The Students' Obstacle on Synchronous LMS School – Online English Learning During Pandemic

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Abstract. In this pandemic, learning materials in 21st-century education are the main obstacles to improving students' quality. The government program followed up that schools were encouraged to hold online classes. The new situation poses severalonline learning challenges that do not always provide excitement for students whenthey have to adjust to the pace of learning. Online learning facilitates interactionbetween teachers and students to conduct language learning in real-time andinteractively through online digital platforms such as video, voice calls, andcommunication via WhatsApp to deliver the material. In addition, speaking andlearning strategies on study English as a foreign language for students to activelyparticipate in class. Therefore, the expectations of both students and teachersregarding whether online synchronous classes are effectively implemented or not have not been sufficiently fulfilled. The researcher seeks to investigate the possiblechallenges in synchronous-online English learning according to students' perceptions. Researchers conducted a survey using observations, questionnaires,and interviews to collect data. Several participants were interviewed on students. The challenge consists of three major problems: technical challenges, situationalchallenges, and language anxiety. During the home learning strategies program,students revealed that they had different abilities to take online courses simultaneously due to their background and previous experience. However, most students have a desire to maintain strategies to improve their online learning strategies performance and to cope with changing situations. Similarly, the threegrand strategies for dealing with their challenges include self-control, externalcontrol, and academic strategies. In addition, most students prefer to haveasynchronous online classes over synchronous classes because of their flexibility.

Keywords: Synchronous – online learning, online learning challenges, learning strategies

INTRODUCTION

The world is currently facing an education crisis because Covid-19 has spread globally. In addition, online classes have become a necessity for students during the Covid 19 pandemic. The world of education is currently getting a precious experience, the usual educational processcentered in a building called a school, with the social distancing of Covid-19, the learning process has finally moved into student homes based on internet connections or the Republic ofIndonesia Television Channel. (TVRI). Learning English in modern learning is different fromface-to-face learning. Teachers struggle to manage the online classroom since

they are not accustomed to using it in a usual manner (Cahyadi et al., 2021). In accordance with the times, the classroom is no longer the only place where students and teachers meet with their learning process. In today's distance learning, teachers can deliver material and students can access explanations without having to meet in class physically. Online learning facilitates interaction between teachers and students to conduct language learning in real-time and interactively through online digital platforms such as video, voice calls, and communication via WhatsApp to deliver the material. This event is very rare amid the Covid-19 outbreak, where the student learning process will at least be fully accompanied by parents who are probably mostly doing work from home. This condition due to Covid-19 provides an opportunity for parents to be directly involved in the learning at home(Masrul, 2020). Therefore, the implication is that the learning process becomes distance learning. Here a momentum comes to the surface because parents will meet with their basic obligations again as the main educators and those in charge of the educational process of their children.
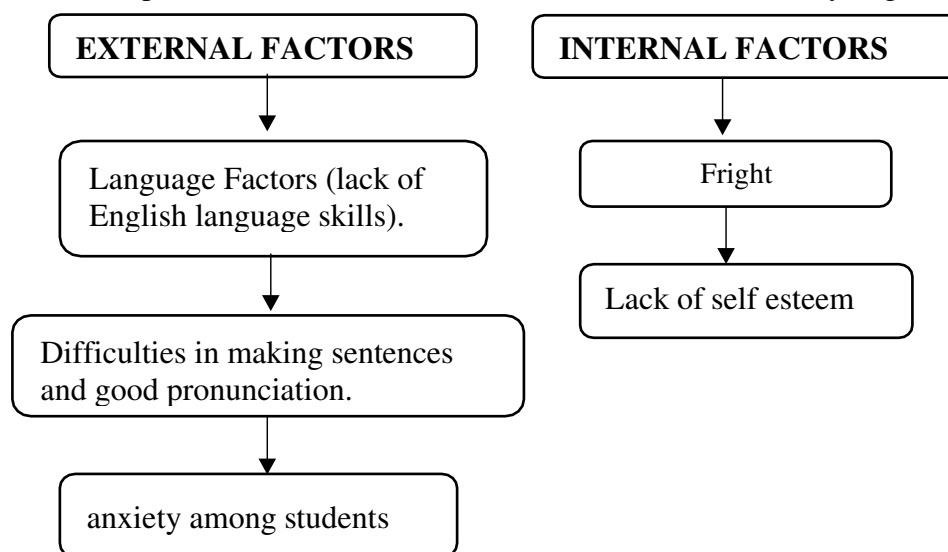
In this case it has challenged students and teachers to apply teaching and learning methods that are appropriate to distance learning situations. A teacher must discover the best approach to cope with obstacles to students' enthusiasm in studying English as a foreign language (Farah et al., 2021). During the home learning program, teachers can interact in real-time and actively with students by only sending learning materials through online learning platforms. Teachers commonly use some of the platforms to conduct real-time teaching are online video meetings, such as Zoom or Google Meet. In addition, online learning platforms support synchronous learning because teachers and students can follow the learning process. Synchronous online video teachers and student interactions have better communication and response (Mouton, 2020). In addition, students can get explanations delivered by teachers and friends through the learning platform. In online learning, especially during this pandemic, it does not always make students eager to learn. Judging from a student's experience, most of the students try to take part in online learning. According to Dhawan (2020), online learning has not been implemented effectively because students are not ready to balance study, work, and family. Therefore, Flaherty (2020) added that most students did not adapt to distance learning well. Moreover, the same situation also occurs in Indonesia as argued by Angdhiri (2020) who stated that learning from home programs is more stressful than face- to-face learning. Therefore, teachers need additional support to address some technical problems and instructional objectives compared to classroom performances. These challenges, students must come up with strategies to survive with current conditions. Learning strategies are very important because the language learning anxiety that students face in online settings is different from the challenges found in face-to-face meetings. Therefore, this study tries to find out the challenges of students in having a synchronous-learning mode during online classes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The world is currently facing an education crisis because Covid-19 has spread globally. In addition, online classes have become a necessity for students during the Covid 19 pandemic. The world of education is currently getting a precious experience, the usual educational process centered in a building called a school, with the social distancing of Covid-19, the learning process has finally moved into student homes based on internet connections or the

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The online learning challenges faced by students in learning English are caused by several reasons. According to Young (1991) stated that the personal challenges of an online learner in general can be categorized into six main factors consisting of interpersonal and personal anxiety, students' perceptions of learning foreign languages, classroom procedures, teaching methods, teachers' perceptions of language teaching, and language tests. Some students revealed that they are well aware of the difficulties in online learning. There are two types of factors discussed to provide an overview and become indicators in analyzing challenges

| EXTERNAL FACTORS	INTERNAL FACTORS
↓	↓
Language Factors (lack of English language skills).	Fright
↓	↓
Difficulties in making sentences and good pronunciation.	Lack of self esteem
↓	
anxiety among students	

based on the root causes. The first is external factors that come from language difficulties and students' environment when they do oral communication. Second, internal factors that arise from the students themselves. The following are external and internal factors.

Figure
External and internal factors in online learning

The pandemic has urged all circles to seek breakthroughs in dealing with the new normal situation, including students in the learning process. According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are defined as certain actions taken by learners to make the learning process more enjoyable, easier, effective, independent, and more adapted to the new learning process. Learning strategies can help students to increase their desire to follow the learning process effectively. An example of students' strategies to overcome their language anxiety has been revealed by Kondo & Ying-Ling (2004) in their research that there are five cluster solutions to overcome language anxiety related to "preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation." Students face the dual challenge of overcoming their anxiety in both language learning and online courses during the pandemic. Therefore, students are urged to find their best way to deal with the situation. Tanveer (2007) suggested that reducing student anxiety can be done by making the learning environment less formal and more pleasant to calm students down. Nurunnabi et al. (2020) found that student learning strategies to cope with pandemic situations cannot be short-term. There may be a long-time frame starting with seeking social support, managing negative thoughts, and connecting with mental health services.

The concern of the first research question is the challenges of students in synchronous- online English learning. To answer the first research question, the researcher uses the distance learning theory from Ribeiro (2020) and the four-issue theory related to online learning challenges by Kebritchi et al. (2017), including expectations and readiness identity, and student participation. The researcher also relates the theory of foreign language anxiety by Horwitz et al. (1989) and Young (1991) combined with recent research by Oteir & Otaibi (2019) and Rajitha et al. (2019) as a rubric to find out the factors and indicators of students' foreign language anxiety as one of the challenges in synchronous-online English learning. As stated in the theoretical description, the researcher also uses the theory about synchronous online learning by Hrastinski (2008) and Hughes (2014) to provide background knowledge to focus on online-synchronous learning modes.

The second research question focuses on students' strategies for overcoming the challenges of synchronous-online English learning. To precede the analysis of the second research problem, the researcher provides several theories related to the factors that influence students' challenges in online language learning to understand the causes of anxiety to be overcome. To answer the second research question, the researcher uses several theories of learning strategies in the context of a pandemic by Oxford (1990), Kondo & Ying-Ling (2004), and Nurunnabi et al. (2020) to find out students' strategies to overcome their challenges in both foreign language anxiety and online learning. The theories include a five-cluster solution for analyzing student challenges.
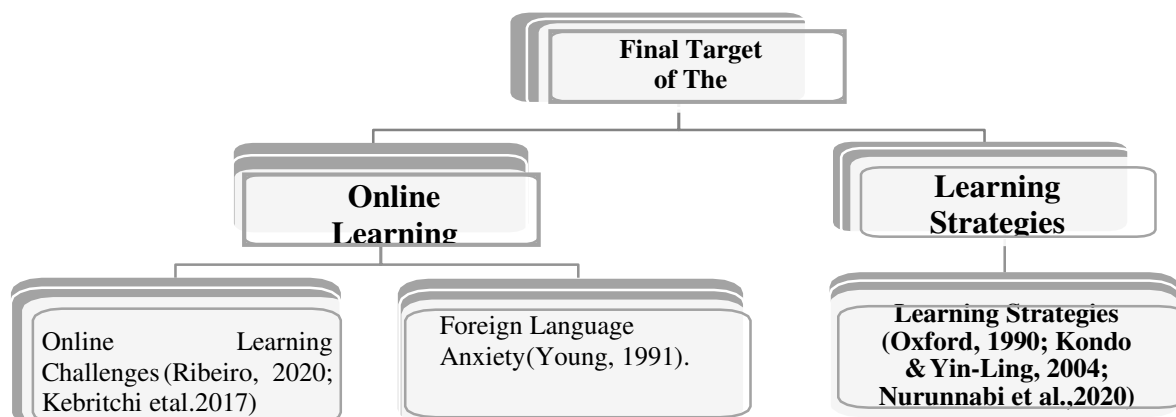
Figure 2.2

Theoretical Framework on Research

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is a survey. Researchers use quantitative and qualitative data to solve research problems. The researcher collects qualitative and quantitative data at the same time to confirm the formulated research problem and to support any evidence collected. First, the quantitative research in this study focuses on collecting numerical data from a large number of people using questions and responses as instruments. In addition, qualitative research focuses on students' experiences and their perspectives related to the subject matter. The reason the researcher uses the analysis of this research method is to get more detailed and in-depth information related to the research problem. In conducting this research, the researcher made observations, distributed open questionnaires, and conducted online interviews as data collection techniques.

This research was conducted at SMP Strada Bhkti Wiyata Bekasi, Jawa Barat in the Academic Year of 2021/2022. The implementation of the research was carried out from Januari until Juni 2022. Based on the instruction from the government, all process of teaching and learning was conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the situation of the learning process during the study was quite limited in terms of teacher- student interactions and the experiences attained by the researcher in understanding the real class situation. The researcher observed the synchronous online learning activity at school with an English teacher using Edmodo, LMS on school, WhatsApp, Gmeet and Zoom as the learning platforms. In conducting the research, the researcher also used questionnaires and online interviews to collect the data based on the online English learning process using the synchronous mode.

The participants of this research are the students of grade VII of SMP Strada Bhakti Wiyata, Bekasi, Jawa Barat. The total number of students in class VII is 29 students. The researcher

decided to choose this class as the participants because the pre-observation revealed that the students in this class have a great enthusiasm during English learning butthey seem to have several challenges in having the synchronous online learning style. Theresearcher selected 23 students to conduct an online interview after distributing the onlinequestionnaire.

The researcher used those three steps starting with doing observations, distributing questionnaires, and conducting online interviews. To answer the two research questions, the data is examined by using interpretative analysis from the observations, questionnaires,and interviews to validate the data about students' opinion about their challenges in English synchronous online learning during the pandemic and their strategies to overcome their challenges.

Data Collection

The Researcher used third data collection, such as Observation, Questionnaire, and Online Interview. The observation enables the researcher to figure out participants' behavior in their natural setting, particularly in language learning. The observation is conducted virtually through Zoom and Edmodo when the English online class is administered by theteacher as what has been scheduled for students of grade XI. The observation aims to understand the challenges faced by the students during their new experience of synchronous-online English learning. The researcher accompanied by the teacher used an observation sheet as the indicators of challenges and language anxiety. A questionnaire isan instrument in the form of questions and statements distributed to the participants who have experienced synchronous-online English learning after the researcher conducted an observation. In the questionnaire, the researcher formulated the items by alternating both positive and negative wording to minimize the acquiescent bias of responses. The questionnaire is aimed to obtain detailed information from the students' opinions regardingthe synchronous-online learning implemented in English class. A semi-structured online interview is designed to attain additional information and deeper answers by asking questions related to students' perceptions, experiences, and feelings based on their opinion.Meanwhile, the interview is conducted to attain the details to support the research of whatthe students have perceived about their challenges and strategies related to the implementation of synchronous-online English learning in the pandemic situation. The researcher also interviewed the English teacher to validate the data and support the findings.
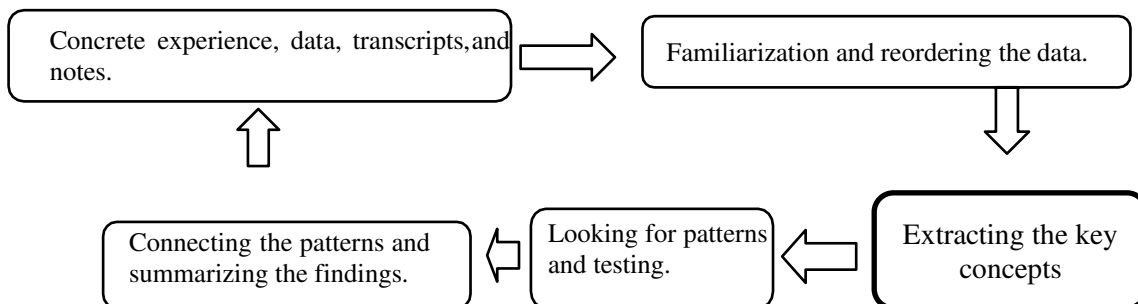
Data Analysis Techniques

This research method uses strategies to get and collect the data needed to answer research question. The method used in this research is a survey. The researcher employedquantitative and qualitative data to collect both numeric and text information to solve the research problems. In addition, the quantitative research in this study focuses on numeric data collection from a large number of people using questions and responses as the instruments. In addition, qualitative research focuses on the students' experiences and theirperspectives related to the subject matter. In doing this research, the researcher conductedan observation, distributed open-ended questionnaires, and conducted an online interview as the data-gathering technique. The researcher analyzed the data using an interpretative analysis to validate the scientific findings.

The participants of this research are the students on doing synchronous - online English learning. The researcher conducts an online interview after distributing the online questionnaire. Purposive sampling is used to decide the respondents (male and female) among the students based on the representative sample's criteria. There are several data collecting techniques as stated by Heigham & Crocker (2009), such as undertaking observations, distributing questionnaires, and conducting interviews. The researcher used those three steps to gather the data, starting with doing observations, distributing questionnaires, and conducting online interviews. The researcher questions use observations, questionnaires, and interviews to validate data in synchronous online learning of English during a pandemic and strategies to overcome challenges. After gettingthe data collected, the researcher analyzed the data to discover the findings. The data analysis in the mixed-method research uses a quantitative analysis for the quantitative dataand the qualitative analysis for the qualitative data. In this research, the researcherconducted a quantitative analysis to examine the numeric data, followed by qualitative analysis to examine the narrative data. To analyze the questionnaire, the researcher presented the responses from the participants using percentages for the closed-ended questions. The researcher categorized the answers of participants who chose the same degree of agreement to be summed up and presented in a percentage by using the formulaas stated below:

$$\frac{\sum x}{\sum n} \times 100\%.$$

∑x is the total number of participants who chose the same degree of agreement.
Meanwhile, ∑n is the total number of all participants.

The answers from the questionnaire with the same code or response would be placed together to make it easier to categorize. The researcher used a coding process adapted fromCreswell (2003) to identify the differences and similarities of the data as shown by the diagram below:

Figure 3.1

Data Analysis Techniques

Based on figure above the researcher interpreted the numeric data in a descriptive form and used the chartdiagrams to report the results. After that, the results of the open-ended questions were grouped to be interpreted and supported by the detailed information from the interview. The researcher analyzed the qualitative data by reviewing the observation sheet, reading the

open-ended answers from the questionnaire, and examining the interview recordings into some paragraphs by using interpretative analysis. The last step of data analysis was interpreting the connection of each category based on the theoretical framework and summarizing the findings. The researcher reported the results in the form of descriptive details. Based on the questionnaire, most of the students showed a negative perception of the synchronous-online English class because of the challenges and difficulties theyfaced during the pandemic situation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains the results to answer the research question formulated on the research problems. The researcher distributed the closed-ended questionnaire consisting of fourparts concerning the challenges in synchronous-online learning: students' expectations, students' readiness, students' identity, and students' participation. The next part of closed- ended questions focuses on students' challenges in speaking English as a foreign language virtually. According to Ardhiani et al., (2021), speaking is a means for communicating ideas that have been prepared and developed in response to the listener's demands. The last part of the questionnaire focuses on students' perceptions and strategies to overcome their challenges which were discovered through an open- ended question. The data as shown by the chat below:
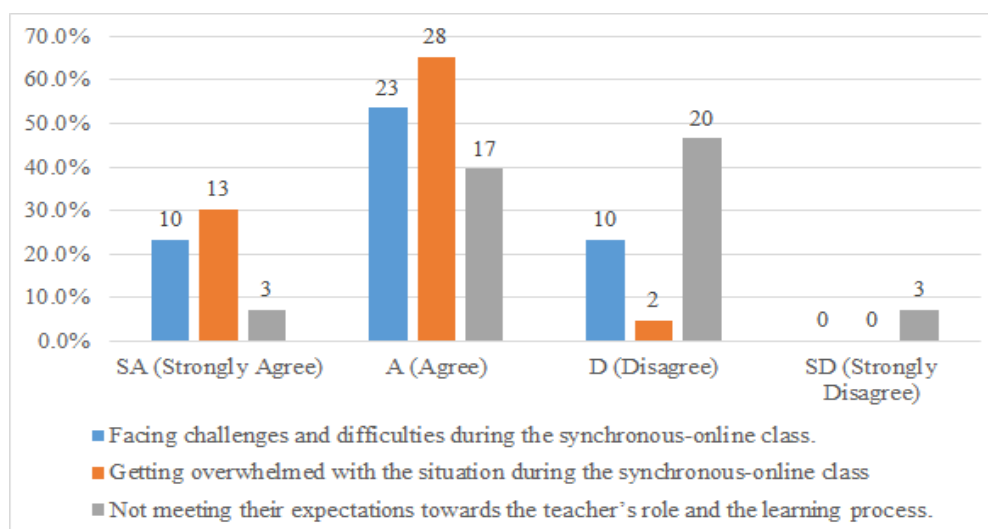

Chart 4.1

Students' Challenges Related to Learner's Expectation in the Synchronous- Online Learningduring the Pandemic Situation

One of the challenges faced by the students was related to their unfulfilled expectations in their synchronous-online learning. Based on the results shown in Chart 4.1, the first statement in the questionnaire denoted that more than half of the respondents (81.3%) chose "agree" and "strongly agree" if they face many challenges and difficulties in the synchronous-online class. In contrast, only 23.3% of the respondents disagreed with the first statementnerapan

model *Flipped Classroom*. The percentage of the results indicated that most of the students had a negative perception in the synchronous- online class during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The students' responses also supported the finding through the open-ended question in the questionnaire and the interview conducted by the researcher. The interviewees said that:

- *During the online class, there were some challenges such as the unstable internet connection, blackout, and difficulties to understand the materials. Moreover, I did not like using Zoom because I felt shy to speak in front of the camera. (*Student 1)
- *At first, it was quite hard to get adjusted to the new situation. But, I did not consider it a big problem since I still could follow the learning process smoothlywith the new learning style.* (Student 2).

The researcher could infer from the two interviewees that during the synchronous-onlineclass, they had different perceptions in seeing the challenges and difficulties to join the course.The biggest challenges were technical problems and the feeling of inconvenience in having a synchronous-online class. Besides that, most of the respondents showed a positive perception in the sixth statement which is about the availability of the supporting facilities to enroll in thesynchronous-online class. 90.7% of respondents chose "disagree" and "strongly disagree" withstatement six. It meant that most of the students do not have any problems related to the lack of supporting facilities during their synchronous-online learning class.

In the final analysis, the results collected from the questionnaire and interview indicatedthat most of the students showed negative perceptions in their synchronous-online English class during the pandemic situation related to their challenges and difficulties in dealing with the faced situation. The indicator of negative perceptions was pointed by the number of percentages which were mostly in the range of "agree" and "strongly agree" with the negative statements in the questionnaire. The students claimed that they faced challenges in terms of readiness and participation in the synchronous-online class and the difficulties in speaking English virtually. The result was supported by the students' opinions which evinced the statements in the questionnaire. The respondents believed that they faced many challenges anddifficulties during the synchronous-online English class, and they had to learn about how to solve their problems by having self-improvement. On the other hand, some students faced fewer challenges since they had met their readiness, preparation, and confidence in English and virtual courses. Furthermore, the students desired to overcome their challenges by forming various strategies to improve their performance in the synchronous-online English class.

The research discussion highlighted two formulated research problems concerning students' challenges and students' strategies in their synchronous- online English class. From the above results, there were several challenges followed by the causes that became the difficulties for students to join the synchronous-online class. According to Gillett-Swan (2017),challenges in an online class are associated with the student's inability to enroll in the online learning process that causes anxiety with the use of technology, the zone of comfort, the number of assignments, and the presence of peer interactions. In line with the theory, Kebritchi et al. (2017) classified the challenges into several stages including students'

expectations, readiness, identities, and participation. However, the strategies to deal with the challenges and difficulties could be strived by doing some actions to reach the easier, effective, and enjoyable situation related to preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation (Oxford, 1990; Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004).

In terms of expectations, students did not meet their presumption about the synchronous-online class, which seemed very advanced until they met some difficulties in joining the class. Henry (2011) stated that the divergences in online learning might happen in communication, information management, and the teacher's role as a mediator. The main causes of their problems that did not meet their expectations were the number of assignments, the equity of assessments or feedback, and the instructor's role in teaching which needed more time and greater efforts to monitor students' learning progress. Moreover, students could not even understand the explanation clearly due to some communication gaps in a virtual meeting. The main problem of synchronous-online courses was the requirement of having multi-channel attention which would be very complex for students who still learn to speak English as a foreign language (Wang & Reeves, 2007).

Students developed strategies such as building a positive mindset, asking personally to the teacher about the materials, and watching video explanations from other sources (Challenge & Strategy 1). Otherwise, some respondents believed that they had met their expectations in the synchronous-online class. Those who had positive perceptions claimed that they had prepared everything well to cope with the situation so that there was no barrier for them to enroll in the synchronous-online class.

Keeping up with the uncertain situation in the pandemic was quite difficult for the student's readiness. The main factors causing unreadiness were unstable internet connection, lack of supporting facilities, and the culture shock of the learn-from-home situation. Even more, students had to do multiple jobs at home to finish both house chores and school assignments, which made the students have difficulty managing the time. To cope with the situation, the students tried to adjust themselves to follow the pace of from-home learning. Some students changed their internet provider and gadgets to be able to join the class smoothly. As time went on, the majority of the students had prepared their schedules to maintain their time management (Challenge & Strategy 2). Therefore, the instructors should ensure that all tools work effectively and have significant outcomes for the students in conducting a synchronous-online class by understanding the availability of technical support and students' background condition (Ng, 2017).

The most difficult challenge mentioned by the students was communication. The issues were associated with their identity as a part of the school community. According to Burnett (2003), the most important things to motivate students to communicate actively in synchronous interactions are a social network and a supportive atmosphere. During their learning times at home, students felt bored, lonely, and unable to study independently. The problems were mostly caused by some factors such as the lack of social support and direct communication with their friends which made them lose their sense of identity. Szeto (2014) in his research revealed that students preferred to look for their peer support in managing frustration and confusion instead of having such an online cross-group interaction. To maintain socialization, the students stayed connected by texting and having a call to do the assignments (Nurunnabi et al., 2020). Some students took a private lesson by bringing in a tutor at home. Besides that, they found some entertainment to get out of their boredom and to feel less

isolated (Challenge& Strategy 3).

As a result of the challenges and anxiety, the students' changing attitudes might cause negative effects on students' performance (Ribeiro, 2020). The above data denoted that students' participation in the synchronous-online class began to decline. The indicator was shown by the unwillingness to speak or just simply remaining silent during the virtual meeting. According to Abdullah et al. (2012), student's participation in the learning process was affectedby personality, environment, instructor, and peers' influence. Students preferred to keep silentduring the synchronous-online class, turn off the mic and camera, and refuse to share students' opinion. Those indicators were in line with the signs of language anxiety mentioned by Young(1991). The main factors that made students not participate actively were being unconfident, shy, lazy, and afraid of speaking English due to the uncomfortable situation in speaking Englishvirtually. Some students revealed that practicing speaking in front of the mirror is one of theirstrategies to boost their confidence in front of the camera. Besides that, they also set up the room to build a positive learning atmosphere to avoid laziness (Challenge & Strategy 4). In contrast, some respondents believed that having a synchronous-online class was effective enough since it enabled them to have an interactive and real-time discussion.

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), language anxiety refers to students' feelings and perceptions associated with the apprehensions of using a foreign language in the learning process. An anxiety to speak English in front of the class was also identified by the researcher and categorized into specific-situation anxiety as stated by Oteir & Otaibi (2019). The studentshad revealed that some causes were making them afraid and shy to speak English. The reasonswere caused by some external and internal factors as mentioned by Rajitha et al. (2019). The external factors were the lack of grammar and pronunciation skills, unfamiliarity with Englishas a spoken language, and the fear of negative evaluation from teachers and friends. Meanwhile, the internal factors that came within themselves were students' confidence to speakin public and stage fear. Students tried to learn more about grammar and pronunciation beyondthe class session to deal with the language barriers. They might also ask the other students whohad been able to speak English fluently to help them learn better. Moreover, some of them thought about some media to practice English in general through movies, music, and games (Challenge & Strategy 5).

In general, the respondents suggested using the recorded video materials taken from each Zoom meeting session or the teacher's recordings so that they could replay the material explanation any time. Meanwhile, some students preferred to have asynchronous techniques since they could follow up easier, do the other businesses simultaneously, and have more timeto rethink their responses during the class.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research, most of the students showed a negative perception of thesynchronous-online English class because of the challenges and difficulties they faced during the pandemic situation. The researcher's challenges consisted of three major problems, including technical challenges, situational challenges, and language anxiety. During home learning, students revealed that they have different abilities to take online courses simultaneously regarding their background and previous experiences. There are some communication and information

gaps in understanding the material due to connection problems. In addition, students feel overwhelmed by the many tasks and roles of teachers in the learning process that are not in line with their expectations. Unpreparedness for learning change requires more time and effort for students to adjust to of the situation especially for those who have to multitask at home. In addition, students believe that the most challenging home learning situation is isolation. It causes them to become bored and hesitant to study independently. The role of the school community brings great impact and support for students to take courses with confidence.

This research suggestion is more relevant on asynchronous online learning, to find out perceptions, it is recommended to develop further research on the challenges or benefits of asynchronous online learning. Meanwhile, the positive perception of students who have low challenges can be explored by further researchers to find out the benefits and effectiveness of synchronous-online learning. In addition, further researchers can design classroom action research that can minimize students' anxiety in online classes and improve student performance in online courses. In addition to seeing the challenges, various student strategies are the most important actions to deal with the current condition of students. Therefore, this study is expected to provide an overview for future researchers to investigate possible strategies in other areas of learning problems.

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