



THE USE OF DISCORD APPLICATION IN VIRTUAL ENGLISH LEARNING: AN INVESTIGATION ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

by

Evi Isfiatul Jannah

STKIP PGRI Jombang, East Java Indonesia

evi.isfiatul.jannah@gmail.com

Daning Hentasmaka

STKIP PGRI Jombang, East Java Indonesia

d.hentasmaka@gmail.com

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Abstract:

Discord application, a voice and text chat platform usually used for games, social, class, or business groups, started to be used as one of the alternative media in virtual learning. A deeper investigation was conducted to get more information about students' perception of virtual learning by using Discord application. This study implemented a qualitative research design, especially a case study. The data were collected from tertiary education students who were experienced in virtual English learning by using Discord application by distributing an online questionnaire and doing interviews. Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that 89.72% of the students positively perceived the use of Discord application in virtual English learning. Some advantages of virtual learning by using Discord application found in the study were elaborated.

Key Words: *Discord Application, Students' Perception, Virtual English Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, as technology has developed, the teaching and learning processes could be done offline (face-to-face) and online (virtual learning). Virtual learning refers to the learning process or learning experience in a virtual classroom that was enhanced through utilizing computers or the internet both outside and inside the facilities of the educational organization (Pannen, 2002; Racheva, 2017). Different from the offline learning that should took place at the same time and place, virtual learning, or also called online learning, did not have the time and space limitations, and therefore, made teaching and learning separable via internet-based information

delivery systems (Peia & Wub, 2019). The most significant difference between them was that online learning had a more extensive learning path and more available learning place and time (Ding, 2019).

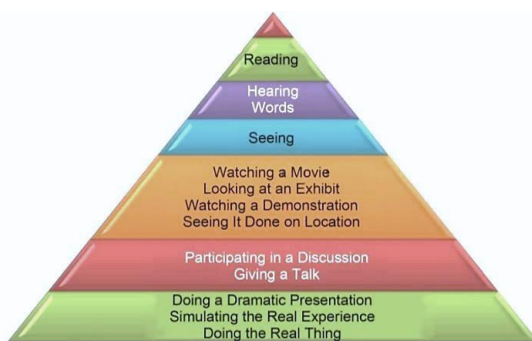
In education today, offline or face-to-face learning in the classroom is impossible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, issued Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Education in the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) Emergency Period. Besides containing the decision to cancel the 2020 national examination, article number 1 also included the suggestion of learning from home. The Minister of Education and Culture emphasized that online learning should be carried out to provide meaningful learning experiences for students without being burdened with demands to complete all curriculum achievements for class promotion and graduation. Agung et al. (2020) also stated that the pandemic of COVID-19 forced the Indonesian government through its Ministry of Education and Culture to implement policies moving conventional classrooms to online classrooms.

To prepare for the changes in the learning system, effective virtual learning media is needed. Virtual learning media or platforms provided a sustainable, high-quality educational infrastructure that encouraged participation and collaboration (Almarzooq et al., 2020). It aimed at involving the students actively in class and helping them receiving information around them quickly (Sicat, 2015). Virtual learning could be taken in various forms of media. It could be done through in-house online learning courses by using a Learning Management System (LMS) (i.e., Google Classroom, Edmodo, Schoology) or it could be done by using software in the form of a downloadable application such as WhatsApp, Zoom Cloud Meetings, Google Meeting, Telegram, and others.

Some studies had proved the effectiveness of the LMS and learning application in learning. Focusing on Google Classroom, some studies had demonstrated the effectiveness of LMS in virtual teaching and learning (Albashtawi & Al Bataineh, 2020; (Shaharane et al., 2016; Wijaya, 2020). While in other studies also evidenced the effectiveness of applications such as Zoom Cloud Meetings (Archibald et al., 2019; Dharma et al., 2017; Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020) and WhatsApp (Ahmed, 2019; Dyavarishetty & Patil, 2017; Ta'amneh, 2017) in virtual teaching and learning.

The use of the LMS and application in learning was also perceived positively by the learners. The studies by Albashtawi & Al Bataineh (2020), Shaharane et al. (2016), and Wijaya (2020) showed the positive perception of the students on the use of LMS Google Classroom in learning. Additionally, Zoom Cloud Meetings (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020; Alameri et al., 2020) and WhatsApp (Mistar & Embi, 2016; Yulianto et al., 2020) were also perceived positively by the students.

To achieve qualified learning, selecting effective learning media to facilitate a balance between concrete and abstract learning must be considered. As adapted by Shaaruddin & Mohamad (2017), Dale proposed six stages of learning, known as Dale’s cone of learning or Dale’s cone of experience, as illustrated in Picture 1.



Picture 1 Dale’s Cone of Learning (Shaaruddin & Mohamad, 2017)

The stages are started from concrete learning at the bottom of the cone and became more and more abstract as it reached the peak of the cone. However, the learning in each stage could be mixed and was interrelated that fosters more meaningful learning (Corpuz & Lucido, 2008; Corpuz & Salandanan, 2013).

Considering the demands, Discord has started to be used in some educational contexts as an alternative media in virtual learning. Discord is a voice and text chat platform usually used for games, social, class, or business groups. It is a popular platform for gamers and an influential tool to facilitate participants in the group (Lacher & Biehl, 2019). Discord has many facilities that could be used to support the learning process in a virtual class. Users could play audio and become parts of user interaction (Jiang et al., 2019). In addition, the Discord application also provides facilities to communicate with other members by entering the available channels in the group (Raihan & Putri, 2018). Therefore, some educators used this application to replace Zoom Cloud Meetings and other applications which considered to have

higher costs.

Recently, studies on the use of Discord in an educational context have been conducted (Dewantara et al., 2020; Kruglyk et al., 2020; Wulanjani, 2018). A descriptive study by Dewantara et al. (2020) specifically described the implementation of Discord application as an online learning media. Further, a survey study on the use of Discord in an online learning environment was conducted by Kruglyk et al. in 2020. The study compared the system requirements between some applications (Skype, TrueConf, and Hangouts to the Discord platform) that focused on the feasibility and features in creating a quality distance communication system in distance learning. Another study by Wulanjani (2018) investigated students' perceptions of the use of Discord in a virtual listening class. Using a closed questionnaire, she focused the perceptions on the suitability of the application, the easiness of the application, and students' enjoyment and enthusiasm in using the application in virtual listening class. The study described that most of the participants perceived positively on the use of Discord. The students felt that Discord gave more opportunities for them to be engaged and participated more actively in listening class.

Considering the studies investigated the use of Discord in virtual learning, it is pretty surprising that the learning quality was not the main focus of their study. Thus, deeper investigation into students' perception of the use of Discord in virtual English learning is needed to focus on learning quality. Further, an open-ended questionnaire followed by an in-depth interview is also required as the instruments in data collection to get a deeper understanding of the students' perceptions. Following those points, the present study investigates tertiary education students' perceptions of virtual learning using Discord application, focusing on a broader scope, not only listening skills but also more general virtual English learning. Additionally, this present study used a close-open-ended questionnaire followed by an interview to get deeper information on the perception. Based on the study's background, the research question that need to be answered in this study is:

How do the tertiary education students perceive virtual English learning using Discord application?

To be more specific, this study aimed at investigating students' perception on the use of Discord application in six stages of learning proposed by Dale (as cited in Shaaruddin & Mohamad

(2017), which included: doing a dramatic presentation, simulating the real experience, and doing the real thing, participating in a discussion and giving a talk, watching a demonstration, seeing; hearing words, and reading.

METHOD

Design

This present study implemented a qualitative research design. Specifically, this study implemented a case study since it investigated English department students' perception of virtual learning using the Discord application. Creswell (2007) stated that a case study is research in which the researcher carefully investigates a program, event, activity, process, or group of individuals. The case study itself is divided into three types (Cresswell, 2007): the single instrumental case study, the collective / multiple case studies, and the intrinsic case study. The intrinsic case study focuses on the case itself (e.g., evaluating a program, or studying a student having difficulty, et.) because the case presents an unusual or unique situation). The focus of this present study was on the perception of English department students on the use of Discord application, which was commonly used for online games, in virtual learning. This situation is considered to be unusual or unique.

Participant

The study was conducted at STKIP PGRI Jombang, East Java, Indonesia. There were five departments at STKIP PGRI Jombang included the English Department. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants who had experienced in virtual English learning by using Discord. Thus, a preliminary survey was conducted by distributing an electronic survey questionnaire. From the e-questionnaire distributed to 105 students of the English department at STKIP PGRI Jombang, East Java, Indonesia, it was found that 22% of them (24 students) experienced virtual English learning by using Discord application. However, only twenty students were willing to contribute to the study.

Instrument and Types of Data

The data in this study were the English department students' statements obtained from the questionnaire and interview that contained their positive and negative perceptions towards virtual learning by using Discord application. The items in the questionnaire and interview were

developed based on Dale's Cone of learning that had six stages of learning as the indicators for the items, which were then developed into twelve items. The indicators were: 1) The students' ability to do a dramatic presentation, simulate the real experience, and do the real thing (3 items); 2) The students' ability to participate in a discussion and give a talk (4 items); 3) The students' ability to watch a demonstration (1 item); 4) The students' ability to see (1 item); 5) The students' ability to hear words (1 item); and 6) The students' ability to read (2 items) in virtual English learning by using Discord. Two experts were involved to ensure the content validity of the instruments. Further, the language used in the instruments was also checked to ensure construct validity. Some revisions are made based on the experts' suggestions. A try out was also conducted to ensure that the instructions and questions in the instruments were understandable.

Data Collecting Technique

The data collection was done in two steps. In the first step, the data were collected using a questionnaire distributed online to twenty-four targeted participants. However, only twenty participants responded to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was in the form of close-ended questions with yes, no, and never options. The closed-ended questions were then followed by open-ended questions that provide a broader possible opportunity for the participants to provide longer answers or explain their answers in the close-ended section. The participants' answers and explanations in open-ended questions were then used as the basic information to be followed up in the interview.

Following the questionnaire, the second step in data collection was the interview. It was conducted to confirm and get deeper information related to participants' answers and explanations in the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview was done with three participants who had been chosen randomly. Since a direct interview was impossible in this pandemic era, it was done through WhatsApp's voice notes.

Data Analysis Technique

The data collected from the questionnaire and interview were analyzed in four steps: identifying, classifying, describing, and drawing a conclusion. In the first step of data analysis, the researchers identified the students' perception of virtual English learning using Discord, then classified them as positive or negative based on the theory of Irwanto (2002). The

following steps described the results of the data analysis and drew conclusions based on the analysis results. Throughout data collection and analysis, the researcher needed to ensure that the findings and interpretations were accurate (Creswell, Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating, Quantitative and Qualitative Research, fourth edition, 2012). Thus, a methodological triangulation was applied in this research by using two different data collection methods: questionnaire and interview. The model of citing is “Manual typing system with the format by typing the sources using Word Reference Manager;” (Turmudi, 2020, p. 59)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire, followed by an interview, aimed to answer the research question: how do the tertiary education students perceive virtual English learning using Discord application? The analysis focused on six stages of learning as proposed by Dale and adapted by Shaaruddin and Mohamad (2017): 1) Doing a dramatic presentation, simulating the real experience, and doing the real thing; 2) Participating in a discussion and giving a talk; 3) Watching a demonstration; 4) Seeing; 5) Hearing words; 6) Reading. The results of the data analysis are presented as follows.

Students’ Perception in the Ability to Do a Dramatic Presentation, Simulate the Real Experience, and Do the Real Thing

The questionnaire results revealed that the students tended to perceive the three items positively in the first indicator, the ability to do a dramatic presentation, simulate the real experience, and do the real thing in virtual English learning using Discord application. The summary of the findings is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Students’ Perception in the Ability to Do Presentation, Simulation, and Real Thing

Items’ number	Questions	Yes	No	Never
1	Are you able to do a presentation in English well through Discord application?	95%	5%	0%
2	Are you able to do a simulation in English well through Discord application?	70%	25%	5%

3	Are you able to do practice well according to the simulation that has been done through Discord application?	70%	25%	5%
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Based on the results of the questionnaire presented in Table 1, it was confirmed that majority of the students positively perceived the use of Discord application in their virtual English learning. They counted the benefits of using this application in doing presentation, simulation, and real thing (i.e., doing practice according to the simulation). While others perceived negatively and stated that they could not do presentation, simulation, or even real thing well using Discord in their virtual learning. On the other hand, only few stated that they had never done those activities in their virtual learning using Discord application.

From the interview result, it was figured out that Participant 1 and Participant 2 felt that Discord application was easy to use for doing presentations, simulation, and practice. Participant 2 stated that the Discord application did not have any time limitation in doing presentations like other applications (i.e., Zoom). It served as one of Discord’s advantages revealed in this study. Both participants were also able to do the simulation and practice through Discord application well. They could do the simulation from two features provided by Discord: voice room and chat room. They could listen and give direct simulation instruction by using the voice room.

Additionally, they could also read and write the instruction in the chat room, which benefited those left behind or who had poor connections during the virtual class. The voice room and chat room were also allowed them to do the practice session well. Participant 2 explained that Discord’s channel feature allowed the user to make some rooms (i.e., voice room, chat room, discussion room, and attendance room) which facilitated students to interact in many different forms.

However, participant 3 had a different argument. She indeed felt that Discord was easy to use for the three activities, but the network connection problem had become a barrier in doing those activities through Discord application. Participant 3 argued that the network connection problem might be caused by the area she lives. Asking further information, the researcher found that Participant 3 lived in a rural area where an unstable network connection. Finding a solution for her problem, Participant 3 stated that even though she had a poor connection that interrupted her in doing live simulation and practice, she could follow the activities through the chat room. Thus, Discord’s channel feature was able to facilitate the activities well.

Students’ Perception in the Ability to Participate in a Discussion and Giving a Talk

The positive response was also found in the perception of participating in the discussion and giving a talk. The indicator consisted of four detailed activities in four questionnaire items. Respectively, the activities were discussed, giving opinions, asking questions, and answering questions. Table 2 presents the summary of the finding for each of the items.

Table 2 Students’ Perception in Participating in a Discussion and Giving a Talk

Items’ number	Questions	Yes	No	Never
4	Are you able to discuss in English well through Discord application?	100%	0%	0%
5	Are you able to give opinions in English well through the Discord application?	100%	0%	0%
6	Are you able to ask questions in English well through Discord application?	100%	0%	0%
7	Are you able to answer questions in English well through Discord application?	100%	0%	0%

The result of the data analysis of the questionnaire revealed that all students (100%) perceived the activities positively in virtual English learning by using Discord application.

A more profound result from the interview informed detailed reasons of the participants’ perceptions. The participants argued that the voice room and chat room facilitated them to participate well in the discussion, give opinions, ask questions, and answer questions. They could do the activities orally through the voice room or written through the chat room. Participant 1 argued that doing the activities through Discord was cheaper than other applications since it used live voice instead of live video. Further, she explained that as Discord used live voice only, she could focus on participating in the discussion, giving opinions, and asking and answering questions without worrying about her appearance. While participant 2 and participant 3 stated that it was easy to do the activities in virtual learning by using Discord and that the rooms provided in Discord helped them do the activities well. Specified the answer; participants 2 and 3 stated that they could type their opinion, question, and answer in the chat room provided and Discord would store the discussion chat, opinions, questions, and answers well. Thus, the students could re-open the discussion chat when they forgot the material being discussed.

Students’ perception in the Ability to Watch a demonstration

The third indicator in the instrument, the ability to watch a demonstration, focused on one activity that was watching a video demonstration by using Discord application. Sixteen of twenty participants (80%) tended to perceive positively the activity as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Students' Perception in the Ability to Watch a Demonstration

Items' number	Questions	Yes	No	Never
8	Are you able to watch video demonstrations in English well through Discord application?	80%	10%	10%

The results indicated that majority of students perceived positively and counted on the benefits of using this Discord application to share, download, re-download, and watch video demonstrations during virtual English learning.

The participants explained that in virtual learning using Discord the video was shared in two ways. First, the students or lecturer directly shared the video through the chat room, or, second, they shared the link of the video in the chat room. Apart from the technique in sharing the video, the participants argued they could easily download the video from the chat room. In addition, the histories of the video or the link were well stored in the chat room that the students could download or re-download it anytime. However, the clearness of the video depended on the quality of the video itself.

Students' Perception in the Ability to See

The term seeing in the fourth indicator refers to the ability of the students to see and understand pictures, graphics, or diagrams well through Discord application. The tendency of positive perception showed by 90% of the participants (18 students) while only 10% (2 students) had a negative perception, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Students' Perception in the Ability to See

Items' number	Questions	Yes	No	Never
9	Are you able to see and understand pictures, graphics, or diagrams in English well through Discord application?	90%	10%	0%

The findings indicated that most of the participants could see and understand pictures, graphics, or diagrams well through the Discord application.

Based on the interview results, participant 1 and participant 2 argued that the pictures, graphics, and diagrams shared through Discord application could be clearly seen and well understood. Participant 1 explained that the picture in the PowerPoint presentation could be seen clearly. While participant 2 added that the quality of most of the pictures shared was reasonable and easily understood. Meanwhile, participant 3 faced problems in seeing and understanding the pictures, graphics, or diagrams when they had poor quality.

Students’ Perception in the Ability to Hear Words

Based on the questionnaire results, the students also tended to perceive positively the ability to hear words. 95% of the participants (19 students) claimed that they could hear and understand English words well in virtual English learning by using Discord application, while 5% of them (1 student) stated that they could not hear the words.

Table 5 Students’ Perception in the Ability to Hear Words

Items’ number	Questions	Yes	No	Never
10	Are you able to hear and understand English words in a live oral presentation or live oral lecturing in English well through Discord application?	95%	5%	0%

In the interview, participant 2 argued that she could understand the oral explanation of the presenter or the lecturer well in virtual learning by using Discord application. However, participant 1 and participant 3 gave slightly different responses. The interview results informed that participant 1 and participant 3 sometimes found obstacles in their network connection which affected their understanding. Participant 1 explained that the poor connection she faced was usually caused by the bad weather, such as rain and power outage. In this situation, she usually followed the lecturing and presentation through the chat room.

Students’ perception in reading

The last stage of learning, reading, referred to two activities in virtual English learning by using Discord application. The first activity was reading and understanding written material and presentation paper or slide, and the second was reading and understanding written discussion. Similar responses were given for both activities. Nineteen of twenty participants (95%) perceived positively on the activities, and 5% did not. It indicates that most participants could read and understand written material, presentation paper or slide, and written discussion

in virtual English learning by using Discord. Table 6 summarizes the findings from the questionnaire.

Table 6 Students' Perception in the Ability to Read

Items' number	Questions	Yes	No	Never
11	Are you able to read and understand the written material and presentation paper or slide well through Discord application?	95%	5%	0%
12	Are you able to read and understand written discussion well through Discord application?	95%	5%	0%

The interview revealed that participant 1, participant 2, and participant 3 agreed that they could read and understand well the written material or presentation paper or slide in the virtual class by using Discord application. They said that the material could be well accepted with a clear explanation. Participant 3 added that she also could understand the material well when the materials sent had good quality. Similar responses were also given by the three participants in the second activity. They stated that they could read and understand the written discussions easily in the chat room. Participant 3 added that she could re-read the material in written discussion repeatedly when she missed the class or forgot the material since it was well stored in Discord application

Discussion

The focus of the research was tertiary education students' perception about virtual English learning by using Discord application. Discord is an application that is popular for gamers and has the capability as an influential tool to facilitate participants in a particular group (Lacher & Biehl, 2019). Some educators use this application as a medium in online learning since it has many facilities that could support the learning process in a virtual class. The facilities include audio (i.e., music, podcast, live voice), chat columns, channels, and others (Jiang et al., 2019; Raihan & Putri, 2018). They also used it as an alternative application to replace Zoom Cloud Meetings and other applications considered to have higher costs.

Discussing the learning activities in this study, they were adapted from the six learning stages in Dale's cone of learning in Shaaruddin & Mohamad (2017). The stages are started from concrete learning which became more abstract. However, the learning in each stage could be mixed and are interrelated that fosters more meaningful learning (Corpuz & Lucido, 2008;

Corpuz & Salandanan, 2013). Thus, a balance must be achieved between concrete and abstract learning to achieve qualified learning. Referring to the six stages in Dale's cone of learning, the instruments of the study, questionnaire, and interview were developed.

The questionnaire results found that the tertiary education students tended to perceive positively (89.72%) the virtual English learning by using Discord application. The finding was in line with Wulanjani's (2018) finding that most students (94%) gave positive responses towards the Discord application in virtual listening class. To be more specific, this present study found that the students perceived positively the use of Discord in doing a dramatic presentation, simulating the real experience, and doing the real thing (78.33%); participating in discussion and giving a talk (100%); watching a demonstration (80%); seeing (90%); hearing words (95%); reading (95%). Those perceptions indicated that Discord application was suitable for virtual learning in a virtual listening class and in other classes. The results also confirmed Dewantara et al. (2020) finding that Discord application could be an alternative media in online lectures.

Gaining more information on the students' perception, an in-depth interview was conducted to confirm participant's responses to the questionnaire. From the interview results, it was revealed that the students tended to perceive the use of Discord in virtual learning positively because of some reasons. The first reason was the easiness of using the Discord application. The interview results showed that most students felt that they could easily use Discord in their virtual class. In line with Wulanjani (2018), most students in her research also felt the easiness of using Discord application. Additionally, the present analysis revealed that time limitation of usage, usually found in Zoom Meeting, was no longer a problem in virtual English learning by using Discord application.

The second was the features of Discord which established a quality environment for learning (Kruglyk et al., 2020). One of many features mentioned mainly by the students in this study was the channels in which they could make some rooms. Based on this present study's results, the rooms that the students felt helpful for their virtual learning were voice room and chat room. Referring to the results of the interview, it was revealed that the voice room facilitated the students in doing a dramatic presentation, simulating the real experience, and doing the real thing, participating in a discussion and giving a talk, and hearing words in live oral presentation and live oral lecturing. While the chat room also facilitated the students in all

activities in virtual learning. To be more specific, the chat room enabled them to watch a demonstration, see and understand pictures, graphics, or diagrams, and read written material and presentation papers or slides. The chat room also helped them covering network connection problems when they do live oral presentations, simulations, practices, discussions, and talks.

The tendency of this study participants to use the voice room, chat room, and the combination between the voice room and chat room were similar to the finding of Dewantara et al. (2020). The usefulness of the voice room and chat room found in this study confirmed Kruglyk et al. (2020) finding that the students could adopt the new system as a quality application to create conditions in the voice room and chat synchronous room communication with lecturers. Besides that usefulness, the results of this study also revealed other advantages of Discord. That was well-stored chat and data so that the students could re-read the materials or discussion in the chat room.

The third reason students positively perceived the use of Discord application was that they could directly share the audio, video, presentation, materials, and pictures in Discord application. This finding was in line with Dewantara et al. (2020), who underlined the easiness of sharing files. Besides the ease of sharing files, it was also revealed that the ease of re-downloading the files was another advantage felt by the students in the virtual learning using Discord application. In this way, the students could re-download the file anytime when they needed to download it.

The last reason found in this research was that Discord is cheaper than other applications. Most of the students stated that Discord was more affordable than other applications because it used live voice instead of live video. Thus, it needed fewer loads on the system and consumed fewer data used. Kryglyk et al. (2020) stated that Discord required much less load and worked with almost all operating systems.

However, as the finding of Wulanjani (2018) mentioned network connection as the problem students face in using Discord application, the problem was also found in this study. Based on the students' answers in the interview, the network connection problem was caused mainly by the bad weather, such as rain and the power outage.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Answering the problem statement, this study found that most tertiary education students

positively perceived virtual English learning by using Discord application. The study also revealed some advantages of virtual English learning by using Discord application. The benefits are the easiness on the way of using the application, the easiness of joining the class, the unlimited time usage, the helpful features that facilitate the virtual learning, well-stored history, the opportunity to re-read the materials or discussion in the chat room, the easiness in sharing many forms of files, the easiness in re-download the files, and the cheaper cost. However, it was also found that network connection was a problem usually faced by students as the disadvantage of virtual learning by using Discord. The network connection problem was mainly caused by the bad weather, such as rain and power outages. Based on the results of this study, it is suggested to the teachers and lecturers to use Discord application as one of the media in virtual English learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and afterwards.

BIO-PROFILE:

Evi Isfiatul Jannah is an undergraduate English language teaching department student at STKIP PGRI Jombang, East Java. She is actively involved in some students' organizations, such as UKM Karawitan Puspita Laras and English Students Association. Corresponding e-mail: evi.isfiatul.jannah@gmail.com

Daning Hentasmaka is a lecturer of the English language teaching department at STKIP PGRI Jombang, East Java. She is an active researcher who has published some research-based articles in national and international journals. She is currently a reviewer at a nationally accredited journal. Her research interests are in English language teaching and applied linguistics. Corresponding e-mail: d.hentasmaka@gmail.com

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