

A case study exploring students experiences of English course through group discussion on online learning

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ABSTRACT

Online learning is a popular for teaching and learning in nowadays situation since corona virus have attacked this world. Online group work is an instructional strategy that is becoming increasingly because of that condition. Many researchers have conducted research on the application of group discussion strategy in learning English. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of students engaging in online group discussion to explore its benefits and challenges. This study collected data from 10 students at university. Participant is college students. A qualitative method design was used. The results indicate that there are challenges from group discussions in online learning group discussion such as; difficulty in adjusting the time schedule, misunderstanding among members, and perceived lack of sense responsibility. The benefit of this group discussion; receiving other group and instructors' prompt feedback. The result show 7 out of 10 students unsatisfied group discussion through online learning. This study suggests that the teacher/instructor must pay attention divided the group members.

Keywords: Case analysis; English Teaching Development; Group Discussion; Online Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

English is the only mandatory foreign language subject for Indonesian students from the secondary up to university level. English is taught at schools in order that students are able to master the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Harmer, 2007). To achieve the English teaching, the teacher must pay attention to the method used to deliver the material. There are many variations in teaching methods; one of them is group work.

Group work offers the teachers a powerful way to engage students, to increase the quality and challenge of the task that students had experienced, giving student's chances for cooperative learning, and minimize valuation loads (Bentley & Warwick, 2017). Dozens of studies have been conducted on group work in the classrooms. Most show a positive viewpoint of the group work method. (Daba, Ejersa, and Aliyi, 2016) conducted a study of second-year biology students of Bule Hora University. They found that the students' perception of the benefits of group assignment is positive since their learners prefer to do assignments in a group rather than individual assignment and classroom tests. (Kondo's, 2010), study involving second-year students of the Kosen revealed that students had positive attitudes of group works activities over individual activities. (Taqi and Al Nough 2014) reported that students who worked in groups enjoyed group tasks and preferred to

work in a group more often. (Kwon's 2014) classroom action research in a university in Thailand showed that most students perceived group work positively, but they met some challenges, especially difficulty in decision-making processes and relationships with peers, in the group works.

Based on studies that have been conducted on group work in the classrooms. Most revealed a positive viewpoint of the group work method, but since the COVID-19 pandemic has attacked educational institutes across the world have closed. Most educational institutes have shifted to online learning platforms to keep the academic activities going. At the time of the COVID-19 outbreak, the sudden shift from offline learning of English language courses to online learning became the current challenge to be faced by students (Basilaia et al., 2020; Saidy and Sura, 2020; Yen, 2020). Based on this issue, this study aims to find out students' experiences of English course through group discussion on online learning. there are three research questions posed in this study:

1. How the students' perceptions of online group work?
2. What factors of online group work do students recognize as challenging and beneficial in the learning process?
3. How do students' experiences of online group work?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Benefits and Challenges of Online Group Work

Some of the literature related to online learning indicates that group work in online classes is beneficial because it enables learners to develop higher order and critical thinking skills as well as to build knowledge and meaning (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Palloff & Pratt, 2005). However, other researchers have reported that online group work may be perceived by students as more challenging than group work in face-to-face settings (Graham, 2002; Häkkinen, 2004; Taylor, 2005). For example, online group work among distance learners lacks some of the social interaction that occurs in face-to-face settings (Kreijns & Kirschner, 2004). This may result in unfamiliarity among group members, which can lead to deficient group dynamics (Fung, 2004). Online collaborative groups may also go through delayed group developmental stages, taking longer to develop social relationships (Fung, 2004; Johnson, Suriya, Yoon, Berrett, & Fluer, 2002).

(Kim, Liu, and Bonk 2005) reported that the difficulty of communication was one of the key barriers among peers because of learners' time zone differences and the absence of face-to-face meetings. Difficulty with communication can be particularly challenging for groups working online, where delays and not having a sense of knowing the group members can have a clear impact on group performance.

2.2. The Factors Impacting Student Satisfaction with Online Group Work

Social interaction is important for online group work as it can impact students' perception of collaboration and social presence. Social interaction plays a role in enhancing student learning and satisfaction with online courses. Social interaction is also affected by features of the online learning environment, individual learners' characteristics, and instructors' pedagogical strategies. In turn, social interaction may impact group formation, group dynamics, and the building of group structures (Kreijns, Kirschner, Jochems, & Van Buuren, 2004). Understanding how these elements work together during group work in an online context is important for facilitating learning. Some researchers have sought to identify strategies to make the social interactions that occur in online group work more explicit. For example, the framework proposed by Kreijns et al. (2004) suggests that relationship sociality, social presence, pedagogical technique, and interaction are important aspects for facilitating group work in an online context.

Technology is another factor identified as being relevant to students' satisfaction with online group work. Technology gives geographically and temporally distributed students the opportunity for collaboration in a virtual workplace by providing an environment for knowledge construction (Stacey, 1999). Technology impacts both group interaction and group dynamics (Brandon &

Hollingshead, 1999; McDonald & Gibson, 1998). Technical problems may hinder communication between group members, which, in turn, can make collaboration between group members difficult. Ensuring the security and reliability of the technological environment is important for online group work, since this will enable smoother interactions. In addition, helping students feel comfortable with the system and with the software that they are using will also assist with the online interactions of the group.

Another important aspect of group work is the level of interaction and engagement experienced within the group. Increasingly, researchers view a group as a social system. According to Forsyth (1999), groups are systems of interacting individuals within a dynamic environment; their development is affected by many different elements. (Carabajal, Lapointe, and Gunawardena 2003) suggest three online group development dimensions including task, social, and technological aspects. To gain insight into online group development, we need to understand how the dimensions influence each other and, in turn, how they impact interaction and learning for group members.

3. METHODS

The study employed qualitative research design to explore and understand the problem of individual or groups (Creswell, 2014, p.32). It helps to know more about the problem and the progress that is faced by students in group discussion through online learning. This qualitative research used an ethnographic case study design to identify and delve on how a groups or individual develop the behaviour from time to time (Creswell, 2014, p.48). 10 students participated in the survey and 3 participants participated in a follow-up interview. Students taking a fashion design course in University North Sumatra, Indonesia third-semester. The data of this study were collected through two instruments which include, 1) online survey consisting of close and open-ended questions; 2) Interview. In responding to the survey, the participants were asked to explain how they maneuverer through all class works and encouraged elaborate as much as possible in their answers. As part of consent agreement, the completed questionnaires were then labelled with numbers to maintain the participants' anonymity, Frequency count was used to calculate the total number of responses related to the degree of satisfied or unsatisfied in group discussion through online learning While, thematic content analysis was employed to identify clear trends in the different viewpoints of the data collected through the rest of the instruments.

In order to fully understand and analyse participants' experiences and perspectives, the data were sorted, labelled, and analysed. Finally, common themes were highlighted and presented as the findings of the study. A qualitative methods design was used to answer the research questions. Qualitative method (interview) and survey. The survey items were used to determine student satisfaction and interview to perceive challenges, and beneficial factors in their group work experiences.

4.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Student's Perceptions towards group discussion through online learning

The analysis of the data collected through the close-ended part of the survey showed that in general, the students found group discussion through online learning unsatisfied. A closer look at the data in Figure 1 revealed that out of 10 participants, the majority 7 found group discussion through online learning unsatisfied, 3 showed satisfied in the subject.

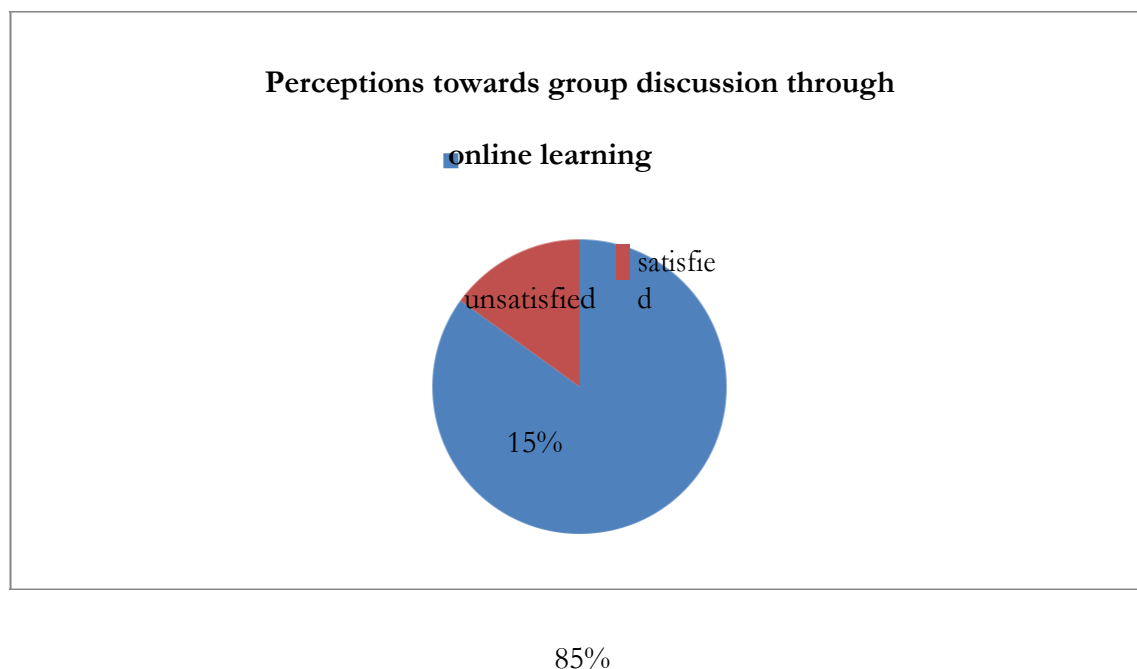


Figure 1 : Students' perceptions towards group work online learning

Participants who were dissatisfied with group work struggled with communication, , lack of a sense of responsibility. For example, when a researcher asked one participant how comfortable she felt with other members, the participant answered that

"I felt uncomfortable with all the group members except for one friend because she is my close friend : "There was one who I like in my group , that I felt comfortable with. But the other people either . . I don't know, they all knew more than me and I just felt like I was just kind of a drag". Her comments indicate that she felt a lack of community. The results of this study indicate several trends in the factors perceived by learners as challenging regarding group work in an online class. The overall research questions have been used to organize the presentation of the data. Quotes provided in this section are from interviews with the participants.

4.2 Factors of online group work do students recognize as challenging and beneficial

The interview used to indicate which online group work factors were perceived as most challenging in the learning process. The participants in this research study reported the following as challenges in their group work experiences in rank order lack of a sense of responsibility, misunderstanding among members, lack to manage the time was also an important issue.

Student 1

"I feel that through group work, the sense of responsibility from members is reduced, they become lazy because they hope the other members will overcome everything. I think

without fun you cannot have a good group. So, maybe, it would be most important that people first, you know them."

Lack of a sense responsibility was also perceived as challenging for online group work by participants in this study. This is not a new challenge for learners in online learning environments in general. Many scholars have investigated lack of community in online learning (Hill, Raven, & Han, 2002; Kim et al. 2005; Song et al., 2004,) online groups may go through delayed group developmental stages, taking longer to develop social relationships.

Students 2

The challenge in online group discussions in my opinion "my group members have a lot of reasons like: busy, attending other activities, or even on a trip. They can't manage their time schedule to do discuss, and seem to take it easy to discuss and said "I just follow the results" without giving any ideas.

Time management was also mentioned as a challenge in the interviews with participants in this study. Other scholars have also indicated that time management can be a challenge. For example, Palloff and Pratt (2005) suggest that groups need to know up front how much time a collaborative activity will take, and each group member needs to commit to that time.

Despite the challenges, there are also some benefits from online group discussions; receiving other group and instructors' prompt feedback.

Student 3

"I am very happy because when my group present the results of the discussion, the instructor and other groups give respond and suggestions so i can revise and improve if there is any mistake"

(Palloff and Pratt 2005) recommend that the instructor should act as "a facilitator or guide, allowing students to create their own learning process through the phases of collaborative activities"

4.3 Students' Experiences of online group work

The interview used to indicate how students experiences. Mariani one of the student share her negative experience

"Me and my group members had a misunderstood. It was hard because everyone had different interests so I feel I more dominant in doing the task and the other only passive."

Another students also share their experience

"My experience in online group discussions is different. sometimes it depends on who the members are. if my close friends, I feel happy and easy to invite discussion but if not my close friend I feel uncomfortable. so I prefer if the group members are my close friends".

Novita the third participant who join the interview share her experience.

“I think online group discussion is not a problem, but sometimes there are problems if the group members are not very good at the material. when group members don't like the material then we find it difficult”

CONCLUSION

The current study has several implications for practice and research. First, there is a need to work with learners to assist them with the difficulty of communication presented by online environments. Online group work requires significant interaction among group members, yet current Web-based learning environments may not fully support opportunities for social interaction. When learners do not express their feelings, opinions, and situation, this can create significant barriers to communication. These challenges should be addressed to improve the quality of learning and increase students' satisfaction with online group work experiences. Gaining communication skills to communicate with a diverse group of fellow students in an online class may be a key to success (Watkins & Corry, 2007). Assisting learners to establish strategies for overcoming the difficulty of online communication may prove to be useful.

Second, there is a need to work with learners to assist them with building familiarity and establishing community in online contexts. Developing a supportive learning community does not occur without time and effort (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Without a supportive community of students, maintaining high student motivation and fostering joy in learning can be challenging. Integrating strategies for community building into the design of the course may assist with this effort (Song et al, 2004). Continued research related to community building strategies in a variety of contexts is also needed to enable the advancement of best practices in the dynamic context of online learning environments.

Third, there is a need for effective instructional design in online courses to better facilitate group work. The design should focus on the technological, task, and social dimensions that impact the group development process (Carabajal et al., 2003). Continuing to explore design models that are most effective for online collaborative learning will also help facilitate this activity.

Finally, online instructors need to adapt their teaching methods to better support students' group work. When learners have conflicts with their group members or have problems with their group work, they can feel frustrated. Establishing teaching strategies to facilitate students' group work may prove to be useful.

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