EFL STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL NETWORK SITE-BASED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Online learning is a choice to use in this current pedagogy. The most prominent power in online learning is the wide room for teachers to develop students' engagement during the learning process. This study aims to figure out how students are engaged in online learning, to describe and examine in depth how they are engaging themselves in the online learning. This study employs a case study. The data were obtained from a collection of students' chat and discussion in Social Network Site (SNS). The data were obtained by observation, questionnaires and interviews. Observation data and questionnaires were analyzed by using Dixson's (2010, 2015) students' engagement theory, which incorporates six engagement behaviors. As the analysis procedure, students' chats and interviews were analyzed inductively (Cresswell, 2012). The result revealed that most of the students were engaged in online learning through the SNS application. Specifically, the engagement shown by the students to this simple application indicates that the impact of online learning on the students' engagement is not determined by whether the platform used is high- or low.

Keywords: *online learning; student engagement; social network site*

Online learning is a choice to use in this current pedagogy. This idea is claimed to be appropriate since it has the learning flexibility as one of the demands in educational advancement (Gilbert, 2015). Specifically, the flexibility in online learning is seen from the condition that students can manage their agenda in their course completion (Dhawan, 2020). It is supported by You & Kang (2014) that online learning is powerful to empower students' self-regulated learning. Even, online learning is also included in most universities in teaching to accommodate various learning needs (Artino Jr & Stephens, 2009). As an example, online learning is simply reachable in rural areas (Dhawan, 2020). Moreover, the most important power in online learning is that it provides a room for teachers to develop students' engagement during the learning process (Dahalan et al., 2012).

Concerning this, students' engagement in the pandemic era learning becomes a hot issue among educators (Akbari et al., 2016). Specifically, the current phenomena require them to have students learn in context as an endeavor to foster their engagement in learning (Messias et al., 2015), parallel to the theory that interaction between teachers and students leads to student satisfaction and student learning outcomes (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). However, the

teachers still have problems attaining that requirement since it is found that the rate of students' engagement in online learning remains low (Kizilcec et al., 2013). Therefore, this matter highlights the condition that students' engagement in online learning (including in the pandemic era) is a big homework to accomplish (Bodily et al., 2017).

Moreover, the foci of the relevant research on students' engagement in online learning were various. Some studies focused on online students' engagement scale (Dixson, 2010; Min Hu & Li, 2017). Others centered on investigating students' engagement and classroom community in online courses (Sun & Rueda, 2012; Young & Bruce, 2011). Besides, attempts to discuss this topic from students' and teachers' voices were also undertaken (Blakey & Major, 2019; Louwrens & Hartnett, 2015).

Although numerous studies have been conducted to find out how students are engaged in online learning, the detail identification and analysis of how they are engaging themselves in online learning are rarely presented, particularly in this pandemic period. On this ground, a detailed investigation on how students are engaged in online learning during the pandemic era and further analysis of how they are engaging themselves in online learning is worth conducting. Therefore, this study aims to identify students' engagement in online learning with SNS which has not been much researched in Indonesia.

Students' Engagement

Engagement is widely seen as essential to the process of learning (Reading, 2008). It is in keeping with some studies' results revealing that students' engagement contributes to developing students' academic achievement (Hew, 2016; Kuh, 2003; Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). This notion is also relevant to the statement that students' attainment in the classroom depends on how far they are engaged in the classroom (Mandernach, 2009). Lined up with this, the role of teachers is also prominent since students will be helped to concentrate further and accomplish academic objectives as the teacher better plans the learning process for student engagement (Berge, 2002; Northrup, 2002). A similar statement is also conveyed that the success of students in achieving learning goals is an important point in student engagement (Handelsman et al., 2005). Aside from that, student success is important regardless of location of the learning experience (Meyer, 2014) as well as engaging in group learning environments that cultivate relationships and academically develop students (Zepke & Leach, 2010). Not only a difference in student behavior, but also might be a difference in the students' attitude on education (Fletcher, 2007; Reeve, 2012; Smith et al., 2010). In this study, student engagement is characterized as the student's involvement and ability to participate in the learning process, both in understanding the content and in carrying out the instrument provided (Young & Bruce, 2011).

While several experts have proposed the aforementioned meanings, the majority of definitions depend on three components: mental, relational, and cognitive (Appleton et al., 2008). This finding is also relevant to other studies' that student engagement can be divided into three categories: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and affective engagement (Hew, 2016; Kong et al., 2003; Wang & Eccles, 2012; Woo & Reeves, 2007). Other studies have found that the phase in students' engagement has evolved from single-dimensional to multi-dimensional (Weimer, 2016). Current studies focused on the relational dimension, which was later joined by the behavioral and affective dimensions, and subsequently by the cognitive dimension (Handelsman et al., 2005; M Hu & Li, 2017). Moreover, the specific behavior of students in the learning process is behavioral engagement, which is the most basic and observable (Ali & Hassan, 2018). Meanwhile, engagement which refers to mental efforts in learning is cognitive engagement and the use of various learning methods can result in various stages of thought (Garrison et al., 2001). Following that, engagement which primarily applies to a

sentimental as a feeling of identity and values, is emotional engagement (Hu & Li, 2017). Other studies reveal five elements are regarded as essential for effective student engagement in the online learning and teaching environment; cultural engagement, collaborative engagement, cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, and emotional engagement (Redmond et al., 2018).

SNS in Online Learning

Online or e-learning is perceived variously by many experts. Lee & Lee (2006) see online learning as real-time delivery of teaching and learning via the internet to an end-user device. While Liao & Lu (2008) tend to highlight web techniques as the one to host online learning. Clark & Mayer (2011) underline online learning as delivering training through digital devices or technology designed to address individual learning. All of these concepts basically keep changing and be understood from many different points of view (Stein et al., 2011). Having analyzed some definitions and perceptiveness, Sangrà et al. (2012) conclude that online learning is a part of the new era signaling the millennial educational system which emerges from a variety of disciplines, for instance, computer science, communication technology, and pedagogy. In short, there is no single fixed definition of online learning as it keeps changing due to time, technology development, and the field of discipline.

To integrate technology into learning, a number of principles should be taken into consideration. Wilson & Smilanich (2005) notice that concerning students' need analysis is pivotal. By way of addition, Erben, Ban, & Castañeda (2009) emphasize students' technology familiarity and content should be regarded by teachers to infuse technology into their teaching activities. To be more specific, Bates (2005: 210) proposes ACTIONS (access, costs, teaching and learning, interactivity, organizational issue, novelty and speed) once teachers want to bring ICT to their classroom learning. Those mentioned principles profoundly pertain to three points that teachers should consider learners, content, and technology appropriateness when bringing technology to classrooms.

Online learning has been acknowledged to be beneficial by a number of experts. Online learning is claimed to provide many possibilities for learning enhancement for it gives exposure to students to connect with their surroundings in creating communication and stimulates students to publish or share information (Newby et al., 2006). Erben, Ban, & Castañeda (2009) convey another important point that online learning will lead to the shifting role of teacher, from teacher-centered to student-centered. Other advanced possibilities offered by e-learning according to Bates (2005) are personal advancement and economic development. While in respect of literacy, Andrews et al. (2007) precisely declare that ICT learning has the most positive consequences for literacy teaching. Likewise, online learning is regarded as promising (Clark & Mayer, 2011) as it customizes training, provides multimedia learning facilities, accelerates expertise through scenarios, and engages learners (Rank et al., 2011).

In the meantime, online learning makes mutation to a much greater extent (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007) by utilizing another platform such as SNS. The integration of SNS into online learning has been mushrooming particularly in this pandemic era. Silius et al. (2010) believe that such phenomenon takes place as SNS are used for exquisite communication in many activities, as people nowadays including students have used SNS in an intensive and effortless way (Çankaya et al., 2013).

A number of studies empirically prove how SNS in VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) can be used successfully to engage students. Interactivity in VLE is found to be a key to keep students engaged (Deschaine & Whale, 2017). Online environments might benefit certain types of engagement (Dumford & Miller, 2018). Attractive features in SNS have engaged students and it is often related to the achievement of positive student learning

outcomes (Akbari et al., 2016). Other factors such as peer community, engaging online teachers, confidence and course design either prove how online degrees can assist students with successful academic and engaging learning experiences (Farrell & Brunton, 2020). Although a positive yet weak correlation is detected, online learning is proven to give an impact on student learning engagement (Rajabalee et al., 2020).

METHOD

Since this study is aimed at identifying students' engagement during learning sessions, a case study was employed. The participants consisted of 20 undergraduate students consisting of 6 males and 14 females with the mean age of 20 who were studying in a private university in Garut, West Java, Indonesia. The participants voluntarily participated in this study (see informed consent). Specifically, the participants were the first graders since they were those who had the English subject in this semester. They had to pass General English as a compulsory course. As the profile, 65% of participants had followed English course at the level of beginner. It means that they had learnt basic lessons of English. In addition, all participants were labeled using pseudonyms.

The data were gathered using observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The data from observation and questionnaires were analyzed by using Dixson's theory (2010, 2015) about students' engagement involving descriptive engagement variable and six engagement behaviors. As the analysis procedure, students' chats and interviews were analyzed inductively (Cresswell, 2012). In addition, the interview consisted of 10 items measuring students' engagement behavior. Those six engagement behaviors are as follows.

1. Excitement in online chats
2. Active participation in discussions
3. Assistance to friends
4. Engagement in online conversations
5. Orderly posts in discussion forums
6. Acquaintances with other students

The data of the interview were then coded, categorized, analyzed, and interpreted by using the theory from Dixson (2010).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Engagement as Realized in Students' Classroom Activities

This part elaborates findings and discussion regarding students' engagements, as shown in online class performances. Below is the visualization of the data.

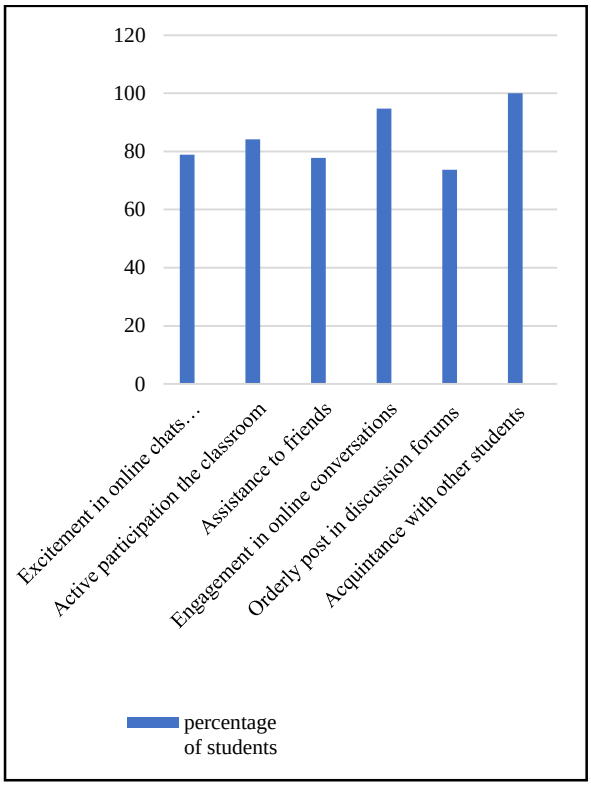

Figure 1. EFL Students' Engagement in SNS Based-Learning

On the open-ended questionnaire supported by the interview data, students had the option of answering the six open-ended questions and could write as little or as much as they wanted. The result of the questionnaire reveals that most students were engaged in the English online course.

For the first indicator, excitement in online chats, 78.9% of students agreed that they had fun in online chats or discussions in English online courses. This could be seen from their answers which showed that they were more interested in online learning because it was different from face-to-face learning, which is a new experience where the

material is delivered with many variations. This information, fulfilling one of the students' engagement indicators (Dixson, 2010, 2015) that students have to enjoy the class, is also supported by Müller's report (2008) that the flexibility and convenience in the online learning process help students be more engaged in the study.

In the second point, active participation in discussions, 84.2% of students participated actively in the discussions. Students' motives to actively join the class include the necessity of online learning, curiosity, willingness to understand the material, and the score that will be obtained in the course. Meanwhile, 21.1% of students who did not actively participate in online learning were because they felt shy, less confident and afraid to answer questions. From the findings above, it is safe to say that the indicator telling students must actively take part in the learning process was attained (Dixson, 2010, 2015). However, the data showing the rest of the participants who still had problems showing their willingness and bravery in this learning type were also supported by Saadé, Kira, Mak, & Nebebe (2017) study that most students were anxious in taking the online course.

For the third variable, assistance to friends, 77.8% of students declared that they helped their companions in the class. Peculiarly, they were active in assisting friends to answer questions, assist in writing and pronunciation, then explain the material that was not yet understood, remind of class schedules, and help friends issue ideas or opinions. Students also helped their friends who had difficulty filling absences using applications, reminding assignments, and sharing signals for accessible online learning. Therefore, an indicator of peer assistance (Dixson, 2010, 2015) was also achieved. However, 22.2% of students seemed less active in helping friends. This is because these students could not give an opinion due to a lack of mastery of the material. This result is relevant to other studies conducted by Ekwunife-Orakwue & Teng (2014) and Nguyen (2017) that students were facilitated by online learning to do various activities with their peers (student with student interaction).

The fourth variable (engagement in online conversations) shows as many as 94.7% of students were engaged in English online conversation. In this variable, the reason arises because there were students who responded in the form of answering lecturers' questions, giving questions then giving comments and some kind of giving appreciation such as the word "*thank you*". Meanwhile, 5.3% of low students did not engage in conversations in online learning because when no questions appeared in a discussion, students were just silent and did not have any conversation. This result is in keeping with Dixson's indicator (2010, 2015) that students are expected to partake in the classroom. Peculiarly, the bigger intensity of high achievers in the classroom participation is in line with the study of Rajabalee et al. (2020) that the learning performance of mid and high achievers is better than the low ones in this typical classroom.

In the fifth variable, the result highlights that 73,7% of students post orderly when discussing in a forum. Some moments in which they are engaging themselves by regular posting are when: 1) answering the lecturer's questions; 2) submitting assignments; 3) responding to the materials being delivered including asking questions. The result signals that most students post in moment taking place frequently with such initial direction from the lecturer. This type of phenomenon has also been found by Martin & Bolliger (2018) mentioning that discussions with guidance from teachers, or in structured conversations, give great advantage to students' engagement. On the other hand, there are 26.3% of students are not to be actively involved in discussion forums during online learning, apart from being lazy, not understanding the material is also another reason that influences them to not be actively involved in discussion forums. In line with this, Seethamraju (2014) emphasized that online learning contributes to engaging students in conducting peer-to-peer learning, especially in building the discussion session,

claiming it is very important to do in the learning process. However, another study sees that one of the challenges in engaging students in online learning is the lack of students' liability in sharing knowledge with their peers (Sakulwichitsintu et al., 2015).

In the last variable, 100% of students get to know other students. In this variable, all students stated that they recognized other learner participants who were involved in online learning. Their interactions are manifested in an answer, question, and joke while chatting. This fact corresponds to the findings of research conducted by Abrami et al. (2011) signifying that synchronous activities, such as chatting, might promote students; interaction. Such interaction further will assist students with social acceptance from their peers (Yu et al., 2010). The use of SNS in online learning environment is supposed to provide students and their peers with immense interaction (Ping, 2011). Students' interaction with peers, besides making acquaintance, is also claimed to affect learning satisfaction and performance. The opportunity of socializing and reciprocally discussing ideas lead them to feel contented and achieve higher learning outcome (Kurucay & Inan, 2017).

To sum up, most students have fulfilled the criteria of students' engagement as proposed by Dixson (2010, 2015). This was obviously seen from their active interaction conducted with their teacher and their peers.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, most of the students were engaged in online learning conducted via an SNS application. Specifically, the engagement was obviously shown through the students' enthusiasm and involvement in the classroom activities such as, participating in a discussion forum and conducting peer assistance during the learning process. Therefore, it is safe to say that the efficiency of online learning on the students' engagement is not placed on the measurement of whether the platform used is high- or low. However, meaningful online learning in engaging students depends on the teachers' way of managing the activities in the classroom. On that ground, further investigation on teacher online classroom management is highly advised.

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