

English Department Students' Perception on Synchronous and Asynchronous Virtual Writing Classes

Viona Sari

Email : vionasari.jombang@gmail.com

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris STKIP PGRI Jombang

Abstrack

This study aimed to determine English department students' perceptions regarding synchronous and asynchronous virtual classes in writing course. This found students' perception to interpret and give meaning to virtual writing classes both synchronous (the use of WhatsApp and Zoom) and asynchronous (the use of LMS such as Google Classroom and Schoology). This research used survey research and distributed the questionnaire for collecting quantitative data which the instrument adapted from Hamouda (2020). The samples are 102 English department students from five classes of writing at the college of STKIP PGRI Jombang in academic year 2020/2021. They participated to fill a 4 point Likert scale questionnaire that has had experience in virtual writing classes. Based the overall finding of the study, it showed evidence that 102 participants generally agree with all statements indicated English department students' perceptions on synchronous and asynchronous virtual writing classes during the Covid-19 pandemic at STKIP PGRI Jombang have a positive perception.

Keywords : Perception, Virtual Classes, Synchronous, Asynchronous, Writing

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning English in Indonesia is designed to develop the skills of students in the four major language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing skill. For most English as Foreign Language (EFL) students especially in non-native English, learning academic writing appears facing many challenges. English writing course in Indonesia especially colleges and universities are expected to make learners enable in expressing thought and feeling to develop their ideas and improve their writing skill in well written products. Writing in university is about more than just creating a grammatically correct piece of writing, but the writing should

demonstrate a well-communicative writing that can produce what the author wanted to express (Qamariah, 2016).

Writing is the most effortful skill in teaching and learning to the English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. In the regular method of teaching writing, the instructors assign a writing task, the learners create a draft, the instructors provide corrective feedback on it and the text is rewritten by the learners, and then submitted for evaluation (Khoshsima & Sayadi, 2016). However, most of the Indonesian EFL students who are learning English as foreign language perceive writing English as a complicated subject because they feel difficulty in writing accurately and properly. Students face many problems in developing their writing in these components such as vocabulary, grammar, text management, meaning clarity, and coherency of ideas (Martarini & Sastaparamitha, 2020).

In normal situations the facts show that students still face some difficulties during the teaching and learning writing. Whereas, pandemic conditions also make them study with challenges in using virtual classes. The COVID-19 pandemic was an unexpected and challenging public health problem for all of us that happened in the world at the beginning of the year 2020. Indonesia is deciding self-quarantine, social distancing and physical distancing. One of the aspects affected by COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia is education. Distance learning or virtual learning systems have offered options for educational continuity during COVID-19 pandemic that face-to-face in real classroom environment shifts to virtual classes as alternative. Virtual classes are an online teaching and learning environment that allows educators and learners to participate and communicate with one another through an internet network which can be accessed in different places and at different times.

In the virtual learning environment, virtual classes have applied both synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning is a form of learning that uses online forms, such as video conferencing and online chat with direct interactions between educators and learners connecting and communicating in a real time. Meanwhile, asynchronous learning is a method of learning using independent learning approach indirectly or do not participate in the meeting at the same time (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Virtual class during COVID-19 in Indonesia commonly uses both synchronous and asynchronous with these applications such as video conferencing tools (Zoom,

Google Meet, etc), social media (WhatsApp), and online learning software or Learning Management Systems (Google Classroom, Schoology, etc).

English Department students from STKIP PGRI Jombang who had taken virtual writing classes had experienced employing both synchronous (WhatsApp and Zoom) and asynchronous (Google Classroom and Schoology). The main purpose of this research is to understand more about the perceptions of English department students who had taken writing courses in virtual classes of synchronous and asynchronous, whether they perceive it positive or negative. According to Yaghoubi et al., (2008), the perceptions of learners play a major role in improving the effectiveness of education. It means that knowing English Department students' perception is important contribution to understand how they perceive the implementation of virtual classes in writing course. Therefore, this research aims to explore the English department students' perception on virtual writing classes which applied both synchronous and asynchronous. Then the research question in this research is 1) What is English department students' perception on synchronous and asynchronous virtual writing classes?

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Perception

Perception is as a process by which people obtain and interpret information about something. The definition of perception is stated by (Robbins & Judge, 2013:166), "perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment". It can be said that perception is a process interpreting or understanding the stimuli that received from environment to give a meaning. There are two categories to classify students' perception, they are positive or negative. According to Robbins (2002:14), positive perception comes from individuals' impressions that express satisfaction to the stimuli, and then negative perception is individuals' perceptions that express dissatisfaction toward the stimuli.

English department students can perceive virtual writing classes in the positive or the negative. Hamouda (2020) reported that virtual classes on language skill give positive perception from students which indicate that virtual classes can be useful, easy and convenient, enjoyable, interesting, and helpful. These aspects revealed that students have

satisfaction about virtual classroom experiences. Al Turki, Aldraiweesh & Kinshuck (2016) stated that the flexibility of communication and interactions with instructors was one of the useful of the virtual learning classroom. Hussein (2016) argued that virtual classes are easy and convenient when students perceive virtual writing classes with good access in class and easy to access learning material. Hussein (2016) reported that enjoyable can be described as students being excited to see what the teacher and other students have posted. According to Hamouda (2020), virtual classes are interesting; learners are more interested because the learning environment actively attracts their attention so that all of this encourages students to focus on participation rather than afraid. Hamouda (2020) reported, virtual classes can be helpful when students perceived that virtual classes can both facilitate and enhance their learning experience.

B. Virtual Classes

Virtual classes are teaching and learning in an online environment that institutions implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic in which educators and learners do not meet face to face or without the physical limitations of traditional classroom walls, but it provides the same teaching and learning that allows participants to communicate and share with each other. According to Dung (2020), virtual classes refers to teaching in a learning environment where teachers and students, or both are separated by time or space and the content of the course is communicated via IT software, multimedia tools, the internet, video conferencing, etc. Virtual classes can be grouped into two types, as follows: synchronous and asynchronous.

Synchronous learning is defined as a simultaneous learning that lecturer and learners must attend at the same time or in real time that is conducted in an online environment. According to Dung (2020), synchronous online courses involve simultaneous online interaction between the educators and learners through, text chats, audio chats or video chats which learning environments allow students in real time to participate in a course from home. While, asynchronous virtual learning does not require both lecturers and students to be online at the same time and in the same location. According to Dung (2020), asynchronous online courses do not actually happen in real time, students are more self-directed, completing the course work within a time deadline, which the interaction between

lecturer and student takes place through discussion boards, blogs, etc. Asynchronous learning is mostly accomplished through the use of a learning management system (LMS) or other platforms that students can access at any time.

C. Virtual Classes in EFL Writing Course

Writing is one of the productive skills of language, which is way to communicate someone's thoughts and feelings through written. According to Nunan (2003:88), writing is a cognitive activity to find the idea, to think about how to communicate it and organize it into statements or paragraphs that are clear to the reader to understand. The educators used some applications as the online tools to facilitate the EFL students' in writing course during virtual classes' process. They employ some of the free apps of WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Classroom, and Schoology as a support tool in teaching and learning writing.

In synchronous virtual learning, it offers a variety of real-time communication options with apps like WhatsApp and Zoom which may be used for chat rooms and video conferencing for interacting between lecturers and students. In asynchronous virtual learning, there are varieties of applications of LMS such as Google Classroom and Schoology that are used in this writing course. The students write the draft and post and it was provided feedback from lecturer and student may give comment feedback on their classmates' draft. This is the opportunity to revise their sentences for correctness before uploading the writing.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study used survey research method with descriptive study on quantitative data. The population of this study is the English department students at any classes of writing who study in English Education Department major at STKIP PGRI Jombang in the academic year 2020-2021. The students had ever taken the synchronous and asynchronous virtual writing classes during Covid-19 pandemic. The samples of this research are 125 English department students from classes of 2019 A, 2019 B, 2020 A, 2020 B, and 2020 C. The main technique for collecting data of this study was divided into three steps, the first stage includes adapting and validating the questionnaire statements based on the objectives of the research question (adapted from Hamouda, 2020). The second stage includes distributing the

questionnaires to the participants through internet tools by using Google Form. The third steps involve statistically analyzing the data and discussing the findings in order to answer the research question and make the final conclusions.

In the questionnaire, the researcher only adapted 18 closed-ended items of positive statements. The researcher used 4-points Likert scales for each statement to determine whether they agree, strongly agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. Students' perceptions are positive if they choose agree or strongly agree and the negative perception when students choose disagree or strongly disagree. The analysis of the questionnaires is presented in the table and the figure to show the frequencies, the percentages, and the mean scores of the English department students' responses selecting for each option to the statements that were calculated statistically by using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.0 and the result of the data collected are shown in the descriptive statistics. The data was also used in order to find the interval for getting the mean scores, so that it can be interpreted based on the criteria on each statement, as follow:

Table 3.2. Illustration of the 4-Point Likert Scale Adopted from Alahmadi & Alraddadi (2020)

Likert Scale	Interval	Description
1	1.00-1.74	Strongly Disagree
2	1.75-2.49	Disagree
3	2.50-3.24	Agree
4	3.35-4.00	Strongly Agree

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Results

The total numbers of the participants are 102 English department students voluntary participated in giving response to the questionnaires. The participants are 18 males and 84 females. The following tables are descriptive statistics from the result's questionnaire, the researcher describes and interpret the findings on each items and categories based on the table, as follow:

1. English Department Students' Perception on Synchronous Virtual Writing Classes

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Synchronous Virtual Writing Classes

Item	Statement	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Description	
3	Using virtual class made me feel more confident to participate in class discussions.	N	3	28	50	21	2.87	Agree
		%	3%	27%	49%	21%		
9	A virtual learning classroom enriches the interaction between students and teachers.	N	8	37	47	10	2.58	Agree
		%	8%	36%	46%	10%		
16	I enjoy to communicate with other students in this subject electronically (email, chats, messenger etc).	N	5	18	43	36	3.08	Agree
		%	5%	18%	42%	35%		

Based on the descriptive statistics above, the synchronous virtual writing classes received positive perception from English department students because all the statements indicate agreement. For the item number 3, based on the table 4.1, it was clear that with cumulative agree (70%) of the respondents feel more confident in virtual writing classes. For the statement number 9, the table showed that 56% participants agree and strongly agree, this indicates they agree virtual class enriches the interaction between lecturer and English department students in English writing course. In the statement of point 16, as many as 77% agreed. It shows that with mean score 3.08 indicated English department students enjoy communicating synchronously with other classmates in English writing course electronically such as email, chat, messenger, etc.

2. English Department Students' Perception on Asynchronous Virtual Writing Classes

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Asynchronous Virtual Writing Classes

Item	Statement	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Description	
5	Using virtual class has motivated me to finish and submit my assignments on time.	N	5	24	44	29	2.95	Agree
		%	5%	24%	43%	28%		

7	Virtual classes motivate me to improve more the writing skill in collaborative learning activities.	N	1	27	55	19	2.90	Agree
		%	1%	26%	54%	19%		
11	I find that applying a virtual learning classroom in my writing course is time-saving.	N	3	21	55	23	2.96	Agree
		%	3%	21%	54%	23%		
14	Virtual classes provide sufficient opportunities for writing practice.	N	0	20	68	14	2.94	Agree
		%	0%	20%	67%	14%		
17	Virtual classes reduce my fear of writing of my classmates	N	5	20	60	17	2.87	Agree
		%	5%	20%	59%	17%		

From the findings above, it can be concluded that asynchronous virtual writing classes have positive perception because the generally of the students chose agree and strongly agree on the statement.

In the statement point 5, it can be seen from the results that the higher response indicated agreement with cumulative agree (73%), it is assumed that most of English department students agree that the use of virtual class asynchronously motivated them to finish and submit English writing assignments on time. In the item point 7, the cumulative agree are 73% that indicated students agreed virtual class asynchronously motivate them to improve more the writing skill in collaborative learning activities. In the statement point 11, the results showed that there are cumulative agree 77% that most of the students agree that virtual learning classroom asynchronously in English writing course is time saving. In the statement point 14, the cumulative agree are 81% that means asynchronous virtual classes provide sufficient opportunities for their English writing practice. In the statement of point 17, the most students agree with the cumulative 76%, students agree asynchronous virtual classes can reduce the fear of English writing to their classmates.

3. English Department Students' Perception on both Synchronous and Asynchronous Virtual Writing Classes

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of both Synchronous and Asynchronous Virtual Writing Classes

Item	Statement	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Description
1	Using Virtual class has made this course less stressful.	N 6 % 6%	35 34%	45 44%	16 16%	2.70	Agree
2	Using virtual class has made this course more enjoyable.	N 3 % 3%	35 34%	46 45%	18 18%	2.77	Agree
4	Virtual classes should be used in all classes of writing.	N 7 % 7%	37 36%	46 45%	12 12%	2.62	Agree
6	I find that applying virtual classes to writing course is useful.	N 3 % 3%	31 30%	54 53%	14 14%	2.77	Agree
8	In virtual learning classroom, I have the freedom to ask my teacher what I do not understand.	N 5 % 5%	30 29%	45 44%	22 22%	2.82	Agree
10	Virtual classes made the writing course more interesting.	N 4 % 4%	45 44%	38 37%	15 15%	2.63	Agree
12	I find that applying virtual classes to writing course is helpful.	N 2 % 2%	26 25%	58 57%	16 16%	2.86	Agree
13	I find that applying virtual learning classroom to writing course is Easy and convenient.	N 2 % 2%	28 27%	61 60%	11 11%	2.79	Agree
15	Virtual classes help me improve my overall writing skills.	N 4 % 4%	22 22%	57 56%	19 19%	2.89	Agree
18	I preferred the English-writing course to be taught through virtual classes.	N 10 % 10%	28 27%	44 43%	20 20%	2.73	Agree

From the findings above, synchronous and asynchronous virtual writing classes got positive response from the respondents. The result of this study has shown the English

department students' perceptions on synchronous and asynchronous virtual writing classes have positive perception.

For the first statement 1, the cumulative agree (60%) indicated that most of them agree the virtual classes made the writing course less stressful. In the second statement, the result reveals cumulative agree 63% of respondents agreed virtual writing classes is enjoyable. In the fourth statement, the cumulative agree (57%) it can be assumed that more than half of students were agree with this statement that English writing course should be taught through virtual learning method both synchronous and asynchronous in all classes of writing. The statement point 6, the positive response of cumulative agreed are 67%, it can be interpreted more than half English department students agreed the virtual classes are useful for English writing course. In the statement of point 8, the cumulative agree (66%) indicated more than half students have freedom to ask the lecturer in virtual writing classes for both synchronous and asynchronous. In the item number 10, the cumulative agree 52%. It can be assumed that English department students agree virtual classes made the writing course to be more interesting.

In the statement point 12, the cumulative agree (73%) which means students disagree virtual writing class is helpful. In the item statement number 13, it can be calculated the cumulative agree (71%) indicated students were agree with this statement that English writing course is easy and convenient. In the statement of point 15, it can be seen from the results the higher response indicated agreement with cumulative agree (75%), the result represented that virtual classes help English department students to improve their overall English writing skill. In the last statement or item 18, as the table show that the most students agreed (63%), and it can be interpreted that the students preferred the English writing course to be taught through synchronous and asynchronous virtual classes.

The findings of the study reveal that the majority the English department students agreed on the statements. The result of this study has shown the English department students' perceptions on synchronous and asynchronous virtual writing classes have positive perception. It can be seen the figure below:

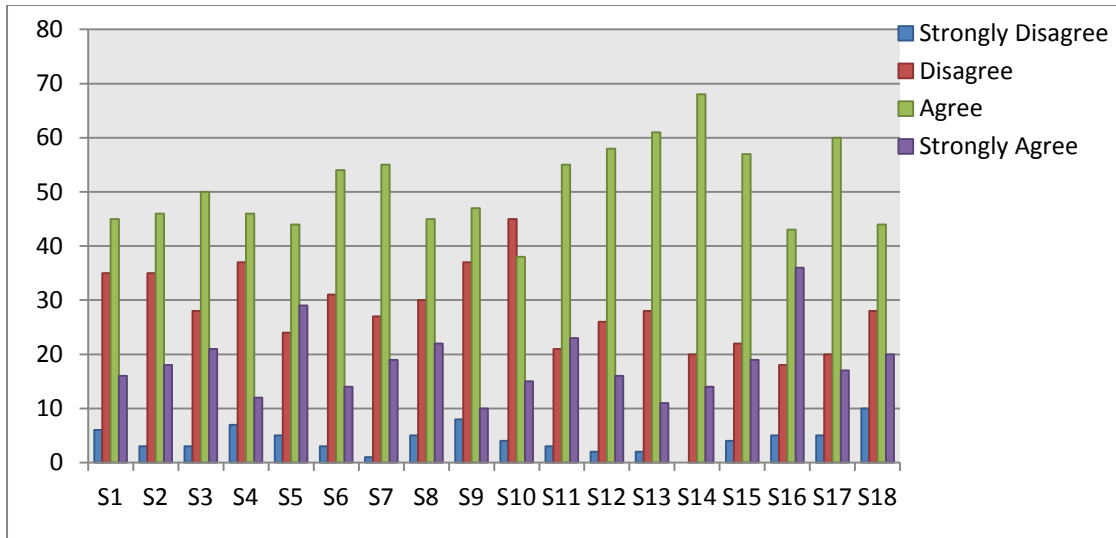


Figure 1. Questionnaire result

B. Discussion

Based on English department students' perception, they perceived positively that synchronous and asynchronous virtual writing classes are useful, easy and convenient, enjoyable, interesting, and helpful.

1. English Department Students' Perception on Synchronous Virtual Writing Classes

It found the students' perception whether they feel more confident to participate in class discussions. Similarly found in study of Hussein (2016), Hamouda (2020), Suadi (2021) & Ta'amneh (2021), they revealed positive perception from students that using synchronous virtual classes such in learning language skill can increase confidence for participating discussion. Next, the similar findings are in line with Alahmadi & Alraddadi (2020), Hamouda (2020), Tirtanawati (2020), & Suadi (2021), the findings showed that students have positive response that synchronous virtual classes can encourage students' interaction to the lecturer and it can enhance interaction between lecturer and students. The last, the result is supported the finding by Hussein (2016), Hamouda (2020), and Alahmadi & Alraddadi (2020), they reported that the most of the participants enjoyed communicating through virtual classes synchronously.

2. English Department Students' Perception on Asynchronous Virtual Writing Classes

First, the finding is consistent with Hussein (2016) & Hamouda (2016) that students are motivated to do their assignments and encourage to submit it via virtual learning platform on time. Second, the similar results of Fonseca & Peralta (2019) and Shahi (2016), these studies revealed that virtual classes can develop collaboration and interaction between students especially develop collaborative writing activities by using learning management system (LMS). Third, the findings were consistent with the results of Bagata (2020), and Laili & Muflihah (2020), Farmulasih (2020), found that English language students also perceive that virtual learning can save time by doing and submitting assignments virtually and may reduce wasting time when the class is in activity and make efficient for students.

Fourth, the result is also obtained by Rosyada & Sundari (2021), and Fonseca & Peralta (2019) who found that virtual classes has sufficient opportunities for students for practicing English writing skill that were important to students practice more and progress in their writing by practicing and learning outside the classroom. Fifth, the similar results were line with the findings by Perveen (2016), Shahi (2016) & Ozdal et al. (2021) using virtual classes asynchronous in language learning environment may reduce the fear to help students develop writing skill in providing more relaxed environment.

3. English Department Students' Perception on both Synchronous and Asynchronous Virtual Writing Classes

First, the similar result was also in line with the findings of Shahi (2016), Hussein (2016), & Hamouda (2020) who revealed the positive perception that virtual classes provide EFL students' language learning to reduce their stressful. Second, the similar result of study conducted by Hussein (2016), Shahi (2016), Hamouda (2020), Atmojo & Nugroho (2020), & Agung et al. (2020), these studies revealed positive perception that students enjoy learning through virtual classes. Third, the findings support the result from (Riwayatningsih & Sulistyani, 2020), the students were satisfied and preferred writing course is taught through virtual classes. Fourth, the similar result of study conducted by (Hussein, 2016) & (Hamouda, 2020), indicating that usefulness of virtual classes into EFL learners could create a positive

environment, such as communicate and interact with one another while discussing that can increase student-student and student-teacher interactions.

Fifth, the similar result was also in line with the findings of Hamouda (2020) and Khan et al., (2021), the study revealed that virtual learning classrooms provide much freedom to ask the questions and connect to the lecturer. Sixth, the similar findings study by Khoshshima & Sayadi (2016) & Farmulasih (2020) the use of virtual classes in the writing course is more interesting. Seventh, the similar findings by the study of Laili and Muhflihah (2020), Hamouda (2020), Al-Qahtani (2019), virtual classes virtual are helpful in allowing students learn and practice in their own pace which are also helpful features to organize students' tasks, manage the classroom, and facilitate student interaction.

Next, the similar findings are in line with Hamouda (2020), Hussein (2016), Khan et al., (2021), & Fitria (2021), revealed that learning through virtual learning platform is easy to use and easy to access learning material such as download and exchange documents with their lecturer and classmates. Then, the similar results are supported by (Perveen, 2016), (Ozidal et al. 2021) & (Riwayatiningsih & Sulistyani, 2020), who stated that that virtual learning classroom help students to improve English writing skill by avoiding them from making mistakes and giving them more opportunities to express themselves without having fear. The last, the findings support the result from (Riwayatiningsih & Sulistyani, 2020) this reveals virtual learning in writing course can have positive perception and were chosen for the participants' academic performance.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions from questionnaire and SPSS output, it can be concluded that virtual writing classes have positive responses from English department students because they generally agree to all statements both synchronous and asynchronous. It indicated that the English department students perceived satisfaction of learning English writing skill through virtual classes which they positively perceived the classes are useful, easy and convenient, enjoyable, interesting, and helpful. To sum up, English department students' perceptions on virtual writing classes during the Covid-19 pandemic at STKIP PGRI Jombang have a positive perception.

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