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Online Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic: A Response to Challenges in Instructional Emergency

¹Siti Mina Tamah and ²Susana Teopilus

^{1,2}English Department, Teacher Training Faculty, Widya Mandala Catholic
University, Surabaya, Indonesia

¹mina@ukwms.ac.id; ²susanateopilus@ukwms.ac.id

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¹Siti Mina Tamah and ²Susana Teopilus

¹mina@ukwms.ac.id; ²susanateopilus@ukwms.ac.id

^{1,2}English Department, Teacher Training Faculty, Widya Mandala Catholic University, Surabaya, Indonesia

Abstract: Many studies highlight online instructional issues in an ordinary situation; however, this article is oriented to a very restricted online course in an extraordinary condition – the COVID-19 pandemic realm. The objectives of this article are (1) to portray how Writing-A lecturers within such a short time preparation conducted the online courses to achieve the course objectives, and (2) to depict how Writing-A students perceived the implementation of this online course. The study is based on a half-semester small-scale study project employing institution documents and surveys. The subjects were 43 students in an institution in Indonesia. The results demonstrate the Teaching Presence which was the new challenge faced by the lecturers and the Cognitive and Social presence which occurred in the students' new online learning. The significance of this study is the disclosure of how the encouragement of communities might contribute to conducive learning for both e-lecturers and e-students.

Key words: perception; online course; covid-19 pandemic; community of inquiry; writing class

Abstrak: Banyak penelitian yang mengetengahkan topik pembelajaran daring pada situasi biasa. Namun, artikel ini berorientasi pada pembelajaran daring yang sangat terbatas dalam kondisi luar biasa – ranah pandemi COVID-19. Tujuan dari artikel ini adalah (1) untuk menggambarkan bagaimana dosen Writing-A dalam waktu yang singkat berjabaku dalam persiapan melaksanakan pembelajaran daring untuk mencapai tujuan pembelajaran, dan (2) untuk menggambarkan bagaimana mahasiswa Writing-A memandang pelaksanaan pembelajaran daring ini. Studi ini didasarkan pada studi skala kecil yang

berlangsung setengah semester menggunakan dokumen institusi dan survei. Subyek penelitian adalah 43 mahasiswa di salah satu institusi di Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan Teaching Presence yang merupakan tantangan baru yang dihadapi dosen, dan juga Kognitif dan Sosial Presence yang terjadi dalam pembelajaran daring untuk mahasiswa baru. Signifikansi penelitian ini adalah terungkapnya isu bagaimana dorongan masyarakat dapat berkontribusi pada pembelajaran yang kondusif baik bagi dosen maupun mahasiswa yang dikelilingi situasi elektronik.

Kata kunci: *persepsi; kelas daring; pandemi covid-19; komunitas inkuiri; kelas menulis*

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide spread of coronavirus disease – officially declared by WHO on March 11 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020) – has tremendously affected many countries, including Indonesia. Two foremost purposes extensively publicized by the Indonesian government are to reduce the fatality rate and to crush the infection curve. The Indonesian government then implemented the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) popularly known as *Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar* which translated as Large-scale Social Restrictions.

In Jakarta, the epicenter of this disease, the first ECQ was instigated for the period of 10 to 23 April 2020, which was followed by the second and third ECQ, which was terminated on 4 June 2020 (Kompas.com 20/05/2020). Similarly, Surabaya, the second biggest city, observed the same policy from 28 April to 11 May 2020 (Kompas.com 09/05/2020), followed by the second and third ECQ covering Sidoarjo and Gresik, the two neighboring cities from 11 May to 8 June 2020.

The ECQ policy has also greatly affected Indonesian education. To enforce the physical distancing attempt, schools as well as universities started to implement '*Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh*' (PJJ) – the term for distance learning. The issuance of the 24 March 2020 Circular Letter Number 4 Year 2020 about emergency distance learning due to COVID-19 consisted of two big stipulations: the abandoning of 2020 National Exam which is annually carried out in March, and the suspending of schools.

This distance learning is considered the most feasible one to respond to the outburst. A huge change in the teaching and learning process – termed ‘emergency e-learning’ (Murphy, 2020) – transforms face-to-face classes into online learning classes. Many teachers are not ready for this online learning as the facility is not yet entirely provided (Lie et al., 2020). This fact also poses a particular challenge to higher education institutions.

The university where the authors teach has made tremendous efforts to support the rapid transition to accommodate the online teaching and learning processes in the whole university. In an extremely short three-day notice, the rector issued a circular letter informing the campus lockdown in response to the ECQ observed in Surabaya. A further attempt to facilitate the implementation of online learning to substitute the on-campus learning activities was to improve the capacity and the needed bandwidth for the university learning management system (LMS). Another attempt was to provide training for all university lecturers. The English Education Study Program, being one of the study programs, responded to this change by requiring all courses – one of them Writing A – to be delivered online.

In a traditional writing course, there are lots of interactions and individual conferences between teacher and students, enabling the students to have direct instruction, guidance, and feedback to help them write better. This situation is quite different from a writing online class, where face-to-face interaction is not available. This article is a small case study report about the implementation of the Writing-A online course, which is aimed at revealing the followings:

- (1) how Writing-A lecturers conducted the online courses to achieve the course objectives, and
- (2) how Writing-A students perceived the implementation of this online course.

ONLINE LEARNING

Online learning or e-learning has developed since IT developed rapidly and entered the education sector. In developed countries, online learning has increasingly become widespread due to better speed of IT advancements (Chen, Ko, Kinshuk & Lin, 2005). Network technologies have enabled two parties (teacher and students) separated by space to be ‘collected’ again virtually.

Table 1:
The distinction between traditional classroom learning and e-learning

	Traditional Classroom Learning	E-Learning
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate feedback • Being familiar to both instructors and learners • Motivating students • Cultivation of a social community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-centered and self-paced • Time and location flexibility • Cost-effective • Potentially available to a global audience • Unlimited access to knowledge • Archival capacity for knowledge reuse and sharing
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor-centered • Time and location constraints • More expensive to deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of immediate feedback in asynchronous e-learning • Increased preparation time for the instructor • Not comfortable for some • Potentially more frustration, anxiety, and confusion

Source: Zhang et al., 2004, p.76

This online learning implies the confrontation to education within four walls. The four classroom walls have been broken down, changing the traditional classroom setting to online learning. With further IT advancement, the platforms of online learning have been designed to approach the original mode of interaction where the faces of teacher and students can still be captured and recorded to enable the repetition of the instruction, or ‘capability for knowledge reuse’ – as Zhang et al. (2004) put it.

Russell (2001 in Hrastinski, 2008), having reviewed 355 comparative studies, reported that there was no significant difference between traditional and e-learning modes in students’ learning outcomes. Meng-Lei and Yuan (2019) revealed a different instance. They proved that online learning for college students was beneficial. The mean score in the experimental group was significantly higher than the one in the control group. Disregarding the polarized result of the internet-based learning implementation, e-learning is arguably a radical change fueling transition for the sake of supporting learning ‘in a more personalized, flexible, portable, and on-demand manner.’ (Zhang et al., 2004, p.75).

In the literature, two crucial modes of online learning have constantly been discussed: synchronous and asynchronous. The term synchronous online learning is initially developed as it is close to the face-face classroom meeting. The regular face-to-face classroom meeting scheduled to occur inside the four classroom walls has been moved to outside the walls by technological advancements. Implicitly a synchronous session necessitates simultaneous student-teacher presence which has been scheduled set aside by the students and the teacher to 'meet' virtually together.

On the other hand, asynchronous online learning is not time bound and students can work more independently at their own pace. A study reported by Perveen (2016) indicated that asynchronous e-language learning was quite beneficial for second-language learners but with some limitations. Perveen eventually suggested a balance of both synchronous and asynchronous online modes for a better environment for e-language learning.

COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY (COI)

The two foremost words forming this section are *Community* and *Inquiry*. The former designates a group of individuals with common expectations and interests. The latter resembles the steps of the scientific method as a way to develop critical thinking, as Dewey (1938) conceptualizes (Miy & Diaz, 2015). As this article is online-oriented, the authors decide "virtual learning communities comprise a participative network that stimulates communication, the contribution of ideas, and socialization of experiences that lead to personal and collective identity, and as a result, builds knowledge" (Miy & Diaz, 2015, p. 83) to refer to *Community*. For the complete definition of CoI for this study, the authors extend it as follows: CoI refers to a group of students and the three lecturers assigned in the three Writing-A parallel classes possessing shared learning objectives and adopting the idea that knowledge socialization is advantageous as it improves further learning for both the students and lecturers.

Associated with the phrase CoI, some researchers use the terms *learning community*, and *teacher community* (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Tsiotakis & Jimoyiannis, 2016). Some other terms include *Professional Learning Community* (Prawitasari & Suharto, 2020), *Community of Practice* (McLaughlin and Talbert 2006; Murugaiah, Thang, Azman, & Nambiar, 2013), and *Teacher Learning Community* (Murugaiah, Azman, Thang, & Krish, 2012).

Whatever terms are used, they are primarily derived from the ideas introduced by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (1999). Further, it is pointed out that CoI is the most frequently cited online learning theoretical framework (Halverson et al., 2013 in Garrison, 2016).

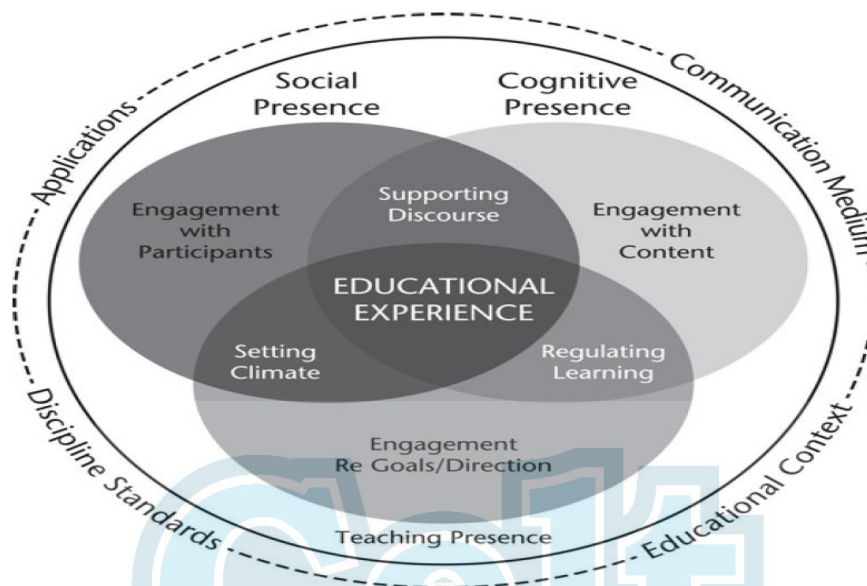


Figure 1:
Community of inquiry framework
(Garrison, 2016; 2017)

Figure 1 shall reflect the operational elements and their intersections that result in a deep and meaningful collaborative learning experience highlighted as ‘EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE’ in the intersection center. The core participants in the learning process namely the students and teachers are both engaged within the three essential elements: Cognitive Presence, Social Presence, and Teaching Presence (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999).

The Cognitive Presence is meant to be the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry can construct meaning through communication. This Cognitive Presence is essential in critical thinking which frequently becomes the ultimate goal of all higher education. Garrison (2009) further points out that Cognitive Presence yields the heart of CoI as it is a time when students are challenged with a problem or issue to confirm understanding brought about by, among others, reflection.

Social Presence refers to the ability of participants in the CoI to project their characteristics into the community. The significance is how it functions as a support for Cognitive Presence so that it brings about critical thinking. Miy and Diaz (2015) add that Social Presence relates to how the community establishes a trustworthy atm-demonstrates demonstrate affective signals like the use of names, humor, and greetings.

The last element in the framework, Teaching Presence, comprises two functions. The first function is the design of the educational experience covering the selection, organization, and primary presentation of course content, as well as the design and development of learning activities and assessments. The second function – facilitation – is a responsibility that may be shared among the teacher and the students. The Teaching Presence element is a means to support and enhance Social and Cognitive Presences to realize educational outcomes. To this element, Hrastinski and Rising (2020) extend that teachers’ knowledge of how to learn should be implemented for the sake of student development – indicating further teacher professionalism.

RESEARCH METHOD

The main data sources for this descriptive study included (1) institution documents, (2) students’ survey answers, and (3) students’ Writing-A journals – part of the course assessment method. Referring to the theoretical framework, the researchers used the first data source to discuss Teaching Presence. The second and third sources were for handling Social and Cognitive Presences.

The researchers performed the following to ensure the validity of self-made survey items: (1) all reread the theory of CoI to get a more solid understanding, (2) one researcher prepared the first draft, (3) the other two read and gave input for consistency between the measurement items, and see if some more items would be needed to cover the Social and Cognitive Presences, (4) all met in online meetings to discuss it, and (5) one researcher improved it – the use of a 4-point Likert scale instead of 6 after referring to Chang (1994) arguing that the 4-point scale had higher reliability than the 6-point scale.

For the try-out, the writers involved 24 students from semester 4. These students were directed to <https://forms.gle/fhvmMncpCTEs5yhNA> for the try-out completion.

The survey items were analyzed based on two classifications: (1) those items which yielded textual data to see if they were understood, and (2) those

which would be calculated using Cronbach's Alpha to see if the items measure the same characteristics to comprise reliable items.

Seven constructs were classified from the 34 items formulated. Constructs 1 and 2 were to identify the engagement in online learning before the pandemic and during the pandemic focusing on common IT issues and Writing-A online courses respectively. Constructs 3 and 4 were to examine the synchronous-asynchronous Writing-A online course and the learning environment prepared for the course respectively. Construct 5 was to compare the online vs. face-to-face learning modes. Constructs 6 and 7 respectively penetrated the learning environment for group work issues and miscellaneous issues (See Table 2 for more details).

From the try-out, three items were found to be misunderstood by two students. As it comprised only 8%, the items were kept without revision. The statistical analysis of the items indicated that there was internal consistency and reliability. The average Cronbach's alpha brought about a value of 0.73. Referring to Taber's (2018) classification, the researchers affirmed that the research instrument reached the label of above good - to be precise 'high' though still 5 steps more to be 'excellent'.

The reliability having been proved, the actual items were released to the actual research respondents, i.e. 46 students registered in Writing-A. These students were chosen for convenience purposes - indicating a non-probability sampling technique. The subjects were close to hand - they were the students of the researchers who were Writing-A lecturers in the academic year. After the semester completion in early June 2020, they were invited to <https://forms.gle/GYLhyq1BMti3xZUR7>. 43 students were responding (94% response rate).

Table 2:
Survey item table specification

Construct	Sub-issue	Survey Item	Note	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Engagement in online learning - pre-pandemic	1-3 (3 items)	No Cronbach's alpha calculation as it belongs to those yielding nominal or textual data	-

2	Engagement in online learning – during the pandemic (focus on general IT)	4-9 (6 items)	Cronbach’s alpha calculation performed to see internal consistency	0.69
3	Engagement in Synchronous-asynchronous Writing online course	10-15 (6 items)	Cronbach’s alpha calculation was performed to see internal consistency (excluding one item with a yes/no answer)	0.84
4	Learning environment prepared for the Writing online course (materials, assignment, assessment, etc.)	16-21 (6 items)	Cronbach’s alpha calculation performed to see internal consistency	0.68
5	The learning environment for online vs. face-to-face modes	22-24 (3 items)	Cronbach’s alpha calculation performed to see internal consistency	0.67
6	Learning environment focusing on group work	25-29 (5 items)		0.79
Average Cronbach’s Alpha Value				0.73

The ones used as a triangulation were the three journals in the second half of the semester. To answer the first research question, the writers described how the sudden Writing-A was prepared to be a fully online course to keep the class to achieve the course objectives. To answer the second one, the writers focused on the survey answers.

The analyses were presented in frequency and percentages based on the order of the constructs determined. They were analyzed further by relying on the survey’s open-ended answers and the writing journals. Special symbols were used in the analysis: [A1] means the supporting data were taken from a student coded A1; [B1, J2] means the supporting data were taken from journal 2 of a student coded B1.

FINDINGS

A. How Writing-A Lecturers Conducted the Online Course to Achieve the Course Objectives

The university where this case study was conducted has developed its own LMS to provide a virtual learning environment to students. In 2000, the university set up a Moodle-based LMS. Having obtained the fund from a competitive scheme by the Indonesian government in 2010, the university named it specifically *bella@ukwms.ac.id* (henceforth, BELLA). BELLA is an abbreviation of *BE*lajar dan *LA*tihan meaning *study* and *practice* literally; ukwms is the initial of the university name. Before the pandemic, not more than 1% of campus courses embraced it. Yet, when the pandemic occurred, BELLA use boomed suddenly (amounting to about 98%). The remaining courses used other platforms like Schoology.

Responding to the rapid change from face-to-face on-campus courses into online courses during the ECQ policy, all lecturers at the Department prepared their classes. Coordinated by the Faculty and the Department, meetings and flashed workshops were conducted. Even a WhatsApp group named *Posko Bella FKIP* was created on 19 March 2020. Questions, answers, and complaints were accommodated, and the lecturers learned from one another via this facility.

The online classes started on 23 March 2020, right after the mid-semester examination. This implies there were seven remaining meetings devoted to dealing with the remaining topics: Sentence Variety, Paragraph, and Essay Writing.

The lecturers agreed that asynchronous and synchronous sessions would be used. For the asynchronous sessions, the written materials (PowerPoint slides and exercises) were posted at BELLA or sent via WhatsApp group to students before the scheduled synchronous meetings to give students time to read and learn them before the synchronous sessions. These materials, which used to be presented using LCD in class, were since then uploaded at BELLA.

The lecturers would use WhatsApp group chat to tell them what to do.

1. Asking them first to state their attendance in the synchronous session and guiding them on the next step to do, for example going to Zoom to participate in the lecturer's explanation and discussion, asking them to post their answers and let the others and the lecturer read and give feedback. The feedback session would also use the forum facility at BELLA. This

activity was therefore similar to the direct oral discussion conducted in the face-to-face meeting, the difference being that this was done using written messages via WhatsApp group chat or forum facility at BELLA.

2. Giving weekly individual homework and group work providing students the opportunity to have a virtual small group discussion. The completed assignment was uploaded at BELLA and graded by the lecturers.
3. Asking the students whether they still had any questions before closing the synchronous session. If so, they could send them via WhatsApp group chat or discussion forum at BELLA. Then, the lecturers asked the students to read the announcement for the next session at BELLA.

In the asynchronous session, the students could always revisit BELLA and review the materials that had been discussed and have a look at the announcement and materials for the following meetings. The students could do it in their own free time and at their own pace.

At the end of the semester, the lecturers discuss the test items virtually. After the test problem was submitted to the Head of the Department to be reviewed and declared OK, it was uploaded at BELLA by each lecturer. The students logged in at BELLA 15 minutes before the scheduled time to report their attendance. The test problem was revealed at exactly the scheduled time. When they finished doing the test, they submitted their answering file at BELLA.

B. How the Writing-A Students Perceived the Online Course Implementation

1. Engagement in online learning – pre-pandemic

Of 43 responses gathered from the students, 37.21% admitted that they had never been engaged in online learning before the COVID-19 pandemic, while the majority (62.79%) admitted they had been once engaged in online learning before. Among the majority, 40.74% said that the first time them to have been engaged was in the first half of the semester, 29.63% had it when they were in the previous semester, and still 29.63% had it when they were in high school. Further responses related to the learning management platforms used, the majority (reaching almost 78%) said that they used Schoology. Others (about 15%) mentioned BELLA and Google Classroom. About 7% stated the use of Edmodo and WhatsApp groups.

2. Engagement in online learning – during the pandemic (with a focus on general IT)

Being able to join the Writing-A online class well during the pandemic does not mean that the students had no problems. Not having a good and stable internet connection became one of the students' problems. Slightly above 51% admitted that they had trouble finding a good internet connection. Some supporting data covered mentioned *Sometimes my internet connection got in trouble like when I give an online presentation [A3, J3]* and *We are still nervous to use the online exam because sometimes the internet got in trouble [A14, J3]*. An almost equal percentage was found for those admitting no problem. This finding was similar to the issue of internet quota. In light of the online learning glitches presented in this section, this small-scale research is likely to support the claim pointing out that online learning brings about potential frustration, anxiety, and confusion (Zhang, Zhau, & Zhou, 2004), especially to newly born e-students in this research. Novikov's (2020) finding is similar - internet connection issues are a major factor bringing a negative impact on the learning process.

Table 3:
Online learning glitches (it and non-it oriented)

Statements	Negative Perception		Positive Perception		Mean*
	SD	D	A	SA	
C2.1 Not having a good internet connection is my problem in joining Writing-A online course.	7 16.28%%	14 32.56%	18 41.86%	4 9.30%	2.44
C2.2 Not having enough internet quota is my problem in joining Writing-A online course.	11 25.58%	11 25.58%	13 30.23%	8 18.60%	2.42
C2.3 Not having a computer/laptop is my problem in joining Writing-A online course.	14 32.56%	15 34.88%	9 20.93%	5 11.63%	2.12

C2.4 The specification of my computer/laptop cannot support online learning properly.	9	18	10	6	2.30
	20.93%	41.86%	23.26%	13.95%	
C2.5 Managing time is my problem in joining Writing-A online course.	9	15	16	3	2.30
	20.93%	34.88%	37.21%	6.98%	
C2.6 Not having a conducive learning environment at home or my boarding house is my problem in joining Writing-A online courses.	10	13	15	5	2.35
	23.26%	30.23%	34.88%	11.63%	

Note: SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree
 *A 4-point Likert scale

Given computer/laptop procurement and laptop specification, more percentages (about 67% and 63% of students respectively) claimed that the possession of a computer/laptop was not problematical for them. As most students were part of Generation Z, most of them were unsurprisingly familiar with smartphones and computers in general. The majority of Generation Z have used digital technology since they were young. Hence, it should not be run for the students to have difficulty in online learning. Among four IT-oriented problems, it can be concluded that computer/laptop procurement was the one contributing to the least problematic issue for the students. As Table 3 reveals, the Likert scale score (2.12) was the lowest among all.

Regarding other problems, it was found that almost half (44.19%) got difficulty in time management. Supporting appraisals were *How I manage my time is still not good enough for a university student [C8, J2]*, and *Indeed this online course has a lot of work to do but the intelligence to mature in dividing time is very necessary [A2, J2]*. Similarly, this study also found that about half of the number of the students (53.59%) revealed that they had a conducive learning environment at home or their boarding house to a certain degree. The remaining (about 47%) admitted they lacked it. After being probed to tell more, two of those agreeing 'strongly' to the lack of a conducive home environment informed *A lot of people in my house, Miss. I have 4 nephews and 2 nieces. So I was often disturbed [B8]* and *Well, I have a little brother, he's still 4 years old and he's very active. He wants to find*

out what I'm doing, especially when I have a class. well, his curiosity makes me kinda disturbed, especially when I have afternoon classes [B5].

3. Engagement in synchronous-asynchronous writing-a online course

From those 39 students admitting they were active in joining the synchronous session, this study found two groups of reasons: the first two indicated motivation issues, and the last group indicated only confirmation 'Yes, *I was very active*'. Further analysis on the motivation issue indicated 11 answers could be classified into two: those indicating the presence of intrinsic motivation (*I am trying to maintain my focus on studying even at home [B7]*) and extrinsic motivation (*Because it was scheduled, it required me to attend [A13]*). It was found that 7 (63.6%) were intrinsic motivation oriented.

Table 4:
Synchronous-asynchronous perception

Statements	Negative Perception		Positive Perception		Mean*
	SD	D	A	SA	
C3.1 I joined the scheduled synchronous sessions actively.	0	4	25	14	3.23
	0%	9.30%	58.14%	32.56%	
C3.2 Apart from the synchronous session, I also did an asynchronous session to see any new announcements.	0	3	26	14	3.26
	0%	6.98%	60.47%	32.56%	
C3.3 Apart from the synchronous session, I also did an asynchronous session to see/read the posted materials.	0	4	26	13	3.21
	0%	9.30%	60.47%	30.23%	
C3.4 Apart from the synchronous session, I also did an asynchronous session to review what has been discussed during the synchronous session by looking back at the forum or chat facilities.	2	4	26	11	3.07
	4.65%	9.30%	60.47%	25.58%	
C3.5 Apart from the synchronous session, I also had a small discussion with classmates.	0	3	21	19	3.37
	0%	6.98%	48.84%	44.19%	

Note: SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree

*A 4-point Likert scale

Among the minority (slightly above 9%) admitting they did not join synchronous sessions actively, two students added similar reasons: *Sometimes my internet is lacking so I cannot join the session actively [B3; B12]*. This echoed the complaint *To be honest, I don't think that the e-learning system is working for me because I don't feel any advantages from this system. ... I just want my normal college life with my friends and offline learning with my lecturers [B3, J2]*.

The analysis of the next two items similarly disclosed positive perceptions. The majority (above 90%) admitted that apart from the synchronous session, they also did asynchronous sessions to see any new announcements and read the posted materials. Regarding the review activity, 86% of students admitted they did review on their own what had been discussed by looking back at the forum or chat facilities. The Cognitive Presence was implicitly also high in asynchronous sessions. Among several reasons obtained, two worth citing are *If I didn't read it in the first place, I wouldn't have understood anything [B12]* and *I want to keep myself informed, and I want to understand the learning materials better [C4]*.

Regarding the presence of small discussions, it is found that only 3 (6.98%) students perceived that no group work was performed. Two did not provide any reasons. One seemed a typical insulated person writing: *Just to prepare the presentation I did it [A2]*. A2 seemed to be confused with the sudden change causing hopelessness: *Online presentations are different from class presentations. I feel a little strange, maybe everyone also feels that way but this is all for our good to prevent the spread of the coronavirus [A2, J2]*. When probed to reveal more after the survey completion, A2 detailed *As a whole I like the new method that created a good presentation method. the method makes all members work, not interdependent on just one member. but what I don't like is the prompter role that I feel needs to be removed because it's not so visible [A2]*. Role assigning, argued by Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005 in Tamah, 2015), is advantageous in enhancing greater participation of group members, ensuring various aspects of a learning task, and reassuring interdependence among members. This finding though obtained from only one student's honest confession was quite a strong proof to the idea argued.

Classroom face-to-face teaching typically involves forming students into small learning groups working on various tasks assigned. Learning that occurs in face-to-face classroom meetings is implicitly collaborative (Aunurrahman, Hamied & Emilia, 2017; Tamah & Wirjawan, 2018; Xethakis 2016). Tamah (2011) reported that assigning specific roles to individual students working in small learning groups could be beneficial as low-achieving students, in particular, were stimulated to become less passive and more involved. The highest mean

score amounting to 3.37 went to this particular issue. The majority unanimously provided a positive perception of group work. Some reasons worth quoting are *Because it helps me when I'm too shy to ask my lecturer [B8]*, and *If I don't understand the materials or assignments well, I will ask and have a discussion with my friend and vice versa. I think it is good to know and learn from different opinions [C6]* indicating that they had group work for learning academic issues. This further implies that knowledge creation is naturally social (Gaeis 1985 Ellis 2009 in Tamah, 2017).

Besides Cognitive Presence, Social Presence was indicated in the group work. Obtaining *Yes it makes me feel well cause my friends smile I can feel blessed [A11]*, and *I have a lot of discussions with my friends, in addition to socializing also to find out the situation that I do not know, and by discussing with friends can facilitate us in undergoing online classes [A13]*, this study found an interesting revelation. Social Presence was pointed out obviously.

Related to synchronous-asynchronous preference, this study finds that the majority (to be exact 69.77%) of students opted for the 'both' alternative. This particular finding authenticated the suggestion from Perveen (2016) to have a balance of both online modes. The application of both synchronous and asynchronous sessions could then be retained for further development of online courses for the sake of a better learning environment.

The survey analysis to date reveals that the majority of the students had a positive attitude toward synchronous and asynchronous sessions. The first evidence is found in Table 4 (C3.1) which has been chosen unanimously as it reached slightly above 90%. This indirectly revealed Cognitive Presence was very high in synchronous sessions.

4. Learning environment for writing-a online course

As indicated in Table 5 almost all conceded *agree* and *strongly agree* responses. Of 43 students, only one (2.33%) student disagreed with "The assignments given was helpful". Among the majority, one student stated *It [the assignment] develops my reading skill because I have to read many times to perfectly understand the written instructions. [A1, J2]*.

Likewise, the majority (reaching almost 98%) asserted positive perception: the feedback received helped them improve their writing. This finding similarly appears for the followings: writing reflective journals helped them improve their writing, and enough writing materials were provided. Interestingly, although almost all agreed they got enough writing materials,

most of them still tried to get additional online resources to learn on their own - though it was the smallest (3.05) among the Likert scales obtained.

Table 5:
Writing-a online course learning environment

Statements	Negative Perception		Positive Perception		Mean*
	SD	D	A	SA	
C4.1 The assignments given helped me understand the writing materials better.	0	1	20	22	3.49
	0%	2.23%	48.51%	51.16%	
C4.2 The feedback I received from my teacher helped me improve my writing.	0	1	16	26	3.58
	0%	2.33%	37.21%	60.46%	
C4.3 Writing reflective journals helped me improve my writing	0	2	16	25	3.53
	0%	4.65%	37.21%	58.14%	
C4.4 I got enough materials to learn Writing-A from my teacher.	0	2	21	20	3.42
	0%	4.65%	48.84%	46.51%	
C4.5 Apart from the materials I got from my teacher, I also tried to get additional online resources to learn the materials on my own.	3	3	26	11	3.05
	6.98%	6.98%	60.47%	25.58%	
C4.6 I was encouraged to reflect on my learning.	0	3	26	14	3.26
	0%	6.98%	60.47%	32.56%	

Note: SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree

*A 4-point Likert scale

It was also found that the majority of the students were encouraged to reflect on their learning. This study found that teachers' feedback - Teaching presence - was perceived the highest (3.58) revealing also the high Cognitive presence in the learning environment.

5. The learning environment for online vs. face-to-face modes

Largely, most students agreed that the face-to-face classroom instruction they received before the pandemic was more effective than online one. About 84% of students agreed they mastered the materials more when joining face-to-face instruction. Some supporting documents worth quoting are *Learning by the online system is difficult, especially for those of us who are hard and late for thinking and understanding [A4, J3]*; and *Honestly, an online class is not that easy. There are many problems that we face together, for example, miscommunication. [Lecturer] already gave us detailed instructions, but some of us still didn't follow the right instructions [A5, J3]*. This study finding is congruent with the one of Novikov (2020) who found similarly that the majority of students (reaching almost 87%) preferred traditional face-to-face learning and would opt for it if available.

Table 6:
Learning environment (online vs. face-to-face modes)

Statements	Negative Perception		Positive Perception		Mean*
	SD	D	A	SA	
C5.1. Compared to during the pandemic, I mastered the materials more when joining face-to-face classroom instruction.	2 4.65%	5 11.63%	22 51.16%	14 32.56%	3.12
C5.2. Compared to during the pandemic, I communicated with my friends and teacher better when joining face-to-face classroom instruction.	1 2.33%	4 9.30%	23 53.49%	15 34.88%	3.21
C5.3. Compared to during the pandemic, I got to know my friends more when joining face-to-face classroom instruction.	1 2.33%	4 9.30%	19 44.19%	19 44.19%	3.31

Note: SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree
*A 4-point Likert scale

Related to communication issues, the majority had better communication via face-to-face classroom instruction than online. The difficulty faced via online communication is illustrated: *So we use Zoom..., but this online class is not effective because we cannot get social interactions with others even though we had video calls [A10, J1]*. Concerning the last item, again, the majority were having difficulties in getting to know their friends via online communication during the pandemic. This exemplification *Now that I can't meet my friends and do my usual routine, everything feels so different [B12, J1]* reveals that my Social Presence was a bit ruined during online courses.

6. Learning environment focusing on group work

As Table 7 indicates, Social and Cognitive presences occur in the Writing-A online course. The majority answered unanimously for the positive perception – a perspective predominantly vital to writing classes where students are required to exchange and provide feedback on their work and where collaborative work is expected. Among the analyzed items, it is obvious that the most unanimously answered items showing positive perception went to life skill improvement during the pandemic. The Likert scale score (3.3) indicated it was the highest. Some obtained reasons included *I learn how to fix my wifi on my own (it's true), I learn how to manage my task and not procrastinate [B3]*, and *I lived in a small city before and never used any app to have online classes at that time, so when I have to face the ignorance about ICT during this online class, I could manage the problem perfectly [B4]*.

This study also found that during the pandemic the students talked more about general life issues. This is understandable as the learning change is caused by a pandemic triggering life issues dominating the talk. One journal is worth revealing: *It was not like my regular day on campus, this time I did not go there, I stayed at home due to the outbreak of Corona. It was weird it is still a weird feeling until now, I want to go to campus and meet my friend. Staying at home suffocates me, I do not want to die bored. [Lecturer] gave us a task about my favorite places, I remember it clearly that I wrote my bed and beaches. Later on, [Lecturer] gave us a Writing Tag, when we should continue our friend's sentence but made it relevant, and we should correct the mistake. There were also materials [Lecturer] given to us to study [B3, J1]*. Life issues seemed to dominate the journal as more than half of it talked about life issues.

Meanwhile, one of the four students from the NO group wrote *The outbreak is such difficulty in life that we should overcome and turn it into something positive. Although during this difficult time, I still have the responsibility to study and to*

get a good score [A1, J1]. A1 while also revealing complaints about life admitted the study responsibility surpassed the life issue

Table 7:
Learning environment (small group oriented)

Statements	Negative Perception		Positive Perception		Mean *
	SD	D	A	SA	
C6.1 I had my small group discuss the assignments.	3	5	21	14	3.07
	6.98 %	11.63 %	48.84%	32.56%	
C6.2 During the small group discussion, I got assisted by my classmates.	2	7	23	11	3
	4.65 %	16.28 %	53.49%	25.58%	
C6.3 During the small group discussion, I assisted my classmates.	1	10	20	12	3
	2.33 %	23.26 %	46.51%	27.91%	
C6.4 Joining the Writing online course improved my life skills.	1	3	21	18	3.3
	2.33 %	6.98%	48.84%	41.86%	

Note: SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree

* A 4-point Likert scale

. A similar case is detected: *The stress hits differently. We can't even have a proper life because we are not allowed to go outside and meet our friends. Learning online, we need to learn more because we can't even have a face-to-face meeting which makes it worse. All I need to do now is to be patient and to be more diligent to survive this hard time [C10, J1].*

FURTHER DISCUSSION

The practice of assessing group work was continued by one author implementing group presentation – each member would get different roles as a spokesperson, prompter, technician, and moderator in one cohesive presentation and the rotated roles were determined on the presentation day (Putranto, 2019; Tamah, 2015; 2017). Putting it into practice for the first time for an online course (members were separated by space) yielded quite a positive comment disregarding the fact that the voice came from only two 4-member

groups of students. When probed to reveal further *I had a new experience to deliver the presentation online, and it was amazing [A1], Online presentation, that's one of the lessons for me [A9], and I like most when presenting, because an online presentation we learn how to speak well even though not face to face [A15]*, the eight students agreed to have the new culture to be applied again for Writing online class – a 3.4 Likert score was obtained. This deserves further investigation.

This small-scale study found that though group work was not overtly formed by all three lecturers, online learning yielded collaborative learning. Slightly above 80% of students admitted it (Table 7). Further research is worth conducting to get more insights about this particular Cognitive Presence in the implementation of the new learning environment. It is found that during the pandemic, students talked about general life issues more than academic ones. This study did not examine if the case was similar to the normal study period before the pandemic. Further studies can investigate this issue to contribute more insights into student learning.

The students' reasons obtained from the survey *To help my friends or I ask something to my friends when I don't understand something [B3], and Mostly because we're confused about how things should be done [B14]* indicated that they had group work for learning academic issues. The authors would humbly relate it to VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). As VUCA reigns at present, it might be righteous to imbue ambiguity in nowadays teaching. It triggers discussion – students' thinking and solving problems together and without leaving aside the teachers whose role is a facilitator. A bit of ambiguity might challenge both teachers and students prompting Cognitive and Teaching Presences.

CONCLUSION

Disregarding the limitation that this study merely includes one online course, this paper has contributed to portraying how a massive online course was performed in a very limited time and revealed the perceived challenges by a cohort of 43 students engaged in a skill subject during the COVID-19 pandemic. Theoretically, the study is expected to reveal the extent of the encouragement of communities for both teachers and students. Teachers are challenged to develop their professionalism so that they possess Teacher Design Knowledge (TDK) competency having the roles of listeners, collaborators, innovators, and leaders (Kim, 2019). Students need to, as Lie (2020) argues, build up their discipline, interdependence, and responsibility. For more practical significance, it is

expected that the study can contribute – though in a very limited scope – to post-pandemic pedagogy.

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