AN EXPLORATION OF STUDENTS’ ENGAGEMENT IN EFL ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS

by

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Abstract:

Students’ engagement is an ongoing concern for educators because of its positive association with deep learning, educational purpose, and educational outcomes. This study aims to reveal the students’ engagement and explore the factors of students’ engagement in EFL asynchronous classes. This research was qualitative design with a case study approach. The participants of this study were 35 ten-graders students in one of the senior high schools in Majalengka. Surveys and interviews were used to gain the data from the participants. The survey was conducted on 35 ten-graders and mainly focused on their engagement during the asynchronous class and their reasons for being to or not engaging with the lessons. Meanwhile, factors that influenced their engagement in the asynchronous class were elaborated using the interview. The result showed that students gave positive responses in students engagement on cognitive and behavioral engagement; most of the students, both high and middle achievers, always followed the teacher’s instructions and sometimes gave opinions/ideas. The most prominent factors that influence students’ engagement are teacher factors; among them are exciting teaching methods and teachers’ characteristics. This study suggests that teachers need a variety of methods in which to use online platforms and conduct more creative activities to get the best learning outcomes.

Keywords: Asynchronous Learning, EFL Class, Students’ Engagement.

Abstrak:


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menunjukkan bahwa siswa memberikan respon positif dalam keterlibatan siswa pada keterlibatan kognitif dan perilaku; Sebagian besar siswa, baik yang berprestasi tinggi maupun menengah, selalu mengikuti instruksi guru dan terkadang memberikan pendapat/ide. Faktor yang paling menonjol yang mempengaruhi keterlibatan siswa adalah faktor guru; Diantaranya adalah metode pengajaran yang menarik dan karakteristik guru. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa guru membutuhkan berbagai metode untuk menggunakan platform online dan melakukan kegiatan yang lebih kreatif untuk mendapatkan hasil belajar terbaik.

*Kata kunci: Kelas EFL; Keterlibatan Siswa; Pembelajaran Asinkron*

**INTRODUCTION**

Student engagement has been identified in a number of studies as one of the most critical components in promoting effective learning, desirable outcomes as well as students’ achievement (Brallier, 2020; Bundick et al., 2014; Crowley, 2017; Delfino, 2019; Ginting, 2021; Turmudi & Ratini, 2022). Fredricks et al., (2004) stated that student engagement can be divided into three categories: emotional engagement: reactions to teachers and classmates (it is can be a positive or negative reaction), behavioural engagement: engaged in class/discussion (paying attention and so on), and cognitive engagement: students are willing to put in the effort needed, or even more than needed to achieve it understand material or mastery of an ability.

Meanwhile, the advancement of technology has made a massive impact on education (Budhwar, 2017; Hu, 2017; Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). It results in shifts in an innovative learning environment (Nethra, 2019) that will prepare students to compete in a fast-paced century (Budhwar, 2017; Hew & Brush, 2007; Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). The use of technology in learning environment was increasingly widespread during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to online learning being enforced (Yarrow et al., 2020).

Online learning is divided into three types: synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid. Synchronous learning requires both students and teachers to be present at the same time to conduct learning (Perveen, 2016; Salmon, 2013), while asynchronous activities are not time-limited and allow students to complete assignments at a pace that suits them (Perveen, 2016). Hybrid online combines synchronous meetings with a number of asynchronous activities (Perveen, 2016). Asynchronous learning promotes self-directed and student-centered learning (Murphy et al., 2011), scaffolds prior knowledge (Lin et al., 2012), allows for more in-depth
discussion (Huang & Hsiao, 2012), and provides flexibility to access readily available material at any time and from any location (Perveen, 2016). Based on Swan (2001), the asynchronous learning process provides satisfaction in terms of design clarity, engagement with the teacher, and active student debate. It also reduces insecurity and anxiety by enabling students to respond more creatively and innovatively and giving them adequate time to conduct e-activities (Perveen, 2016). However, asynchronous learning has drawbacks, including making it difficult to keep students engaged in lessons without a clear plan (Perveen, 2016), bringing a barrier between students and teachers (Byrd, 2016), and raising concerns about student-teacher interaction and its potential to affect students’ engagement (Hew et al., 2010). Yet, number of research (Kelly & Lock, 2021; Northey et al., 2015; Susanti, 2020) have shown that asynchronous learning may increase student engagement in learning.

As a result of the emergence of online learning, studies on student engagement in online learning have become more popular (Fadhilah et al., 2021; Hariadi & Simanjuntak, 2020; Hollister et al., 2022; Suharti et al., 2021; Susanti, 2020; Turmudi & Ratini, 2022; Yuyun, 2023) and produce various findings. A study finds that English online learning using various platforms in vocational schools strengthens the EFL students’ behaviour, emotion, involvement, and cognition engagement (Suharti et al., 2021). The same outcomes are seen at the university level, by looking the same elements of engagement, Yuyun (2023) reveals that EFL student engagement in online learning has different levels of significance, and most students are more involved in synchronous online activities due to their ability to interact with professors and peers in real time. In the same level, Turmudi and Ratini (2022) discover that with access to advanced technology, students continue to engage as well as succeed at their best levels in their studies. Still with the same analysis elements, Susanti’s (2020) study found that students' engagement during online class was high in all three aspects, cognitive, emotional and behavioural. However, in certain sub categories, such as cognitive engagement, they had difficulty communicating their ideas, previewing activities, getting the correct answer and completing the task. Northey et al., (2015) revealed that students participated in asynchronous learning were more engaged than students who only attended face-to-face classes. In addition, that participation in the asynchronous setting relates significantly and positively to students’ academic outcomes (final grades).
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Motivation, attention, engagement, and intellectual effort (Major, 2015); attitudes, personality, drive, effort, and self-confidence (Gray & DiLoreto, 2016); interaction, motivation, effort, engagement, active learning, and time commitment (Kuh, 2003; Robinson & Mackey, 2008) are factors which affect students engagement. Ginting (2021) divided the factors into: student motivation, attentiveness, interest and self-regulated; engagement and active learning; as well as level of academic challenge and intellectual efforts.

Yet, students' limited engagement in online learning can also be seen in their inability to stay connected with peers and teachers while simultaneously managing the speed of the course. A research discovered that student engagement in online classes was high in all three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural (Hollister et al., 2022). Additionally, Hariadi and Simanjuntak's (2020) research find that student engagement in asynchronous classes is less visible due to challenges such as difficult interactions, deadlines and network connectivity, which are influenced by the English teacher method in teaching and EFL students learn.

Previous studies have found that most research has been conducted at the university level, with limited research at the secondary education level. Most studies only investigate student engagement in online learning in general, and few examine synchronous or asynchronous learning. The factors that influence student involvement in online learning are still limited. To elaborate more about the issues student engagement in the asynchronous learning process, research needs to be conducted. Moreover, it is important to know what factors affecting students in order to get involve in asynchronous class activities to achieve the educational purpose. So, to find out deeply about factors influence student less engagement, this current research tries to seek the depiction of students’ engagement in asynchronous in EFL class based on Fredricks et al., (2004) and to reveal what factors influence their engagement.

In this study, student engagement refers to students' active involvement and dedication to achieving learning goals (Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004) as indicated by how attentive, involved, interested, passionate, and motivated they are to be successful in learning (Ginting, 2021).

Upon all the study seeks answers under the following research questions:

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http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0
1. What is the students’ engagement types in EFL asynchronous classes?

2. What are the factors of students’ engagement in EFL asynchronous classes?

**METHOD**

**Design**

This research was a qualitative case study since it was comparable to collecting the data from the students regardless to their engagement during EFL asynchronous class. According to Crowe et al., (2011,p. 1) “case study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context”. Therefore, case study design is considered more appropriate to be used in this study since it is used to explain, describe or explore events or phenomena of everyday context in which they occur (Llewelyn, 1992).

**Participant**

This research was conducted at one of the secondary schools in Majalengka. The participants were 35 students of ten-grader consists of 21 females and 14 males. The participants were chosen based on the purposive sampling technique.

**Instrument**

A survey and interview were used to collect the data. The survey consists of 15 questions which mainly asked about how students engage in asynchronous class as well as the factors influence their engagement. The interview was conducted to explore more about the factors affecting students’ engagement in the class. The interview was in Bahasa and it was asked to six (6) students as class representatives.

**Data collecting technique**

The data of this research was gained through survey and interview. The survey is distributed to 35 students of ten-grader. The students were asked to fill the frequency list of their involvement in asynchronous class. This is done to find out the students’ engagement percentage during the learning process. Meanwhile the interview was conducted to 6 students to reveal the factors affecting their engagement in the class.
Data analysis technique

Data analysis involves collecting all gathered data and developing a study from the information supplied by participants. The analysis data in this research was based on a scholar (Creswell, 2014). Creswell mentioned that there are six steps to analyzing qualitative data: (1) Organize and prepare the data, (2) read through all the data, (3) Begin detailed analysis with a coding process, (4) generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis, (5) advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative, and (6) making an interpretation or meaning of the data. Along with this analysis data, the citing system employs APA Style 7th edition with aid of Offline citation system of Mendeley Desktop (Turmudi, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The data description in this part is collected from a survey and interview to answer the research questions: 1) How is the students’ engagement in EFL asynchronous class? 2) What factors influence the students’ engagement in EFL asynchronous class? 35 students participated in filling the survey and 6 students joined in the interview section.

Students’ engagement in EFL asynchronous class

The data of students’ engagement in EFL asynchronous class was gained from interviews and surveys. The type of engagement that the students showed were: cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement and emotional engagement.

1. Cognitive engagement

The first statement in the survey was concerning students' participation in expressing their opinions or ideas in English. According to the survey results, the majority of the students agreed with the statement. The majority of students (77%) answered that they sometimes share their thoughts or ideas in English class. The findings of the analysis are shown in the graph below.
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Figure 1 Opinion or idea in English learning (statement 1)

The graph above shows that 77% of students said that expressing their thoughts and ideas in English kept them always engaged in their studies. This demonstrates that even if it's asynchronous, students may still express themselves more freely.

The second survey question focused on how well students responded to questions in English during asynchronous learning. According to the survey's findings, the majority of participants (57%) sometimes responded to questions in English. While just 31% of students consistently respond to questions in English. Only a small minority (12%) of participants, however, never responded to questions in English. According to the survey, the majority of the pupils sometimes responded to questions in English. Even though a large number of students claimed to sometimes respond to questions in English, it is clear that student participation in asynchronous learning was still high when contrasted to survey findings that revealed a small percentage of students who did not engage at all.

Majority of the participants responded to the third statement about students' engagement in asking questions in order to acquire additional information. Eighty percent of students sometimes ask a question to learn more. However, a small percentage of participants (11%) always ask for further information, while a smaller percentage of participants (9%) never do. Therefore, it might be inferred that the majority of students do so sometimes.

The findings indicate that students are engaged in actively seeking out the knowledge they need. This means that a very high level of cognitive engagement is shown by student participation. The results were supported by the data obtained from the interview. Based on
the interview, it was perceived that students gave quite positively responses in cognitive engagement in EFL asynchronous class.

According to the aforementioned survey and interview data, it was also discovered that students who were highly engaged tended to respond favorably. Low achievers and middle achievers, however, did not respond well. They admitted in interviews that they lacked some skills and lacked the confidence to express thoughts or ideas.

2. Behavioral engagement

Based on the survey on behavioral engagement, the majority of pupils provided positive feedback. The first survey question asked participants about their involvement in turning in assignments on time. The majority of students chose always (60%) and sometimes (40%). Thus, it can be said that all students consistently submit their assignments on time. 15 students sometimes submit their assignments on time, whereas 20 students always do so. The results of the analysis can be seen in the following graph.

![Chart 4](image-url)

**Figure 4 submitting assignments on time (statement 4)**

Almost all students stated that they always (94%) or sometimes (6%) follow directions from their teacher. Consequently, it can be said that every student always pays attention to what their teachers are telling them. As a result, up to 33 students consistently obey their teachers' instructions, while just 2 students do so irregularly.

The next survey question asked about students' attention throughout the learning process. Nearly 54% of students responded "always," while the remaining 46% chose "sometimes." Thus, it can be said that all students consistently pay attention while they are
studying. 19 students pay attention during class all the time, whereas 16 students do so on occasion.

The findings from participant interviews provide support for the survey results. The findings of the interviews indicate that most students pay attention and obey to the teacher's instructions during asynchronous learning.

Based on the findings of the aforementioned questionnaire and interview, all students responded favorably to their participation in behavioral engagement. This is consistent with Fredricks et al. (2004) and who said that behavioral engagement is crucial for achieving good academic achievements and preventing dropout. This leads to the conclusion that students participate in good behavior.

3. Emotional engagement

Based on the survey results regarding to the statement on emotional engagement, most students gave lack positive responses. The data shows relevant to the results:

According to the survey statement on students' uncommunicative participation throughout the learning process, most students (68%) are sometimes uncommunicative and others (20%) are always uncommunicative. Some students, however, were never (12%) uncommunicative throughout the class. As a result, it can be stated that students are often uncommunicative during asynchronous learning. The results of the analysis can be seen in the following graph.

In response to a survey on student participation in discussions, the majority of students (77%) participate in discussions sometimes, while 17% participate in discussions constantly.
However, a small percentage of students (9%) said that they had never participated in a discussion. As a result, it can be concluded that students sometimes participate in discussions.

The findings of the following survey question about students' excitement for challenges with learning English are as follows. Up to 71% of students said that they sometimes get excited about challenges with learning, while 20% of students said they usually get excited about learning English-related challenges. However, as many as 9% of students lacked motivation to complete the assignment. Thus, it may be inferred that occasionally, students are excited about the challenges that their teachers provide them with throughout the learning process.

The survey results are supported by the data from the interview which showed that students sometimes engage with the challenge provided by their teachers. Based on the survey and interview results above, students’ emotional engagement was highly positive.

The factors that influence students’ engagement in EFL asynchronous class

Interview and survey were used to gather the data in order to determine what factors affect the students’ engagement in asynchronous EFL classes. Based on the interview and survey results, students' willingness to participate in asynchronous learning was influenced by their personalities, the teaching and learning process, and their academic level.

1. Motivation, attentiveness, interest and self-regulated factor

Based on the survey, it was found that students affected with their motivation in learning. They felt difficult to focus on learning process. The majority of students—up to 94%—are at least motivated to study, according to survey data on this topic. However, only 3% of students show high levels of motivation, while the other 3% are unmotivated to learn.
Figure 10 I felt difficult to focus on the learning process (statement 10)

Other results from the survey, however, indicate that students’ attentiveness to learning is insufficient. This result showed a lack of enthusiasm for the instructional strategies used in asynchronous classes by teachers. Additionally, students struggle more with self-regulation while working on asynchronous activities. Another set of data indicated that students might be motivated if they supported each other with motivation. 60% of students frequently support their peers, whereas 40% sometimes provide some assistance.

2. Engagement and active learning factors

The findings from the survey indicate some students are enthusiastically engaged in learning. Due to a variety of reasons, including lack of enthusiasm to learn English, shyness, and lack of confidence, the others are not as actively participating. Furthermore, 52% of students felt anxious about getting negative feedback from their peers, and 28% of them sometimes faced anxiety. 20% never worried about receiving negative feedback from their peers. The results of the analysis can be seen in the following graph. Meanwhile, the teaching method applied by the teacher has an impact on how engaged the students are in their studies. When the teacher adopts an engaging strategy, up to 54% of the pupils are actively engaged. 6% of students are never active learners, compared to 38% who are sometimes engaged. Therefore, it can be said that a teacher's method of teaching can motivate students to participate actively in the learning process.

3. Level of academic challenge and intellectual efforts

When it comes to intellectual work, students struggle with learning tasks like reading, writing, and getting ready for assignments or tests. However, since they have more time to prepare in an asynchronous setting, students are more likely to participate in class. Up to 77% of students recognize that when they have to participate in discussions or present their work in synchronous classrooms, they are more prepared. This is because the preparation of the substance requires more time. While the remaining 26% said that they were not much impacted by the amount of time provided.

Discussion
This research aims to provide light on student engagement in EFL classrooms and the factors that affect their engagement in asynchronous learning. Finding out how student engagement in asynchronous learning is the first objective.

Students in this study showed cognitive engagement by being able to: 1) express and share their thoughts, ideas, as well as opinion; 2) express themselves freely; and, 3) reply to teacher questions and ask questions to discover information.

The findings of the research indicate that students engaged in asynchronous learning cognitively. The obtained data stresses that students’ cognitive engagement is relatively high, particularly since the students show a great desire to improve their academic and learning skills as well as knowledge (Fredricks et al., 2004). This is shown by the responses to the survey, which showed that many students provided opinions and thoughts in response to the teacher's questions (Redmond et al., 2018). They often share information and points of view regarding the subject matter being studied as well as ask questions about it (Redmond et al., 2018). They engage in these cognitively demanding tasks by engaging in more in-depth learning activities (Delfino, 2019; Kennedy, 2020) including reading online articles, watching the news, and reading books. This indicates that students are looking for strategies to learn about the subject (Ginting, 2021; Hu, 2017).

Some students were also given the task of participating in asynchronous learning by researching online sources to improve their assignments. To fulfill their asynchronous tasks, they self-regulate. It may be said that students are attempting to learn to master new skills (Ginting, 2021), such developing ICT competence and reading skill, especially reading online material.

Additionally, cognitive engagement is not only apparent in the mental process but also in the collaborative tasks that students participate in with one another, such as interactions, participation, and others (Galikyan & Admiraal, 2019). Based on the findings of the surveys and interviews conducted for this research, it can be concluded that students participate in asynchronous activities through discussing to their friends and collaborating in groups.

The findings of this research support what Fredrick et al. (2004) said about cognitive engagement, which involves a psychological investment in learning and mastery of material.
By making various efforts to keep up with the class and developing a desire to master the material even during the COVID-19 emergency, the participants in this study decided to be consciously engaged in learning. The findings of this research support what Fredrick et al. (2004) said about cognitive engagement, which involves a psychological investment in learning and mastery of material. By making various efforts to keep up with the class and developing a desire to master the material even during the COVID-19 emergency, the participants in this study decided to be consciously engaged in learning. Many students take their participation seriously, despite the fact that not all of them do.

Some students express an eagerness for challenges, particularly when given projects or other similar assignments (Delfino, 2019). Their excitement for completing the project serves as clear evidence of this. However, they are still relatively ineffective at applying metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's ideas into practice. However, they are able to openly express their opinions and their thoughts on the opinions of their friends. In light of these results, it may thus be concluded that students have the ability to self-regulate in order to actively engage in the asynchronous learning process.

Behavioral engagement means talking about student participation in the learning process. This engagement can be in the form of positive behavior or negative behavior. In this study, the results of surveys and interviews revealed that the engagement shown by students in the asynchronous learning process was a positive behavior. Firstly, students doing activities in class including assignments and submitting them according to a predetermined time. This is in accordance with what was revealed by Fredericks et al. (2004) where the domain of concern in behavioral engagement is student conduct in class, student participation in school-related activities, and student interest in their academic tasks. By being interested in academic tasks, it means that students show engagement in learning so that it will affect student achievement in learning (Fredericks et al., 2004).

Based on Kennedy (2020), students' attitudes about participating in action tasks like clicking, navigating, publishing, and scrolling have something to do with behavioral engagement. Even though the study's results did not state that students engaged in these additional activities outside submitting assignments, it was assumed that they did so in order
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to discover the material they desire to learn by clicking buttons, accessing sites, and scrolling the mouse.

Additionally, when students express strong cognitive engagement, it is possible to conclude that they are actively engaged in behavioral engagement (Hu, 2017). Based on the results of the study, students show strong cognitive engagement as well as high behavioral engagement. However, there is an argument that student engagement indicates interest in learning and academic work, such as perversion, focus, attention, asking questions, and active participation in class discussions (Buelow et al., 2018; Fredricks et al., 2004; Ginting, 2021; Hollister et al., 2022). Therefore, Hu and Li's statement that students who participate in cognitive engagement are likewise engaged in behavioral engagement is reliable. This study shows that students participate almost 54% in the learning activities.

Meanwhile, in relation to emotional engagement, in this study, based on the interview, students stated that emotionally, they felt less connected to their teachers and classmates due to their absence from the real world. Thus, the sense of belonging to the school, class, friends, and other education personnel is less visible. In fact, they said they didn't know their juniors or some of the teachers who were currently teaching. This is very reasonable because, after all, asynchronous learning is carried out without the presence of the teacher or students at the same time. Therefore, emotional engagement in the asynchronous EFL class is not clearly visible.

Students showed negative engagement in terms of communication. As many as 68% of students do not communicate actively in this asynchronous class and are less interested in facing challenges in class so they are not motivated to complete assignments. Delfino (2019) lists a number of markers of emotional engagement, including collaborating on projects with other students, taking part in a project for the community, really desiring to understand the material, etc. According to these indicators, the engagement indicator, which is participation, has signs that are essentially identical to those of cognitive engagement and behavioral engagement. Therefore, it can be claimed that the three different forms of engagement are connected to one another. Due to their physical separation in this research, the students' engagement in asynchronous learning was, however, less apparent to them. Communication through various communication platforms is different from face-to-face communication.
This happens because it is influenced by several factors, namely, lack of motivation, lack of attention and interest in the material and the lack of self-regulation of students so that students are less able to manage study time. Several of these factors support the theory of Ginting (2021) which states that motivation, attentiveness, interest and self-regulation affect student engagement in online learning. Apart from the negative emotional engagement shown by students, in this study it has been proven that in online learning, emotional engagement can be seen as stated by Fredericks et al. (2004).

Cognitive and behavioral engagement are impacted by emotional engagement (Brallier, 2020). In this study, students showed less emotional engagement. However, in some ways, this research also supports relevance to a prior study by Susanti (2020), which claimed that students' emotional and cognitive involvement was not generally positive. It would thus be important for teachers to consider strategies that could make learning emotionally engaging for students.

In conclusion, this study contributes support to Huang and Hsiao's (2012) and Swan (2001) statement that asynchronous activities provide opportunity for more in-depth discussions with peer groups as seen by the students' enthusiastic engagement in class discussions, interaction with teachers and actively engage in other learning activities. In addition, students felt less anxiety in giving their opinions and thoughts (Susanti, 2020) since they did not have to share their ideas directly to their peers and teachers. Additional data indicates that students seem to be more prepared while preparing for class. It can be said that asynchronous learning gives students opportunity to prepare themselves in expressing opinions, doing their tasks and planning their answers to the problems given. This confirms Perveen's (2016) claim that asynchronous classrooms provide students enough time to carry out online exercises.

From the engagement indicators shown by students in this study, it can be revealed that the existing engagement is influenced by several factors. In general, low interaction and relationships between teachers and learners, as well as students and other students, are the key elements impacting student engagement. Other variables that influence student engagement in asynchronous learning involve students getting bored with the same and repetitive technique of delivering content and tasks, which causes them to be less passionate about completing
assignments. Furthermore, there is a lack of digital tools and internet connections. This may be attributed to family and school-related variables. Families without facilities and infrastructure, as well as schools that are unable to offer these facilities. To ensure that students can participate in asynchronous learning, teachers and schools should pay special attention to these aspects.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

There are three kinds of students’ engagement found in asynchronous class of English. They are: first, cognitive engagement which consists of expressing opinion/idea in English, responding questions and asking a question to get more information. Second, behavioural engagement among them submits an assignment on time and follow teacher instructions. Lastly, emotional engagement including actively engaged in the discussion and enthusiasm for challenges in English learning.

Among all factors that was investigated, the factor that most influenced the students to engage were students’ motivation, attentiveness, interest and self-regulated. Additionally, teachers’ method in teaching became the main point to make students engage in asynchronous learning. Interesting and well-design materials and assignments affected students actively engage in the class.

Limitation

This study was conducted in one site of secondary school. It is better for the next researcher to collect the data from several schools which can be as representative from various cities or provinces. Thus, the result of the study cannot be generalized. In addition, it will be interesting to dig from various data sources such as teacher’s and/or institution’s point of view.

Implication

The future researcher can try to investigate the ways of the teacher to make their students to more confident and actively engaged in learning activities, especially in asynchronous learning.
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