Interactions Using Technology in Language and Literature University Classrooms: Optimizing Synchronous and Asynchronous Online Learning during Disruption-Covid 19 Era

Akhyar Rido
English Department
Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia
Bandar Lampung, Indonesia
akhyar_rido@teknokrat.ac.id

Abstract—The era of COVID-19 pandemic and disruption has made thousands of educational institutions closed most of their classes and millions of educators transformed face-to-face into online mode of learning. Following this, early 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture Republic of Indonesia required all levels of education from elementary school to university shifted in-person to online learning mode as the main learning process in all subjects. The objective of this study was to look at how lecturers at English department in a university in Indonesia optimize interactions using technology through synchronous and asynchronous platforms during disruption-covid era. Employing a qualitative approach, this study observed thirty language skills and literature subjects for two semesters. The findings indicated that, in terms of synchronous platform, the lecturers used video conference for facilitating student-lecturer and student-student interactions mainly through lectures, presentations, and discussions. In terms of asynchronous platform, the lecturers utilized the university open online course or SPADA, the university youtube channel Kuliah Teknokrat, and the university library online public access catalogue or OPAC and e-journals for facilitating student-lecturer, student-student, and student-learning material interactions through activities such as structured assignment, independent project, autonomous learning, and peer correction. As a result, most of the students successfully completed the subjects and many of them published their works in journals, newspapers, and anthologies. This study suggests that language and literature lecturers and relevant stakeholders could implement synchronous and asynchronous platforms in their online classrooms as it could foster students' engagement and make learning more productive.

Keywords—interaction, online learning, asynchronous, synchronous, language and literature classrooms

I. INTRODUCTION

English is important in Indonesia because the 21st century global workforce demands not only young and skilled university graduates competent in technical skills, but also communication skills which prioritize English language, predominantly in tourism, hospitality, services, advertising, marketing, manufacturing, and even shipping sectors [1, 2]. Learning English is always associated with globalization where the nation needs to perform on the global stage for the sake of economy. Hence, this changing role and the growing importance of English in Indonesia have created new purposes and needs for learning English mainly by young Indonesians who have previously learned English as a foreign language (EFL) for communication and academic purposes [1]

However, learning English language and literature is considered challanging for Indonesian university students, especially during this disruption-covid era as there is transition of learning. Before, students meet their lecturers and friends face-to-face in their classrooms [3, 4]; later, they have to study from home and this causes some issues [5]. First, interaction becomes one-way; students do not get sufficient feedback on what they are doing, there is no opportunity to express opinions, and lack of participation so that communication skills are not developed. Second, lecturers have difficulty to incorporate a balanced and effective interaction in both synchronous and asynchronous platforms of teaching, determining the most appropriate technique, the focus of linguistic skills that must be prioritized, learning resources that can be easily accessed, as well as interesting and relevant learning media which make students not engaged in learning and less productive [6]. Thus, this paper explores the impelementation of learning at faculty of arts and education in a tertiary education institution in Indonesia during disruption-covid era, highlighting how interactions between student and lecturer, student and student, as well as student and learning materials are optimized using technology synchronously and asynchronously, predominantly in language and literature classrooms.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Aparicio, Bacao, and Oliveira [7] define online learning (also called: virtual learning, distance learning, m-learning, massive open online course or MOOC, learning management system or LMS) as a learning process facilitated by an innovative web-based based system on digital technology that contains various forms of education as well as a number of interaction activities. The goal is to provide an open, accessible, fun and interactive learning environment that supports and enhances the learning process. Dron and Anderson [8] state that online learning has its own characteristics, including student-centred; built in a structured and organized manner; involving massive participants and participation; integrated, timely and authentic. Because of these characteristics, online learning is carried out in two platforms, synchronous and asynchronous [9]. Please refer Fig. 1.
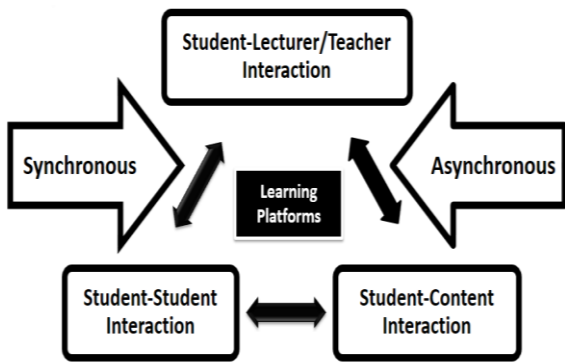
Fig. 1. Synchrnous and Asynchronous Platforms of Online Learning through Three Types of Interactions

Synchronous online learning is a type of real-time learning; interaction between lecturer and student as well as between student and student are carried out simultaneously like regular face-to-face meetings, facilitated by a system, usually video-conferencing [10, 11]. Meanwhile, asynchronous online learning is not time bound and students can carry out electronic activities in their own way, independently according to their own time availability. Normally, students only interact with learning resource or material such as reading materials, learning videos that are related to the topic of discussion while lecturers only supervise or check [12].

The key point is that both synchronous and asynchronous platforms need to accomodate interactions between lecturer and student, between student and student, and between student and learning material [13]. This is where interaction and learning are intertwined [5]. In language and literature classrooms, interaction cannot be separated from learning because they are the core of second language teaching pedagogy [14, 15, 16].

III. Method

To conduct this study, a qualitative design was used and observation was conducted for two semesters at faculty of arts and education in a higher learning institution in Indonesia, focusing on thirty English language and literature subjects which included writing, reading, speaking, and listening as well as poetry analysis and production, drama analysis and production, prose analysis and production, literary criticism, history of modern thought, and translation, which were conducted online. These online subjects were attended by students of English Department from year one until four as well as students from other faculties and universities using English as the medium of instruction and taught by professionally trained and certified lecturers with masters and PhD in English language, linguistics, literature, and education who used synchronous and asynchronous platforms of learning in their classrooms. The observed synchronous platform of learning channel was video conference through the university Zoom and Google Meet channels while the observed asynchronous platform of online learning channels included the university open online course or SPADA, the university youtube channel *Kuliah Teknokrat*, and the university library online public access catalogue or OPAC and e-journals. Later, it observed types of interactions in each learning channel and the activities.

Meanwhile, data analyzing procedures in this present study consisted of five steps. The first step was building a

database. All data obtained from observations were arranged and labeled in separate files in one folder, so there were thirty folders of data. Second, open-coding was done. In this step, the data were identified and analyzed carefully and the researcher was open to any possible synchronous and asynchronous platforms of learning channels found. Third, the researcher conducted focused-coding. This was done by classifying the data into types of interactions occured, including the activities based on the conceptual framework. Fourth, it was drawing emergent theme. The researcher focused on similar synchronous and asynchronous platforms that might be developed, then, emergent theme was obtained. Lastly, after having the emerging themes, the findings were presented.

IV. Findings

This study revealed that all lecturers have optimized interactions using technology in their language and literature online classrooms by balancing the use of synchronous and asynchronous platforms to facilitate student-lecturer, student-student, and student-learning material interactions.

A. Synchronous Platform of Online Learning

The results indicated that, in terms of synchronous platform, the lectures used video conference through the university Zoom and Google Meet channels to facilitate student-lecturer and student-student interactions. It can be seen in Fig. 2.

First, for student-lecturer interaction, the lecturers conducted lectures, discussions, and presentations. Through video conference, the lecturers transfered language and literature knowledge based on the decided topics and managed the turn taking, deciding who speaks, when to speak, and when to stop [4, 15]. They also facilitated discussions and presentations which gave opportunities for everyone to express their thoughts, exchange ideas, ask questions, and use their English language in various activities and for different purposes such as while presenting book reviews and lecturing character and characterization in prose, drama, and literry criticism classes. After that, the lecturers gave their feedbacks, reparing students' language errors (normally grammar and pronunciation errors and mistakes) as well as commenting their literary content knowledge which improved their English language and critical thinking skills [17, 18].
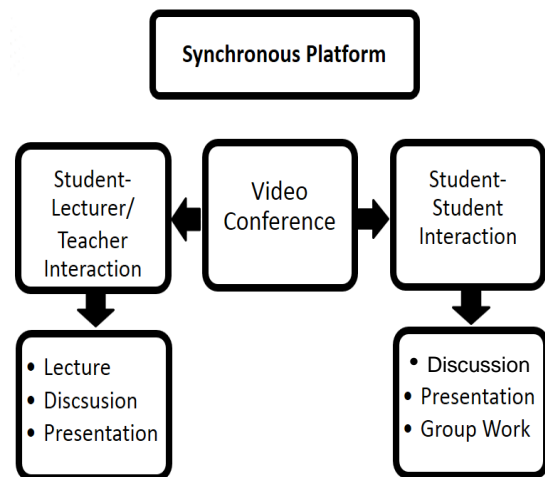

Fig. 2. Synchrnous Platform of Online Learning in Language and Literature Classrooms Using Video Conference

Second, similar to lecturer-student interaction, in student-student interaction they were also mediated by video conference. Through video conference, the students got opportunities to synchronously interact with their classmates in a series of presentation and discussion sessions as well as group work. Here, they were given opportunities to excange their ideas, give comments, and ask questions which could improve their English speaking skills and literary content knowledge as well [5, 16].

Moreover, the lecturers also offered remote alumni and industry talks, webminars, social services, and researches and publications programs to support faculty in making this transition. Alumni and industry talks made the students had opportunities to learn from great people outside of campus, making them more aware of the skillsets needed for their future career [1, 2]. Meanwhile, through researches and social services the students were able to contribute to the society, helping teachers, schools, and senior high school students who were struggling with online learning in this disruption-covid era. Their publications could be additional learning materials for them. This supplementary activities were also relevant with the spirit of *freedom of learning* or *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* program by the Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology of Republic of Indonesia [19].

B. Asynchronous Platform of Online Learning

In terms of asynchronous platform, the lectures utilized the university open online course or SPADA, the university youtube channel *Kuliah Teknokrat*, and the university library online public access catalogue or OPAC and e-journals in order to facilitate three types of interactions, including lecturer-student, student-student, and student-learning material.

First, through asychronous platform, all lecturers used the university official learning management system (LMS) or SPADA Teknokrat to interact with the students. Please refer the Fig. 3.

Here, the lecturers posed structured assignment and independet project which were introduced via the system in the beginning of the semester and the students had to do it step by step and consult their lecturers when they faced some issues. As most of the lecturers demanded progress report in the middle of the semester, the students frequently involved in intensive sessions of interactions with their respective lecturers before completing their assignment and project which succesfully promoted engagement [5, 12]. Surprisingly, the students also became productive learners as many of them published their works in national journals, newspapers, and anthologies.

Second, similar to lecturer-student interaction, LMS or SPADA Teknokrat also became asynchronous learning platform for student-student interaction. Here, the students involved in forum discussion which were related to their assignment and project or particular issues e.g. reviewing fiction, drafting drama script, or composing poetry. They also frequently conducted peer correction, giving comments or feedbacks on their friends' essays as well as papers, mainly in academic and scientific presentations as well as in writing classes or in literary criticism and history of modern thought subjects. This way of interaction was done in weekly basis for each subject, therefore, made them able to exercise their writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills, how they looked at something through different perspectives wisely. This also encouraged participation and promoted active learning [18, 15].

Third, through LMS or SPADA Teknokrat the lecturers facilitated the students to interact with reading materials. They provided e-books and lecture or tutorial slides. The reading materials were uploaded based on the lesson plan and updated weekly by considering the needs of the students which happened in all classes. Following that, the lecturers checked the students' undertanding towards their reading by asking them a series of questions during the lectures when they met via video conference. This made the students became autonomous learners [12].

Fourth, the lecturers also used a channel namely Teknokrat Youtube Channel *Kuliah Teknokrat* in their asynchronous learning platform to facilitate student-learning material interaction. Please refer Fig. 4.

Through this channel the students could access and watch videos related to the topics and materials being discussed. The videos were presented by the lecturers himself/herself with the help of online learning production studio crews of the university. This gave the students not only information related to the topic but also authentic input for learning which contributed to the improvements of their listening and speaking skills [5, 12, 20]

Fifth, the lecturers encouraged the students to interact with learning materials by accessing the university library OPAC and e-journals. It can be seen in Fig. 5.
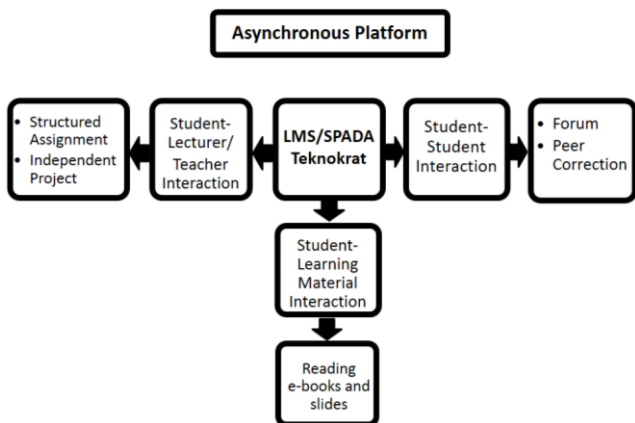

Fig. 3. Asynchrnous Platform of Online Learning in Language and Literature Classrooms Using LMS or SPADA Teknokrat
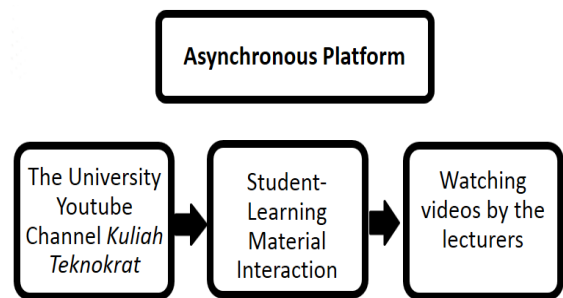

Fig. 4. Asynchrnous Platform of Online Learning in Language and Literature Classrooms Using The University Youtube Channel *Kuliah Teknokrat*
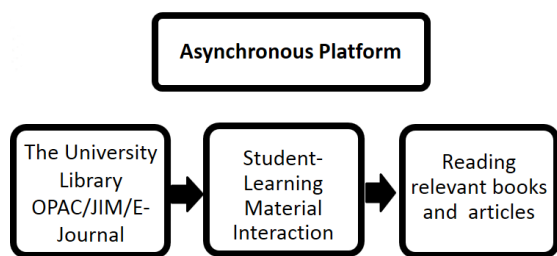
Fig. 5. Asynchrnous Platform of Online Learning in Language and Literature Classrooms Using The University Library OPAC/JIM/E-Journal

The university library OPAC and e-journals collections consisted of thousands of e-books, thesis, journal articles, and conference proceedings. The lecturers normally recommended selected reading materials based on the topic of discussion in a particular meeting. This helped the students to comprehend the materials at hand as they were given a lot of reading exposures which also acted as input to enhance their reading skills [20] as well as improve their literary knowledge [18]. In addition, this platform was practical as the students could frequently repeat, download, and save the e-books, slides, and articles in their personal computer for further intensive reading and discussion [12, 14].

V. CONCLUSION

To conclude, all lecturers had optimized synchronous and asynchronous platforms of online learning in their language and literature classrooms. By optimizing those two platforms, three types of interactions were successfully promoted using technology. This made the students could interact with their lecturers, other students, and learning materials, and society out of campus through various learning channels like video conference, the university open online course or SPADA, the university youtube channel *Kuliah Teknokrat*, and the university library online public access catalogue or OPAC and e-journals. As a result, most of the students completed their courses and many of them published their works (articles, book reviews, poems, and short stories) in journals, newspapers, and anthologies. This study suggests that language and literature lecturers and relevant stakeholders could use these synchronous and asynchronous platforms of online learning, including the supplementary activities in their online classrooms, as it could improve the students' language skills and literary knowledge, foster engangement, and make learning more productive.

REFERENCES

[1] E. Di Grapello, "Role of education and training sector in addressing skill mismatch in Indonesia," *in Education in Indonesia, D. Suryadharma and G.W. Jones, Eds. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2013, pp. 236-266.

[2] A. Rido, "English for university graduate employability: students and employers' coices," Advances in Social Science, *Education and Humanities Research,* vol. 430, pp. 6–10, 2020a.

[3] A. Rido and F.M., "Characteristics of classroom interaction of English language teachers in Indonesia and Malaysia," *International Journal of Language Education*, vol. 2, pp. 40–50, 2018.

[4] P. Vu and P.J. Fadde, "When to talk, when to chat: student's interaction in virtual classroom," *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, vol. 12, 41-52, 2013.

[5] A. Rido, N. Ibrahim, and RMK. Nambiar, Interacton and Pedagogy of Indonesian Vocational English Master Teachers, Kuala Lumpur: UKM Press, 2020.

[6] J. Valverde-Berrocoso, M. D. C. Garrido-Arroyo, C. Vurgos-Videla, and M.B. Morales-Cevallos, "Trends in educational research about e-learning: a systematic literature review (2009-2018)," Sustainability, vol. 12, pp. 1-23, 2020.

[7] M. Aparicio, F. Bacao, and T. Oliveira, "An e-learning theoretical framework," *J. Educ. Technol.Soc.*, vol. 19, pp. 292-307, 2016.

[8] J. Dron and T. Anderson, "The future of e-Learning," *in The Sage Handbook of e-Learning Research, Haythornwaite, C.A.: Sage*, pp. 537-556. 2016

[9] G. Salmon, E-tivities: the key to achieve online learning, London: Routledge, 2013.

[10] B. O'Rourke and U. Strickler, "Synchronous communication technologies for language learning: promise and challenges in research and pedagogy," CercleS, vol. 7: pp. 1–20, 2017

[11] N Ziegler, "Synchronous computer-mediated communication and interaction," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 38, pp. 553–586, 2016.

[12] B. Wilkins, "Asynchronous collaboration integrating online learning in foreign language classroom," *The Journal of Language and Teaching*, vol. 8, pp. 101-108, 2018.

[13] G. Moore, "Three types of interaction," *The American Journal of Distance Education*, vol. 3, pp. 1-7, 1989.

[14] A. Rido, RMK. Nambiar, N. Ibrahim, " Teaching and classroom management strategies of Indonesian master teachers: Investigating a vocational English classroom," *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, vol. 22, pp. 93–109, 2016.

[15] A. Rido, RMK. Nambiar, N. Ibrahim, "Interaction strategies of master teachers in Indonesian vocational classroom: A case study," *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, vol. 21, pp. 85–98, 2015.

[16] A. Rido, "Why they act the way they do?: Pedagogical practices of experienced vocational English language teachers in Indonesia," *International Journal of Language Education*, vol. 4, pp. 24–37, 2020.

[17] A. Rido, H. Kuswoyo, and R. Ayu, "Interaction management strategies in English literature lectures in Indonesian university setting," *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics*, vol. 5, pp. 315–337, 2020.

[18] D. Shi, "Teacher-student interaction in novel and poetry classrooms in the Hong Kong tertiary setting," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 3, pp. 1975-1982, 2013.

[19] Ministry of Education Republic of Indonesia, Mendikbud terbitkan SE tentang pelaksanaan pendidikan dalam masa darurat covid-19, available online: https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2020/03/mendikbud-terbitkan-se-tentang-pelaksanaan-pendidikan-dalam-masa-darurat-covid19 (accessed on 20 October 2020).

[20] M. Long, "Native speaker/non-native speaker conversation and the negotiation of meaning," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 4, pp. 126-141, 1983a.