DO YOU KEEP YOUR STUDENTS ENGAGED? A LOOK AT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN EFL ONLINE CLASSROOM

Pelibatan Aktiviti Pelajar Dalam Bilik Darjah? Satu Kajian English as A Foreign Language (EFL) Secara Atas Talian

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ABSTRACT

During COVID-19 outbreak, student engagement becomes a central point to ponder among educators in conducting online learning. Departing from that point, this study is aimed at looking at student engagement as reflected in online learning through WhatsApp application. This application was chosen since many teachers in Indonesia employ this low-tech application to teach. This study was conducted qualitatively by using online-classroom observation for five meetings, followed by ten selected students in one of Senior High Schools in West Java, Indonesia. The findings revealed that behavioural engagement dominantly occur in this learning process; whereas, cognitive as well as emotional engagement is rarely to find out. Put differently, students had few rooms to develop their academics in the classroom interaction via WhatsApp group. In addition, the students are also not so closed since the emotional bounding between them is not obviously seen. This finding brings to an inference that the teacher has a challenge in involving students to discuss the learning materials via this platform.

Keywords: COVID-19 outbreak, online learning, student engagement, whatsapp application

ABSTRAK

Pada masa pandemik COVID-19, keterlibatan siswa di kelas merupakan suatu permasalahan yang muncul bagi para pendidik, terutama ketika harus menjalankan pembelajaran online. Bertitik tolak daripada isu tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat cerminan keterlibatan siswa pada saat pembelajaran online dengan menggunakan aplikasi whatsapp. Media ini dipilih berdasar temuan di lapangan bahwasanya para guru di Indonesia memilih untuk menggunakan whattsapp sebagai teknologi praktis yang dapat digunakan untuk mengajar. Penelitian kualitatif ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pemerhatian kelas online selama 5 pertemuan kelas bahasa Inggeris di salah satu sekolah menengah atas di Jawa Barat, Indonesia. Dapatan daripada penelitian ini adalah ditemukannya keterlibatan perilaku siswa sebagai jenis keterlibatan yang paling sering nampak di kelas tersebut. Sementara jenis keterlibatan lainnya yakni, keterlibatan kognitif dan emosi siswa sangat sedikit. Hal ini tentunya menunjukkan bahwa siswa tidak memanfaatkan kesempatan dengan baik untuk mendiskusikan hal hal terkait akademik di kelas. Selain itu, ikatan emosi siswa dan guru kurang nampak sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa guru dan siswa tidak mempunyai kedekatan secara emosi. Dapatan ini merujuk guru masih mempunyai keterbatasan dalam melibatkan keterlibatan siswa terkait mendiskusikan materi pembelajaran, juga dalam melakukan pendekatan emosi terhadap siswa.

Kata kunci**:** kerebakan COVID-19, pembelajaran dalam talian, penglibatan pelajar, aplikasi Whatsapp

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is claimed pivotal in conducting a teaching and learning process. This aspect is taken into account since it contributes to developing students' persistence, achievement, and retention in learning (Finn, 2006; Kuh et al., 2008). Another role of student engagement is its power to stimulate

students' learning outcome (Mehdinezhad, 2011). More than that, student engagement also roles important in building students' character, attitude, and commitment in learning (Olieviera, 2020). As an example, students will learn how to respect their peers, teachers, as well as time during learning process. Hence, student engagement is good to help students be better in terms of cognitive, social, and attitude. Nevertheless, students are often disengaged in the classroom. One of cases is that students lack of confidence and feel so embarrassed to show their performance as well as to ask some questions in the class(Han & Hyland, 2015; Zhang, 2017). Another one is students' lack of focus in the class make them loss of engagement and participation in learning (Bond, 2020). Even, the student disengagement brings them potentially dropped from schools (Finn & Zimmer, 2012 as in (Bond, 2020). In other words, student engagement is still a big homework to achieve by the teachers.

Given this background, numerous studies about students' engagement have been conducted. Some of them focus on the use of various engagements carried out by the teacher (Adams et al., 2020; Baresh et al., 2019; Bond, 2020; Fan & Xu, 2020; Ghanizadeh et al., 2020; Han & Hyland, 2015; Hernández, 2012; Zhang, 2017; Zheng & Yu, 2018). Other points are seeing at the implementation of student engagement in learning (Prasetyawati & Ardi, 2020), the utilization of particular media and technology to engage students (Akbari et al., 2016; Carmanita et al., 2021; Harunasari & Halim, 2019; Krishnapatria et al., 2019; Mulia, 2020; Sarhandi et al., 2017; Teng & Wang, 2021). Different emphasis of studies is shown through analysing student perceptions on engagement in learning (Mango, 2015; Wang & Eccles, 2013; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). The results of the studies show that teachers use various engagements in the learning process to engage students, such as flipped learning, computer feedback, peer feedback, corrective feedback, collaborative learning, project-based learning, classroom discussion, blended learning, and Hybrid Problem-Based Learning (HPBL). However, some studies show the implementation using various engagements still has shortcomings. Besides, some studies show that teachers also use technology and media to engage their students in learning because they realize it has a positive impact, such as using a social network, learning platform, smartphones, Moodle, and Google Maps. Also, technology such as the iPad has an important role in students' perceptions of engagement because they are actively involved and it can increase their motivation in learning a foreign language. In addition, students' perceptions of the three types of engagement in the school environment also show that students are involved and influence students differently. Hence, in increasing student engagement, it is necessary to use technology.

Based on the studies above, it is found that most of the previous studies focused on student engagement in offline learning. Hence, this present study will focus on student engagement in online learning using online media/platforms. The use of the online platform is based on the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic requires all students to learn online. Therefore, this study attempts to find out the types of students' engagement appearing in WhatsApp Application during learning English.

METHODOLOGY

As has been mentioned in the previous part, this study is an attempt to investigate types of EFL student engagement in online learning through WhatsApp application in this Covid-19 outbreak. To attain this aim, a qualitative study through classroom observation was employed. The classroom observation was done five times (2 x 45 minutes per each) in month of May, conducted in one of Senior High Schools in Indonesia. This school was chosen since this school used WhatsApp platform as the media to do online learning based on some considerations. Specifically, ten purposively students took part in this study. They were selected from the criterion of achievement level (low, mid, and high) achievers seen from the last semester score of English subjects. Generally, all respondents come from the low-to mid-socio-economic background which becomes one of the main motives of the school to use WhatsApp application as the school platform.

In relation with the instrument of this study was qualitative so that the data were analysed using inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006). This inductive analysis followed the four steps; recording, categorizing, analysing and interpreting. The data were analysed by recording and writing information

related to student's engagement in learning English using WhatsApp Group. Then, the data were confirmed by the evidence in the observation. The data was then categorized. After categorizing the data, those data were interpreted into good sentences. And finally, the general conclusions are drawn.

RESULTS

This section presents the research findings and discussions resulting from observation as the main instrument of data collection. This section also contains the answer to the problem statement from the first chapter. The problem statement is "What types of students' engagement do appear in learning English when using WhatsApp Group".

This study focuses on the types of students' engagement when using the WhatsApp group in learning English at Senior High School students. In accordance with the Fredricks et al., framework (2004), student engagement is divided into behavioral component, cognitive component, and emotional component. Below are the general findings shown by the classroom interaction in WhatsApp Group for five meetings.

Figure 1

The Observations Result on Types of Students Engagement Through WhatsApp Group

	Behavioral Engagement	Cognitive Engagement	Emotional Engagement
■ Student Engagement in Online Learning: Whatsapp Group (in %)	60	20	10
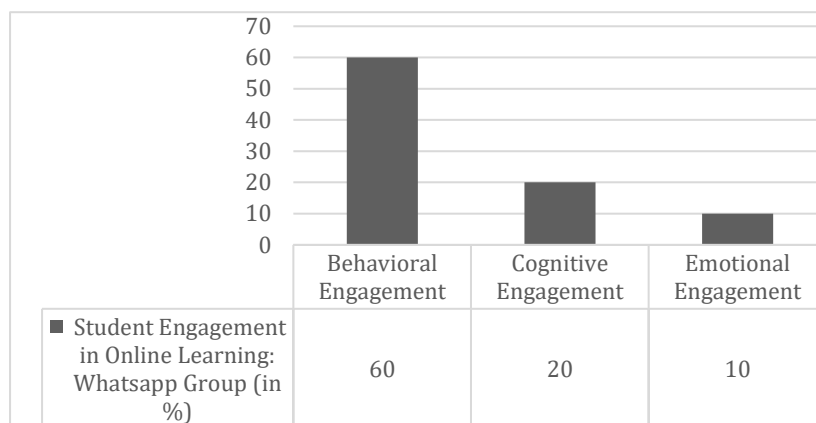
The data above show that mostly students are engaged in behaviour. Meanwhile, the cognitive engagement as well as emotional engagement is rarely found in these classroom activities. The detailed data interpretation is presented in the following section.

Behavioral Engagement

As has been mentioned in the previous part, behavioural engagement is mostly found in this research. This type of engagement mostly appears after the teacher gives some instructions. As an example, student A says, *"Siap Tad" / Ready, Sir* This expression is used to show the readiness to follow what has been instructed by the teacher. Another example is presented below.
The data above means that behavioural engagement is used to get the clearance of instruction. Spcifically, student B said, "*Ok tads,*

Figure 2

An example of behavioural engagement
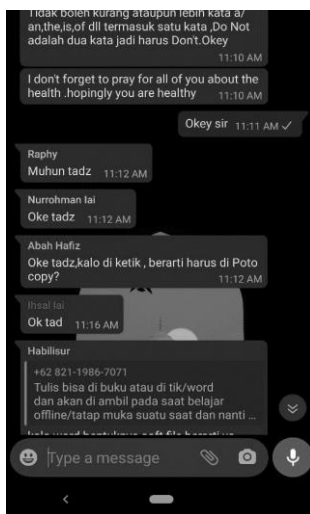
kalo di ketik berarti harus dipotocopi?". This means that the student asks about the procedure how to do the task. Another example is also uttered by student J by saying *"permisi tadz, kalau yang di luar garut ngumpulin tugasnya ke mana?"*. This data show that the discussion is more on the mechanism of the classroom activities.

The findings above show that the student in learning English through WhatsApp group engage behaviorally. Concerning what has been mentioned by Shernoff (2013), behavioral engagement is one of three components of student engagement that are based on observations of how students engage in school tasks, constancy of effort, participation, attendance, or ethical behavior. In addition, students with high behavioral engagement also showed a great attitude and enthusiasm in participating when the teacher gave them tasks in learning (Mulia, 2020). Also, the students who are behaviorally engaged will participate in class and have a feeling of belonging, this feeling will encourage them to enjoy studying, understand the significance of learning, and attend class so that they will have meaningful learning (Hidayat et al., 2019). Not only that but this data is also related to previous studies. As in studies conducted by Adams et al. (2020); Harunasari & Halim (2019); Mulia (2020); Susanti (2020), mostly in learning English, students are behaviorally involved.

Cognitive Engagement

It can be seen from the way of students in responding the material presented by the teacher, such as when the teacher finished presenting the material, student I then asked again *"type 1, type 2 teh apa ustadz?",* then another student asked, student D said *"kalo type 3 rumusnya gimana ustadz?"*, which means those students are active and initiative to ask questions about material that they don't understand and they want to master the material by asking the teacher about the material that they don't know. In addition, when the teacher explains the material until the students understand, student F said *"oh, siap tadz"* and another student respond to the teacher explanation, the student 1 said, *"insya allah paham tadz"* which means the students already understand the material presented by the teacher. In addition to that, this kind of

engagement is also appearing when student G asks about Future Tense as the topic in that meeting. Below is the data sample.

Figure 3

An example of cognitive engagement
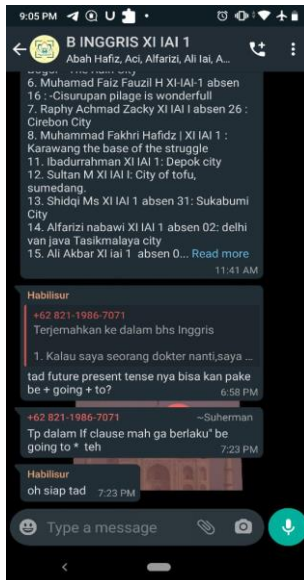
The data above reveal that the student confirms a tense formula in If conditional tense. This reflects that there is room for the teacher and students in discussing the material. So from the examples mentioned in this paragraph, it is clear say that in WhatsApp Group, students try to consult their cognitive understanding on materials to the teacher although the portion is very limited compared to the engagement of behaviour.

Based on the findings, it can be discussed that the students engage cognitively in learning. It is relevant to what has been said by Connel & Werborn, (1990) as in Fredricks & McColskey (2012) that cognitive engagement is a cognitive process when students participate in learning not only in body but also in mind like including students paying attention, concentrating, focusing, absorbing, participating, and having willingness. Also, students who are cognitively engaged in the learning process, according to Robb, 2004 as in Sesmiyanti (2018), think carefully about the newly given knowledge and employ self-regulated learning strategies to improve their knowledge of the material. Cognitive engagement also focuses on students' psychological characteristics, such as understanding and mastering the materials and skills in learning. (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012 as cited in Nguyen et al., 2018). Moreover, in line with the finding of cognitive engagement in learning. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Azrin et al. (2020) because the finding of this study explains that of all types of engagement, students are more cognitively engaged. The reason is related to the fact that the students are more interested in the discussion section rather than studying on a regular and individual.

Emotional engagement
Students' emotional engagement also appears. One of examples is presented in the following stage.

Figure 4

An example of emotional engagement
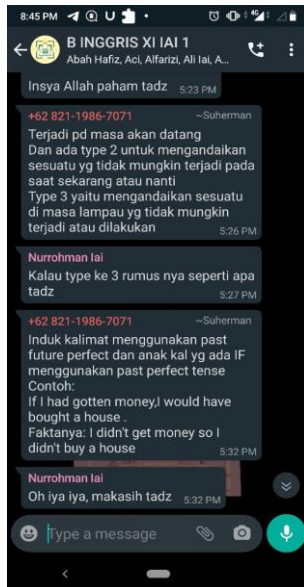
The evidence showing students' response in saying 'makasih tadz' or "thank you" means that the emotion of student is involved in this meeting. This expression is used to thank to the teacher who has been delivering the material. The similar thanking expression is also employed by student F *"terimakasih tadz".* in line with that, it means those students emotionally have a polite and respectful attitude towards learning and their teacher. However, this small proportion of this engagement draws an assumption that the teacher and students are not so closed emotionally or there is still like a gap between them in conducting a teaching-learning process.

Based on the findings, it showed that students are emotionally involved. It is related to Gibbs & Poskitt (2010) that a sense of belonging to the school, curiosity, judgments of learning ideals, good and negative reactions to instructors, friends, and school activities are all components of emotional engagement. In addition, emotional engagement also will make students more focused on learning, as said by Taylor & Statler (2014) according to organizational experts and neuroscientists, people learn more efficiently when they are emotionally engaged. This evidence is also hand in hand with the statement from Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj (2012) that the significance of emotional engagement can enhance learning outcomes in students. The findings of this emotional engagement are also similar to the previous studies by Ghanizadeh et al. (2020); Teng & Wang (2021); Zheng & Yu (2018) because in this study, it was revealed that students were emotionally involved from the three types of engagement.

From the data above, it can be seen that those students are more engaged with the teacher behaviourally rather than cognitively and emotionally. It means that the students are more interested to be active in clarifying the instruction, procedure of learning or doing task.

Emotional engagement is also rare to find since the students prefer to be emotionally engaged in the time when the learning process will end.

Furthermore, various implications are drawn from this present research. First, the students have been sufficient to show their behaviour in the class. This claim is consonant with the result of the study that behavioral engagement in high school students who learn English through the WhatsApp group was more dominant than other types of engagement. Second, the classroom engagement is not balanced since the behavioural engagement is too dominant compared to cognitive and emotional engagements. In line with that, students' engagement must be mutually involved and influence each other in learning (Wang & Eccles, 2013; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). Also, it is supported by Skinner & Kindermann (2009), three components of engagement interact dynamically within themselves as individuals. So that, to achieve academic success at school, students must have characteristics such as interests, emotions, motivation, learning experiences, and academic abilities. Illeris (2003) asserts that in achieving optimal learning outcomes, the role of skills in cognitive engagement and emotional engagement with the learning environment at school is very important. As seen from the existing findings, how students were less involved emotionally and cognitively when learning English using the WhatsApp group so that the students will not have good achievement in learning. Third, the teacher must be able to prepare well for learning because when the students adjust to the school well and conducive, then students will be more involved. So that, teachers must build the relationship between teachers and students, give teacher support, aspects of self-development, application of innovation, especially in using the online platform in learning, as well as completeness and convenience during online learning. With these elements, students will be more emotionally involved. In addition, not only engage emotionally, but the teacher also should be able to engage students cognitively. Teachers may find it easier to engage students cognitively if they are emotionally engaged. Because when the teacher provides emotional support, students will be involved in discussing their work. Overall, in engaging students in learning, students must be engaged not only behaviorly, but emotionally and cognitively as well.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion in the previous section, it can be concluded that in online learning guided by the EFL teacher using WhatsApp Group, the proportion of behavioural engagement is far much bigger than two other engagements; cognitive engagement as well as emotional engagement. This can be seen from the data showing students are more active in confirming task, instruction, as well as the mechanism of learning rather than asking more on materials or showing their physiological engagement. Therefore, it is safe to say that the teacher's competence in managing online classroom should be develop; especially, in stimulating students' participants to discuss academic things (lesson learnt), as well as doing some approaches to make students more emotionally engaged.

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