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EFL Students' Perception of Interaction in Online Learning Practices

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Abstract
This research investigates the English Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers' and students' perceptions of learning interactions when teaching-learning was conducted online during the pandemic of covid-19. The interaction concerned in this study included students-student interaction, student-lecturer interaction, and student-content interaction. Purposive sampling is used to determine the respondents of this study. The data were collected from 106 university students of non-English education majors through a questionnaire in one of the universities in Semarang. Additionally, an interview is used to get in-depth information on the students' perceptions. This study is a case study using a Qualitative approach supported by a quantitative approach. The result shows that students tend to perceive student-student and student-lecturer interaction positively. However, they perceive student-content interaction quite negatively.

Keywords: Students' perception, interaction, online learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of covid-19 caused a global crisis, and it changes everything in many sectors, particularly in education. To apply social distancing, the government of most countries in the world close schools, universities, and many other educational institutions. It becomes a big challenge either for stakeholders or teachers, regarding this unprepared situation. Hence, online learning is considered a solution to be practiced.

Fast adaptation in the context of online teaching and the learning process is needed to face the unpredictable environment (Flores & Gago, 2020). However, it is not as easy as sending students to be home to mitigate the spread of covid-19 (Lynch, 2020). After the ministry of culture and education of Indonesia announced that teaching-learning must be done at home, the face-to-face teaching-learning that usually runs must suddenly change to be online. As a result of it, most educators feel confused since there is ambiguity and disagreement about what to teach, how to teach, the workload of teachers and students, the teaching environment, and the implications for education equity (Zhang et al., 2020). This phenomenon forces teachers to learn "how to learn" using technology quickly. The teaching-learning process was conducted with many challenges and obstacles that lead to negative perceptions appearing from students. They commended that online learning increased their anxiety, stress, and loneliness. Besides, the unprepared distant learning gave impact for many sides;

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students, teacher, and parents (Musonef, et al., 2020). For students, it drove them to be shocked and passive learners. The difficulty of changing teachers' role was faced by parents, and the difficulty of applying learning method was obstacles found by teachers.

However, due to the willingness of educators to give better teaching. Educators explore various platforms to combine synchronous and asynchronous to make the teaching-learning near to the traditional classroom which provides face-to-face learning. Synchronous learning is a teaching learning that takes place in real time, using specific certain online medium through video conferencing, teleconferencing, live chatting, and live streaming. Meanwhile asynchronous learning is a teaching learning that do not happens directly and not interactive. It means that the learning does not occur at the same place or the same time (Riwayatiningsih & Sulistyani, 2020; Fadhilah; 2021, Sulha et al., 2021). When face-to-face teaching learning cannot be done, the blend of synchronized and synchronized modes of instruction seems to be a possible way to support learning in ITE (Moorhouse, 2020). Furthermore, the implementation of online learning provides an opportunity for the acceleration of *Merdeka belajar* concept that is planned by the government that contains technology integration in learning. It is such a good chance for educators, students, or stakeholders to be used to involving technology in the process of teaching-learning.

Bali & Liu (2018) mentioned that online learning has a good side related to the efficiency cost than a traditional classroom. In addition, the drawback of social presence, social interaction, and student satisfaction is highlighted. Due to its flexibility and convenience online learning is interesting to be implemented (Bolliger &Martin, 2018). Tichavsky et al., (2015) revealed students' perceptions that consider online learning as a lack of teaching presence, poor self-motivation, and poor learning pace. Many researchers believe that interaction is important and is the key to implementing effective online learning and developing academic achievement (Munoz, et al., 2013; Salmi, 2013; Keyton & Gilbert, 2020). Interaction is regarded as the fundamental of online learning that can influence the result of teaching-learning. Hence, the perceptions of interaction that occurred need to be gained for what became the drawback can be improved, and what became the good things can be implemented. Then it is hoped that the quality of virtual education could be as good as face-to-face teaching-learning.

Interaction is defined as the whole process of establishing a meaningful change through persistent communication among more than two people (Kang, 2013). It is considered as one of the critical elements that affect learning outcomes and motivation (York & Richardson, 2012). Besides, interaction can create a sense of community among learners in online learning. Moore (1989) stated that interaction has been succeeding in various fields, one of them being online language learning. Additionally, Moore (1989) mentioned that there are three types of interaction; student-student interaction, student-teacher interaction, and student-content interaction.

Student-student interaction is the relationship that occurs between a student with other students, in person or groups. By interacting with their friends, the student will be able to share each other ideas, opinions, problems, and feedback in learning.

Response and feedback can enhance students' interest and motivation (Moore, 1989). Student-student interaction encourages the construction of cognitive improvement, language learning, and motivational support (Lin et al., 2017). In this regard, an instructor needs to encourage or facilitate students to have student-student interaction. When students have good interactions they will care for and support each other during the process of learning, then having better learning is expected to be achieved as well.

Student-teacher interaction takes place when an instructor conveys instruction of learning, discusses with learners, gives feedback or support, answers questions, or encourages students during the teaching-learning. A positive relationship and effective learning can be created through good interaction between students and teachers. The interaction of student-teacher has an essential role in influencing the learning performance of students (Sun et al., 2022). Interaction with the learning environment can stimulate the sense of students and motivate them to learn creatively and innovatively. It is hoped to activate students' thinking and refrain them from simply memorizing facts and knowledge. Ahmad et al., (2016) mentioned that fun learning experiences will stimulate students' interest in science. So that, the students will be motivated to do many kinds of active and encouraging learning activities. The interaction happened between students-teacher can provide and increase the sense and relationship that is friendly and caring between students and teachers. The constant interaction between students and teachers will engage and maintain social interconnection among them (Balagova & Halakova, 2018). The interaction of the student-teacher should be the attention of the instructor during the learning since it can influence students' performance.

Student-content interaction happens when a student interacts with various sources of learning, it can be in the form of books, media, websites, abstract ideas, and computers. Student content becomes an important characteristic of education since it helps students in understanding learning material and generates knowledge (Moore, 1989). The interaction of the student with the content of learning will create student didactic conversation, it occurs when students talk or think regarding information, knowledge, and ideas that become part of learning material (Kuo, 2014). Giving more attention to student content is needed, especially in distance learning. An instructor should make sure that the content of learning can be understood and received well by students for the objective of learning can be achieved.

Interaction is an important thing in both traditional and online classes. However, the online learning that is done distantly makes the situation of learning different from face-to-face class. Hence, this paper aims to find the answer to how EFL students perceive interaction in online learning practices.

2.   METHODS

This research is a case study using a qualitative approach and then strengthened by a quantitative approach. The qualitative approach aimed to describe the fact in the field of study, meanwhile, the quantitative approach gave a detailed result of the data acquired. The participants of this study are 106 students with non-English education majors. The

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students are in the second and fourth semesters in one of the universities in Semarang. The instruments and procedure of research are as follows:

1) Questionnaire

A questionnaire was employed to know students' perceptions toward interaction in EFL classes. The Likert-scale questionnaire and open-ended questionnaire were used here. The Likert-scale questionnaire was created using a four-point -Likert-scale. Meanwhile, the open-ended questionnaire was given for the respondents to be able to give a free answer on the list of structured-questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect detailed answers from the respondents. The link of the questionnaire was spread to the respondents that are suitable to the criteria of this study. They are EFL students in the second or fourth semester of non-English Education major students.

2) Interview

I interviewed to provide an in-depth understanding and exploration of the topic in detail. In this study, the interview was used to strengthen the true information gathered from the questionnaire. There were ten students recruited in this interview session. This interview session was conducted through video conference due the social distancing. I choose those subjects of study to be investigated because I considered that they could give deep information about the case under study.

To analyze the data, the response of perceptions from the questionnaire was calculated to know the percentage. From the result, it can be known whether each aspect was positive or negative. Furthermore, the data of the interview was transcribed. Then, it was coded into several categories such as the positive perception and negative perceptions. It was continued by making a description and interpretation of the data, then connecting it with the literature.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students-student interaction

EFL students' perception toward interaction in online learning practices was explored including students-student interaction, students-lecturer interaction, and students-content interaction.

Table 4.1 Students' perception of students-student interaction

Learner-Learner Interaction	Always (4)	Often (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
I am motivated to work collaboratively with peers or groups	32,1%	33%	34,9%	0%
I can communicate with other students during the course	57,5%	22,6%	17,9%	2%

I can share ideas with others during the course	41,5%	50%	7,5%	1%
I actively participate in online discussion	27,4%	50,9%	20,8%	0,9%

The finding revealed that most students have good perceptions in terms of student-student interaction. However in terms motivating of students to work collaboratively, the percentage of responses "always, often, and rarely" was almost the same. It didn't mean that students did not have the motivation to work in groups or pairs. It is because lecturers were rare in giving assignments collaboratively. They tend to give the individual assignment. Of the 10 interviewees, two students admitted that the lecturer provided pair and group activities.

Student 4, "the students were often to be asked to look for material during the online learning, the students were divided into some groups and we were asked to do a presentation in every meeting (this group was decided/pointed a day before the meeting)".

Student 3, "The lecturer gave pair assignment such as dialog practice because the situation was still social distancing so the dialog was recorded".

Those two students got a group assignment in the form of a group presentation as the explanation of student no 4 and an assignment in the form of pair as student 3 mentioned. Meanwhile, other students said that lecturers didn't give group or pair assignments. Most students only got material and assignments based on the module. It occurred due to the technical, such as the explanation of one of the students that mentioned that the first lecturer used Google meet at the beginning of class, but there was trouble with a signal that made the members out many times, finally, it was decided to use Google Classroom to post material and assignment in the rest of meeting in a half-semester. Further, in the rest of the meeting, the second lecturer used full of Google Meet to explain the material in every meeting. Meanwhile, students 6 and 7 told that they got material from the module and then continued by doing written assignments given based on the material of the day.

The second item focus on the ability of students to communicate with others during the EFL online practice. The form of communication can be in the form of discussing the class itself, either about material or assignments. The total of the student's responses to the answer "always" is 57,5%. It can be said that the responses for this item were positive. Based on the information in the interview session, the students could discuss related class schedules, assignments, and material in their group class. It showed that although the teaching-learning was done distantly it didn't make students isolated from others. They could communicate related to the course.

Regarding conveying arguments or ideas during online learning, the students also gave responses positively, and the percentage is 45% for answering always and 50% for the response "often". The conveying argument was done during the discussion session or the time when the teacher asked students to give responses or questions.

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Furthermore, the response of the students' activeness in online discussion got 27,4% for the response "always" and 50,9% for "often". However, this response is still positive because, in this online discussion, the students tend to be active in participating during the discussion session, it was usually begun by a lecturer giving a case then students would comment on the lecturer's posting, they give their point of view about it. Students were allowed to argue the others' comments.

The online discussion was done on various platforms, such as WhatsApp group, Google classroom, and E-learning. However, the WhatsApp group was the platform used the most. In the interview session, students explained that they were active in the discussion forum because the more they were active the more they will get a high score. It made students actively involved in the discussion forum whether in giving a response or asking questions.

Table 4.2 Students-lecturer interaction

Learner-instructor Interaction	**Always**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**
The lecturer encourages students to be more actively involved during online learning	69,8%	30,2%	0%	0%
Lecturer gives feedback on students' assignments	40,6%	36,8%	19,8%	2,8%
The lecturer can interact with students during the course	2,9%	41,5%	56%	0%
The lecturer encourages students to ask about the material presented	50,8%	41,1%	7,5%	5,7%

The perception of students toward student-lecturer interaction showed that students have positive and negative perceptions in terms of students-lecturers interaction. Students perceive that the lecturer encouraged students to be actively involved in online learning positively. It was shown from the percentage of the respondent is 69,8 %. Not all students had the same opinion toward the response of the item, the rest response 30,2% answered often, but it still showed that lecturers often encouraged students to be actively involved. In the answers investigating, most respondents answered that lecturers always have a way to encourage students to be involved in the teaching-learning process, it was usually done by giving advice and support of the situation faced before ending the class, having some students review material explained by the lecturer, answering questions discussed or giving a case study to be solved.

The next item number discusses lecturers' performance in giving feedback on students' assignments. The total of the student's responses for the answer "always" is 40,6%, 36,8% answered often, 19,8% answered rarely and 2,8% answered never. There

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were various answers in the interview session of this item, some of them answered that they just collected the assignment without getting the feedback but some of them admitted that they got feedback during collecting the assignment.

> *Student 5, "For written task sometimes was not given feedback. But for video task or performance was often given feedback."*

Student 5 explained that she had two kinds of assignments, they are written and video. In written assignments, there was no feedback from the lecturer but in the video, the assignment got feedback from the lecturer. It was different from the explanation of student 6, and student 10. Student 6 admitted that he often got feedback from his lecturer either in the form of a comment on a written assignment. However, student 10 admitted that there was no feedback on a written assignment, it was just a general comment from the lecturer orally about their assignments done by them.

> *Student 6, "yes, the lecturer often gives feedback on assignments collected in the form of short comments such as good job, well-done, or advice "it should be.....", it is only such a short comment but I feel relieved because it proves that the lecturer reads the assignment collected."*
>
> *Student 10, "Feedback was given generally conveyed during the course when students answered questions then it will be explained by the lecturer. But there is no feedback in the form of a score"*

There was various response to the ability of lecturers to interact with students during online learning. Students tend to have a negative response with a percentage of 2,9 % for the answer of always and 41,5% for often. Based on the interview session, there were only 3 students from 10 interviewees who admitted that the lecturer could interact well with online learning. The lecturers usually remind the upcoming material and the group that got a turn to do a presentation on the WhatsApp group, the other lecturer often greets students by calling our names one by one, asking about the condition, and sometimes reviewing the material delivered. It was different from others' responses that admitted that it was fewer lecturers' communication.

How did students perceive the lecturer in giving chance for students to convey arguments and ideas during the EFL online learning tent have positive responses, with the percentage of 50% for the answer always and 41,5% for answering 'often'. As the explanation of students that lectures often give chance for students to ask regarding the material presented at the end of the course, besides lecturer encourages students to actively ask the group who got the presentation.

Table 4.3 Student-content Interaction

Learner Content Interaction	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
I explore various resources (lectures, videos, podcasts, online discussion/conferencing) to support their	14,2 %	20,%	59,4%	6,6%

improvement in learning				
I pay attention to the material presented well	49,1%	48,1%	2,8%	0%
I get an assignment that appropriates the learning objectives	62,3%	29,2%	7,5%	1%
I look and search for applicable material in form of books/articles/ journals etc, based on my interest	1%	11,3%	48,1%	39,6%

The table above shows how students interact with learning content. Here it can't be seen that students perceived themselves in interacting with sources of learning outside the material given as negative. The percentage of the response is 14,2% for always and 20% for often. It means that most students did not actively explore other sources to support their learning. In this regard, the willingness of students of looking for the material was considered low. They were in their comfort zone, tent to only follow modules of learning and receiving material from lecturers.

Furthermore, although online learning creates distance between students and lecturers it didn't make students ignore the material delivered. They admitted that they kept paying attention to the lecturers' explanations. The way lecturers communicated with students kept their focus. Since there was a lecturer who often give questions based on her explanation or students' presentation. It made students keep listening to the material explained by the lecturer or from the group presentation. This item showed a positive response with a percentage is 49,1% for the answer always and 48,1% for the answer often. From the response to the interview, students were focused to listen to the presentation at the beginning of the lesson, in the middle of the presentation they used to play on their phones; it can be playing on social media or texting with their friends.

Regarding assignments got by students were appropriate with the learning adjective delivered at the beginning of lecturing. It was proven by the result response got 62,3% for the answer always, 29,2% was often and 7,5% was rarely and 1% was never. Most students admitted that the assignments given were appropriate to the learning objective.

The last item about the willingness of students in term of searching for and selecting applicable materials (e.g., articles, and books) based on their interests tend to get a negative response, that is 1% for always,11, 3% for often. It indicates that the awareness of students being independent learners is still low.

4.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conducting learning, Interaction is fundamental in influencing students' performance, outcome, and satisfaction. The interaction of online learning according to Moore (1989) included student-student interaction, student-teacher interaction, and student-content interaction. An instructor needs to provide activities in which students can have relationships or communication with their fellows to encourage student-

student interaction. Whereas, an instructor has to build good communication, understand and facilitate students' needs in activating student-teacher interaction. Furthermore, since the online class is different from a traditional class in which the learning is done distantly an instructor needs to give more attention to delivering the content of learning, whether the power point, audio, video, text, or other learning sources. It should be interesting then it is hoped that students will be more enthusiastic in following the class, then the objective of learning can be achieved. To succeed in the implementation of online learning, the stakeholders of education need to provide such training for teachers or lecturers to increase their digital skills, then teachers or lecturers will be able to innovate in designing the materials and be able to choose and explore various technologies for learning. Further researchers are suggested to gain more understanding in depth related to interaction in online learning and broaden the subject of the study.

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