research, there issue that was explored; Challenges faced by students during the synchronous learning process by students of the Makassar State University postgraduate program. This study applies a descriptive qualitative method. This research was held at Makassar State University in the second semester of the 2020/2021 academic year. The participants of this study were 18 students from one class in the Research Skill Study course. The data from the research were obtained from observations and interviews. The results of this study indicate that three factors cause obstacles to challenges in online learning, namely networks and facilities, e-learning support systems, and self-regulation. The findings of this study can be a reflection for English teachers in implementing the online learning process who will use this application while teaching can quickly look for the way out from those challenges.

**Keywords:** Perception, Synchronous learning, Online discussion, Covid-19 Pandemic.

**INTRODUCTION**

Studying from face to face shift to virtual learning, it makes the students difficult to encourage the students in learning specially for English subject. English language education which needs to interact with peers and instructor. In studying English, the students should pay attention and practice after studying. But nowadays the student studying through online process. It happens for eight months because of the Covid-19 pandemic requires that all school activities be carried out from home.

The media as tools divided into three types of learning methods using technology, namely asynchronous learning, hybrid learning, and synchronous learning. The three learning methods are technology learning. But the learning that is most often used in Indonesia, especially for learning English, is synchronous. Synchronous was chosen because teacher and learner can interact directly. Unlike asynchronous, the teacher only sends a learning video then students analyze the video. Therefore, synchronous is the right choices to encourage the students participate in online discussions.

Based on the previous literature study, the researcher takes this study to analyze the students' perception in discussion context learning by using Zoom application. If the previous research as Rinekso and Muslim (2020) focused on the students' perception using WhatsApp to increase writing skill, the researcher would find about students perception of online discussion during pandemic. While, Kwon, Park, Shin, and Chang (2019) about instructor comment of online discussion. Thus this research had a chance to analyze the students perceptions of online discussion because only few research about online discussion specially for English foreign language context. The researcher focused of synchronous that find out students' challenge in using Zoom application. The participation is the students of Universitas Negeri Makassar that use Zoom application as medium to discussion online learning during the pandemic.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Perception**

Perception is the process of perception is a word that is closely related to human psychology, it has been defined in various ways, from a layman's perspective, the perception is defined as the conscious act of a person's environment through physical sensation, which demonstrates the ability of individuals to understand. Meanwhile, in the opinion of experts, "the perception is defined in accordance with the opinions and views of someone" Unumeri (2009: 18). Perception is subjective, depending on one's perspective on a particular object. So that the relative perception is influenced by factors originating from within themselves issued with their own thoughts from someone. According to Walgito (2003: 54-55), the perception is influenced by factors that have been classified, among others. Peterson, Beymer, & Putnam, (2018) stated that

the use of asynchronous and synchronous learning is make an effective affects the established relationship between cooperative goals and cooperative perceptions. But there are differences between asynchronous and synchronous learning processes. Online learning in synchronous is not the uniform environment but the variety of environment different behavior options and communication. However, in asynchronous is not the cooperative of work designed but cooperative presence goals or predict cooperative outcomes.

## Synchronicity

Synchronicity occurs in the "same time" setting in that interactions transpire without a time lag in "real time" or with a very short one in "near-real time" (indicating a very short time between interactions as with text based instant messaging [IM] or short-message service [SMS]). Again, participants can be geographically distributed or located in the same room. Synchronous tools, by contrast, involve media relative to meeting concurrently through text and voice (i.e., live chat), live document sharing, live audio or video conferencing (both one-to-one and one-to-group), meetings in virtual worlds, and white board sharing. Some synchronous work can occur through the institution's LMS depending on its built-in capabilities, but sometimes outside software are brought to the classroom for this work. Synchronous media's primary advantage typically is identified as interpersonal rather than cognitive, ostensibly owing to participants' feelings of intimacy and real-time engagement, which tend to be associated with student satisfaction, student learning, and lower rates of attrition. synchronous OWCs typically also take advantage of asynchronous media for distributing and collecting assignments, providing content, and requiring text-based discussions Hewett (2013). According to Clark, Strudler, & Grove (2015) state that the students more feel the teacher presence if the teacher use the video than text-based discussion because the students will be easy in participating in discussion. Such synchronous interactions can help to avoid miscommunications and to address problems when miscommunication has occurred

## Online Discussion

Online discussions are a great way of extending classroom discussions and learning by getting students to engage with course materials and readings. A discussion forum is one of the most frequently used learning technology tools that supports online discussion. Online discussion forums are an alternative form of communication to in class, verbal discussion whether simply to provide variety in the subject, to meet the different needs and preferences of individuals, or to allow students time to reflect on the debate and consider their response before contributing. Forums allow for time-delayed communication and asynchronous learning – anytime, anywhere.

According to Ebrahimi, Faghih, & Dabir-Moghaddam (2017) state that the online discussion forum in post graduate should aim the cognitive thinking than affective and effective community, the instructors should strive to find ways to encourage students to express their views of critical

thinking. However, the instructors also should be more guide the online discussion. Another researcher also finds about utilizing the online chat environment as effective instructional tool to promote student's literacy skills because the students and instructors doing face to face in discussion Kim (2014).

**Pandemic**

A case of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) causing severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) was first (officially) identified in the Chinese city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, in December 2019. The virus can be transmitted between people who are in proximity to one another and via respiratory droplets produced when an infected patient coughs or sneezes. The virus is also transmitted when someone touches an object with the virus on it. The outbreak initially spread mostly within mainland China. On February 12, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially named the disease caused by the novel coronavirus as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19).

**METHODOLOGY**

This research used qualitative design to identify the students' perception of synchronous discussion. The participants of this research consist eighteen English students that studying in the 2nd semester. They are now studying English by online discussion by Zoom application at Universitas Negeri Makassar in academic year 2020/2021. Furthermore, the researcher collected the data through online checklist observation and online interview The researcher collected the data related to the research questions by using the instrument of the research. In collecting the data, the researcher observed the situation and condition of the class during teaching-learning process and then the researcher interview to know the students' perception and challenge. After collecting the data through observation and interview, the researcher transcribed the audio recording from the interview session by listening carefully and write the transcript on the paper. The researcher asked for permission to the lecturer to observe their teaching and learning process. The researcher contacted the lecturer Whatsapp and asked for permission to observe three times. Before the researcher joined into Zoom meeting, the student shared the link Zoom meeting via WhatsApp. Then the researcher join the Zoom meeting In the second week, the researcher joined the zoom meeting and observe the class. After observation finished, the researcher then asked for permission to the students for interview. After the researcher got the permission, she interviewed the students about perception and challenge in online discussion.

Transcribing the data into text, the researcher identified (coding), selected (labeling), and classified the data based on the analysis in research questions of this research. The checklist observation used were constructed to find out the students' challenges in online, the students' interviews were designed to provide students perception and students challenges. Then, the

explanation of the result of this research made in the form of descriptive, so the readers get complete information from the research.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

As it focuses on issues, to be discussed was the students challenge of synchronous English discussion learning.

The students' challenges of synchronous English discussion learning. The researcher found several factors of causing the students' difficulties of synchronous learning. Some factors are causing the students' difficulties, it explanation will be on chart.

It can be concluded that the students challenge of synchronous learning involved many aspects and the dominant aspect connectivity and self regulation. As Nartiningrum & Nugroho (2020) stated that the students need platform for video conference like Zoom and fun activities in learning. Connectivity becomes big problem because students live in the different area and it depend on the network provider. If the bad network happens the learning process is not run well and it would make the students missing of lecturer explanation. In addition, self regulation also big challenges because the students feel unmotivated, not interested of the study, and feel bored because they only sit in front of the screen without seeing their classmates face. As Lin & Gao (2020) stated that synchronous and asynchronous make the students easily distracted and feeling isolated during the class.

In addition, the students of self regulation can be increase if apply new strategy, such as synchronous discussion and reflecting systems which the students can build their knowledge and learning outcomes. If the students understand the objective of learning they will easily participate in class. As Wolverton (2018) stated that making the students engaged on learning process by utilizing synchronous discussion, discussion ask the students communicate in distance learning course and to increase the pedagogical in synchronous are flexible, students best suited for quality of communication of oversight from instructor.

## CONCLUSION

From the result of data analysis of the interview from students and checklist observation, the researcher found three aspects of the students' challenge. There are: infrastructure and connectivity which include limitation internet. Second is learners' needs and the last is self regulation that the students feel bored because they get more assignment and time consuming of monotonous process. Synchronous learning amidst Covid-19 pandemic by using Zoom application as media of online discussion greatly helped the students learning and improving their skill. As a result, English language education in pandemic gives challenges and opportunity. Challenges for government, lecture and students would reflection of learning process. Especially, post graduate students should adjust and manage effective online communication practices. However, this is the opportunity for maximizing the potential of online learning.

**SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the conclusion of this research, the researcher would like to propose some suggestions which are addressed to the English teachers/lecturers, students, and the further researcher in terms of synchronous online discussion learning. The point of some suggestions as follows:

1. For the English teacher and lecturer apply the appropriate method or techniques in the process of teaching and learning process, because it is used to solve one of the students' challenge of synchronous online discussion.

2. For the students, read a lot reference and attentively of online discussion learning process.

3. And the last, for the further researchers find other problems that encountered by the students in students challenge of self regulation. It will be more interesting to investigate deeply about the students' challenge of synchronous online discussion. Furthermore, I hope that the next researcher will apply a strategy or method to solve the students' challenge of synchronous online discussion learning.

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