
University Students' Perception towards Online Learning: Synchronous and Asynchronous

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Abstract

The teaching and learning process in universities around Indonesia has immensely transformed due to the covid-19 pandemic, including in UIN Antasari Banjarmasin and UIN Raden Intan Lampung. This demands lecturers to adapt their teaching to online learning, either synchronous or asynchronous. However, these two variations of learning alter students' views on how learning should be experienced which further influences their learning performance. Thus, this research is aimed at finding out English Language Education students' perception towards online learning: Synchronous and Asynchronous. This research is descriptive quantitative. There is an e-questionnaire of students' perception consists of 6 items for Perceiver, 6 items for Object/Target, 6 items for Context. The data obtained from the questionnaire has been analyzed by using descriptive statistics and interpreting the Likert Scale of students' answers (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). The finding showed that the students' perceptions were positive in terms of Learning platforms, Learning Materials, and Learning Activities in online learning both Synchronous and Asynchronous.

Keywords: Asynchronous, Online Learning, Synchronous, University Students.

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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on several things including the world of education. All power and efforts have been made by the government to reduce cases of Covid-19 transmission. It cannot be denied that one of them is the online learning policy. English teachers and lecturers must use the right way, have various techniques, and several media to make it easier for the students to learn English. To achieve learning objectives especially in the teaching and learning online processes both synchronous and asynchronous learning can be done in the classroom based on the teachers' choices and preferences.

E-Learning is all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching, based on the individual character and affect the knowledge construction concerning experience, practice, and knowledge of the learner. Specific media is also used in e-Learning to support the learning process by using information and communication systems (Tavangarian et al., 2004).

There are three important elements of learning (Koohang, 2009). The first one is learning activities design that should promote cooperation, scaffolding, dealing with the real world, and social negotiation. The second is learning assessment which consists of instructor, peer, and self-assessment. The last one is about the instructor's role as the guide, coach, and feedback provider for the students.

Online learning process involved the constructivist model which encourage students' independence to explore more about the knowledge and have a deeper understanding of the content (Koyanagi, 1998). In other words, the learner is not a passive recipient but rather the center of instruction: "The learners actively participate in their learning process by discovery, with the instructor as the mediator of the process"(Creswell, 2012).

Through the use of internet technology to facilitate both asynchronous (self-paced) and synchronous (collaborative) learning sessions, e-learning has had a major impact on education and training. Asynchronous learning is self-paced learning that takes place at the learner's consideration. Adult learners prefer to learn by organizing their learning activities.

Synchronous learning events, on the other hand, are real-time learning that brings the teacher and the student together at the same time in a live event. Whether the interaction is one-on-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many, synchronous learning encompasses social learning concepts and dynamics.

Synchronous e-learning has grown in popularity due to proven demands in numerous fields including education. There are no physical meetings in the online educational environment. However, threaded discussions, instant messaging, blogs, and other synchronous and asynchronous learning tools, play an important role in humanizing online courses by recreating the classroom experience of information exchange and social construct, not just between learners and instructors, but also among learners (Carswell, 2001).

A learning management system (LMS) is a software application used to manage, document, track, report on, and deliver educational courses and training programs. The goal of a learning management system (LMS) is to distribute and manage instructional content, as well as to handle student registration, online course administration, and tracking and grading of student work.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are web-based systems that allow teachers and students to exchange resources, submit and return assignments, and communicate online (Shahabadi & Uplane, 2015). Furthermore, it is a software that is used to organize, implement, and assess a specific learning process (Lonn & Teasley, 2009).

Mediation in a learning management system (LMS) entails both the acquisition of competencies and communication skills by all teachers and students, as well as a greater focus on creating interaction moments and practical application possibilities of collaborative work, with the learning process taking place in a participatory manner.

Telegram is a smartphone application for sending messages or for communicating. Telegram is one of the social networks. It is a web-based service that caters to a huge online audience. Telegram is a simple social networking program to sign up for and use, and it contains a large number of stickers with written English words and expressions. It is a collection of amusing photos that can be used in place of words in chats. Telegram is a smartphone app that can be used for educational purposes. Telegrams can also be used to send content or information to students before a class meeting, making them one of the most important educational and entertaining tools (Almrashdeh et al., 2011).

Telegram, like another popular software, allows users to transmit messages and photographs with a self-destruct timeframe (Ghobadi & Taki, 2018). These images or phrases can still be screen shot before they vanish from the hidden conversation. Documents, movies, locations, and searching images can all be exchanged within a secret chat, which can last anywhere from two seconds to a week. The Telegram brags about its improved security, which it credits to time-tested algorithms that combine security with high-speed delivery and reliability. In the telegram application there are several features, including sending messages and photos with a time calculation. With this feature, the message and anything we send via telegram is guaranteed security.

Whatsapp is an internet-based instant messaging application that is used to exchange information such as text, images, videos, audio, pictures, discussions, sending documents in the form of words, and much more. It is one of the most important social media that many people use to communicate with other people (Yinka & Queendarline, 2018).

Google Meet is a product of Google, which is a video communication service developed by Google. Google Meet is free software and can make video connections with 100 members and the video display quality is good (Wijayanto, 2020). In addition, Google Meet has a fairly

high-security system and there is also a feature to create a screen that makes it easier for teachers to share subject matter. Therefore google meet is very popular to use.

Zoom is a face-to-face medium or two-way platform displayed via video that can be used to interact directly such as a live meeting that does not use an application (Handayani et al., 2020). This zoom meeting provides special facilities for everyone to take part in the meeting with the click of a link or room number and has a free platform. This application is not only used for teaching or learning but can also be used for offices and various other businesses using a video connection. This facility has many advantages such as saving time, low cost, it can be done anywhere. Students and teachers will find it easier to write and discuss material to be studied during class such as face to face to face. In addition, zoom also gives freedom to presenters or students to act freely as they do in real classroom situations. Therefore, this method is suitable for use as intermediate learning.

Perception is a dynamic that occurs in an individual when he receives a stimulus from his environment. Students' perceptions about English language lessons will affect student learning processes, namely in positive learning. If students have a positive or good perception of the subject, then students will have a good or positive motivation to learn, so the learning process will also be good, and vice versa.

In carrying out this interpretation there are past experiences and value systems they have. The value system here can be interpreted as the individual's judgment in perceiving an object that is perceived, whether the stimulus will be accepted or rejected. If the stimulus is interesting or there is a correspondence it will be perceived positively, and vice versa, in addition to that there is a direct experience between individuals with objects perceived by individuals, both positive and negative.

Perception is influenced by three factors. The perceiver is the first. When looking at something and attempting to understand it, an individual's beliefs, attitudes, intentions, interests, experiences, cognitive processes, expectations, and cultural upbringing will all impact their perception. The second factor is the perceived object or target. It could be people, things, or events. This has an impact on one's perception. The object of perception is not something that can be seen in theory, but rather something that involves others (Suadi, 2021).

As a result, there is a propensity to group similar individuals, objects, or events together and separate them from unrelated groups. The higher the degree of similarity, the more likely we are to regard them as a group, and vice versa. Novelty, motion, noises, size, background, proximity, and likeness are all examples of this domain. The context of the scenario in which the perception is formed is the third factor to consider. Our perspective is influenced by the elements in our environment. Perception must be examined in context, which implies that the situation in which it appears should be taken into account. The situation is a factor that influences the formation of a person's perception.

Several previous studies related to this current research have been conducted by the other researchers. The first research tried to compare the patterns of learner-learner interaction in synchronous and asynchronous CMC systems in a distance-learning context. The findings found that synchronous contacts accounted for a higher percentage of social-emotional exchanges than asynchronous interactions. In asynchronous conversations, students spent more time on task-oriented participation than in synchronous discussions. Student moderators who followed the Student-Centered Discussions (SCD) guideline when moderating online seminars might encourage full participation in the online seminar. For the improvement of distance-learning settings, recommendations on the design of instructional activities and interactive interfaces were also provided (Robbins, 2001).

The second research concerned on distinguishes between superficial and deep processes in cognitive interaction. They discussed many variables and their effects on students' learning outcomes and satisfaction when using synchronous versus asynchronous remote learning systems (Chou, 2002).

The third research used a causal-comparative design, researchers looked at the use of CMC systems and found no significant differences in cognitive presence, teacher presence, or perceived learning between online students who used only asynchronous CMC systems and those who used both asynchronous and synchronous CMC systems (Offir et al., 2008).

The fourth research focused on both English and Arabic teaching, the number of courses completed and the participant's perceptions of their English language ability influenced their preferences for synchronous and asynchronous web-based learning. Participants preferred synchronous online courses over asynchronous online courses, according to the findings. These findings are consistent with previous research. Learners preferred having direct talks with the teacher, having more flexibility, studying on their own, and learning new subjects through discussions with others or having someone explain to them (Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2010).

The fifth research investigated how synchronous and asynchronous online paralegal courses were perceived by paralegal students and paralegal instructors. Overall, paralegal students and instructors rated synchronous and asynchronous online paralegal courses favorably in terms of instructional design, course material, technical assistance, communication, and universal design (Al-Jabri, 2012).

The sixth research explored the types of online tools and strategies used with problem-based learning curriculum using synchronous and asynchronous tools in an online environment. The findings showed that it could provide learners with a wider range of opportunities to learn and interact with their peers and instructors. The results of the study suggested certain synchronous and asynchronous tools may be more effective when supporting problem-based learning in an online training environment (Farmer, 2021).

Considering those previous researches, they were limited to the university students' perception of synchronous and asynchronous learning. However, this current study is unique because it combined university students' perception of two universities in Indonesia and the number of the students are also big in online learning situation. In addition, this current research also explored three important things related to the perception which are perceiver, object/target being perceived, and context based on the theory of synchronous and asynchronous learning. Therefore, the objective of this research was to investigate university students' perception towards synchronous and asynchronous learning which was experienced during COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Method

This research was descriptive quantitative based on online survey. It was intended to gain insights on university students' perception towards synchronous and asynchronous learning which was experienced during COVID-19 pandemic. This survey design was relevant to this research due to its purpose which digs in individual's or groups' opinion or perception towards certain topics or issues (Ary et al., 2014). The population of this research was third and fifth semester students at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin and at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 790 students in total. Proportional stratified sampling technique was employed due to the population of this research which appeared to be an imbalance on a characteristic of the sample taken (Myers, 2018). There were 61 out of 185 students as the sample taken from UIN Antasari Banjarmasin and 205 out of 605 students as the sample taken from UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Those students were selected as the sample of this research because of the similar condition and policies of the two universities during COVID-19 pandemic about teaching and learning regulations.

Perception questionnaire was administered online by using Google Form to obtain data on students' perception towards synchronous and asynchronous learning. This Likert-scale questionnaire was constructed based on three aspects influencing students' perception: 6 items for perceiver, 6 items for object/target, and 6 items for context (Creswell, 2012) in terms of learning platforms, learning materials, and learning activities.

The data collected from perception questionnaire were analyzed by using descriptive statistics including measure of frequency, measure of central tendency and graphs to describe the number of responses for each item so that the conclusion of this research could be made. Since survey research did not state the hypothesis and the research variable was only one, it did not need to employ inferential statistics to make a conclusion of this research. By having descriptive statistics to describe the data collected from the questionnaire, it is sufficient to make a conclusion of this research.

3. Finding and Discussion

The data of this research were the results of perception questionnaire compromising three aspects: perceiver, object/target, and context in which each aspect consisting of 6 items administered to 266 students of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin and UIN Raden Intan Lampung.

Perceiver

Perceiver concerned an individual interpretation towards an object which was influenced by his or her characteristics such as beliefs, attitudes, or interests. There were six statements regarding perceiver aspect in which statement 1, 2 and 3 eliciting students' perception towards synchronous learning and statement 4, 5 and 6 eliciting students' perception towards asynchronous learning. Statement 1 and 4 were about learning platforms (S1LPS and S4LPA), statement 2 and 5 were about learning materials (S2LMS and S5LMA), and statement 3 and 6 were about learning activities (S3LAS and S6LAA). The results of perception questionnaire on perceiver aspect could be seen on Figure 1.

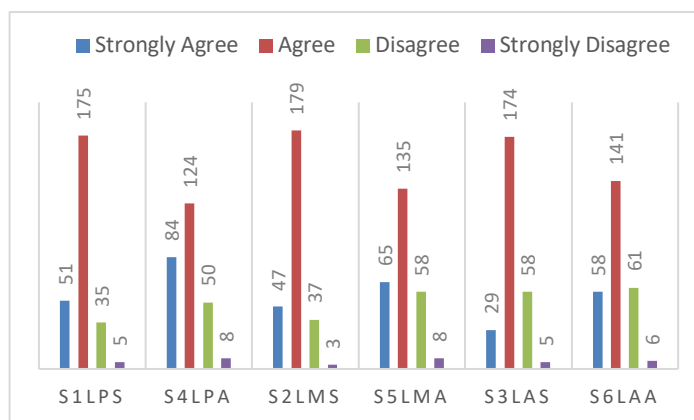


Figure 1. Perceiver Aspect on Learning Platforms, Materials, and Activities

Figure 1 disclosed that 175 (65.8%) students enjoyed synchronous learning platforms compared to 124 (46.6%) students who enjoyed asynchronous learning platforms. This meant that most students perceived that synchronous learning platforms such as Zoom Meeting, Google Meet or Microsoft Team were pleasurable. In term of learning materials, 179 (67.3%) students were excited to learn the materials synchronously compared to 135 (50.8%) students who were excited to learn the materials asynchronously. This meant that most students were fired up in learning the materials from their lecturers synchronously. In term of learning activities, 174 (65.4%) students were enthusiastic about the learning activities in synchronous learning platforms compared to 141 (53%) students who were enthusiastic about the learning activities in asynchronous learning platforms. This meant that most students were interested in how their lecturers gave activities about the materials in synchronous learning platforms. Thus, it could be inferred that most students perceived synchronous learning platforms, materials and activities as enjoyable, exciting and enthusiastic.

Object/target Being Perceived

Object or target being perceived influenced an individual's perception. There were six statements regarding object or target being perceived aspect in which statement 7, 8 and 9 eliciting students' perception towards synchronous learning and statement 10, 11 and 12 eliciting students' perception towards asynchronous learning. Statement 7 and 10 were about learning platforms (S7LPS and S10LPA), statement 8 and 11 were about learning materials (S8LMS and S11LMA), and statement 9 and 12 were about learning activities (S9LAS and S12LAA). The results of perception questionnaire on object or target being perceived aspect could be seen on Figure 2.

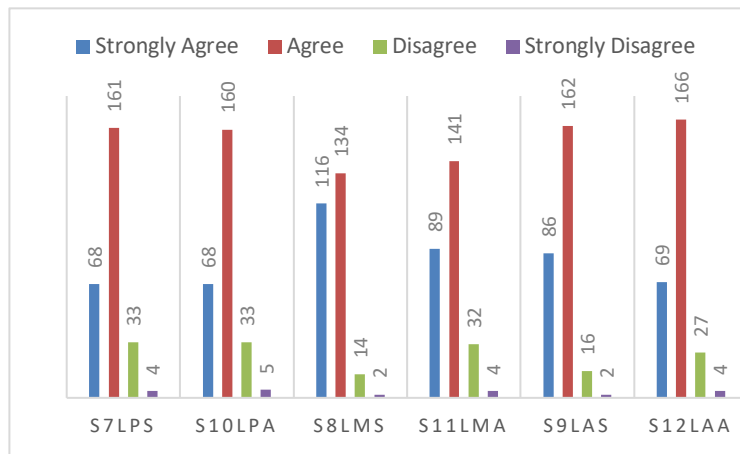


Figure 2. Object Being Perceived Aspect on Learning Platforms, Materials, and Activities

Figure 2 demonstrated that students expected either the synchronous learning platforms, 161 students (60.5%), or the asynchronous learning platforms, 160 students (60.2%), would help them improve their English language skills. This meant that synchronous and asynchronous learning platforms as the objects being perceived by the students were expected to give a greater impact on their English language skills development. In term of learning materials, lecturers' explanation about the learning materials in synchronous learning platforms were seen to provide better comprehension of the materials to the students. It could be seen from the trends of 116 (43.6%) students who strongly agreed and 134 (50.4%) students who agreed with the statement. In term of learning activities, some students expected that synchronous and asynchronous learning platforms would facilitate them with various learning activities provided by their lecturers so that they would become active during learning process. It could be seen that 86 (32.3%) students strongly agreed and 162 (60.9%) agreed with S9LAS while 69 (25.9%) students strongly agreed and 166 (62.4%) students agreed with S12LAA.

Context

Context was related to the situation in which an individual's perception was made. There were six statements regarding context aspect in which statement 13, 14 and 15 eliciting students' perception towards synchronous learning and statement 16, 17 and 18 eliciting students' perception towards asynchronous learning. Statement 13 and 16 were about learning platforms (S13LPS and S16LPA), statement 14 and 17 were about learning materials (S14LMS and S17LMA), and statement 15 and 18 were about learning activities (S15LAS and S18LAA). The results of perception questionnaire on context aspect could be seen on Figure 3.

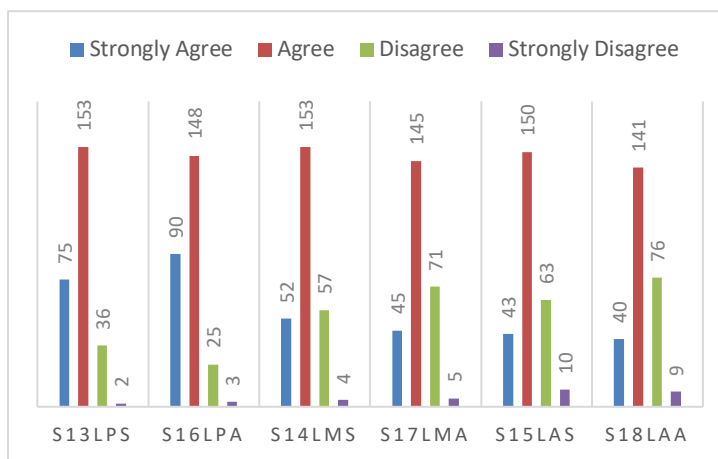


Figure 3. Context Aspect on Learning Platforms, Materials, and Activities

Figure 3 explicated that most students tended to utilize asynchronous learning platforms due its easiness in operating. There were 90 (33.8%) students strongly agreed and 148 (55.6%) students agreed with S16LPA. Furthermore, learning materials delivered by the lecturers in synchronous learning platforms were easily understood by the students. There were 153 (57.5%) students agreed with S14LMS. Concerning learning activities, learning activities provided by their lecturers in synchronous learning platforms were various and fun. There were 43 (16.2%) students strongly agreed and 150 (56.4%) students agreed with S15LAS. Interestingly, there were 76 (28.6%) students disagree with S18LAA which meant that they did not think that learning activities provided by their lecturers in asynchronous leaning platforms were various and fun.

Referring to the result of students' perception questionnaire, it was revealed that students perceived synchronous learning better than asynchronous learning in terms of those aspects. Most students agreed that synchronous learning platforms were pleasurable which made them excited to learn the materials delivered by the lecturers in various and fun learning activities although some students may be inhibited (Robbins, 2001). Some students are not that enthusiastic to participate in online learning despite the fact that they are supported by

adequate facilities, such as computers, androids, and the availability of an internet network. They are less concerned about the importance of EFL literacy and the task given (Damayanti & Irwan). Thus, this awareness may cause the learning activities designed by the lecturer became less interesting for some students so that they could not be enthusiastic like the other students. However, this research resulted different point of view in which most students believed that synchronous learning activities designated by their lecturer were fun and varied (56,4%).

Although synchronous learning demanded on both teachers and students about time restrictions, it has many advantages over asynchronous learning. This is because synchronous learning activities is like traditional classroom interaction where teacher and students interact directly and this kind of activities are favorable by the students (S5LMA, 50.8%). During the discussion session, teachers can monitor how the students engage with one another and can assist the students as needed (Chen, et al., 2005). In the other hands, when learning asynchronously, the lecture audio/video, handouts, papers, and PowerPoint presentations are all easily accessible to students. This information is available anytime, anywhere, and from any device using a learning management system (LMS) or other similar channels (Perveen, 2016) although most students preferred to utilize synchronous learning (S1LPS, 65.8%).

Furthermore, their expectation towards synchronous learning was trending upward. It was believed that synchronous learning platforms such as Zoom meeting increased students' skills in certain aspect (Rohmadi & Indriani, 2020). This was in line with the result of students' perception questionnaire. Most students expected that synchronous learning platforms offered them an improvement in their language skills, the better comprehension of learning materials, and active learning activities compared to asynchronous learning activities which were regarded bored and ineffective (Ilahi et al., 2021). Furthermore, most students also agreed that synchronous learning platforms were easy to operate, were good media for their lecturer in delivering learning materials, and were able to facilitate various and fun learning activities. Yet, combining synchronous and asynchronous learning was a prominent choice to help students understand materials better and let them get involved in learning activities actively with their classmates (Nuyulis & Puspitasari, 2021).

4. Conclusion

The objective of this research was to find out university students' perception towards online learning: synchronous and asynchronous. Based on the result of data analysis it could be inferred that students perceived synchronous learning better than asynchronous learning in terms of perceiver, object or target being perceived, and context aspect concerning learning platforms, learning materials, and learning activities compared to asynchronous learning. This indicated that synchronous learning activities were commendatory for students to get involved in interactive learning activities since they are able to directly interact with their

lecturer and the other students online which helped them build up their confidence in learning and understand the materials easily.

Despite the fact that this research revealed students' positive respond to synchronous learning, there were some limitations in this research such as this research did not elicit kinds of synchronous activities experienced by the students. This research also referred to old theory for factors affecting individual's perception, and this research did not manage to get deeper information about students' perception towards synchronous learning by administering Focus Group Discussion as the follow up activity to clarify students' respond to the statements in perception questionnaire. Therefore, it is recommended to further researchers to investigate the areas which have not been covered by this research.

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