

An Indonesian Secondary English Teacher' Strategies to Accommodate Computer Mediated Communication for Group Discussions: An Interview Study

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Abstract

Numerous scholarly inquiries have been dedicated to exploring the advantageous consequences of implementing computer-mediated communication (CMC) for the purpose of orchestrating online group discussions. However, there is a paucity of empirical evidence elucidating how educators adapt to the use of CMC in the context of online group deliberations. The present research delves into the experiences of an English teacher in an Indonesian secondary school who employed CMC as a pedagogical tool. Grounded within the qualitative research paradigm, this study conducted unstructured in-depth interviews and subsequently subjected the interview transcripts to thematic analysis. The resultant findings shed light on several pivotal aspects of the teacher's role in CMC-enhanced online group discussions, which encompass the activation of students' creative faculties, the fostering of students' self-regulation of learning, the cultivation of a conducive learning environment, the advocacy for technological integration, and the effective management of assessment procedures in the online group discussion setting. Conclusively, this research posits that the incorporation of computer-mediated communication in online group discussions bears substantial educational advantages, as it affords students with alternative avenues to harness their skills and technology, thereby facilitating interpersonal exchanges among students and between students and educators.

Keywords: *computer-mediated communication, Indonesian EFL, online group discussion, social interaction*

INTRODUCTION

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, educators across all educational levels have increasingly embraced the utilization of technological tools for instructional purposes. As the post-pandemic era dawns, instructors persist in integrating computer-mediated communication (CMC) into their pedagogical approaches. Recent scholarship has investigated the advantages of online discourse facilitated by CMC, emphasizing its potential to enhance student interaction, thereby fostering a conducive learning milieu and nurturing critical thinking skills (Afify, 2019). Preceding this inquiry, Williams & Lahman (2011) unveiled CMC's capacity to stimulate active student participation in discussions and augment students' learning outcomes. Furthermore, a study by Tolmie & Boyle (2000) corroborated CMC's efficacy in promoting engagement and fostering productive discussions. Elaborating on specific merits, Burns (2011) noted that CMC could elevate student satisfaction in online socialization, information exchange, knowledge construction, and ultimately, individual knowledge development. Additionally, it was found that online discussions utilizing CMC heighten student motivation for active involvement and cultivate a stronger sense of socialization within the learning milieu (Rovai, 2007). Clearly, the incorporation of CMC into online discussions bears multifaceted benefits for students.

More specifically, CMC has become an integral aspect of group discussions, particularly in the context of English education. The use of online platforms for collaborative discourse enables students to engage in meaningful conversations, share ideas, and develop their language proficiency in English. CMC provides a versatile and accessible medium for students to interact synchronously or asynchronously, breaking down geographical barriers and allowing for participation at one's convenience. This mode of communication offers opportunities for enhanced critical thinking, as students can reflect on and respond to discussion prompts in a thoughtful manner. Additionally, CMC facilitates the exchange of diverse perspectives, fostering a rich and inclusive learning environment. As noted by Tolmie and Boyle (2000), factors influencing the success of CMC environments in university teaching are multifaceted and warrant careful consideration in the design and implementation of online discussions for effective English education.

In addition, it was found that CMC proved highly efficient in heightening students' self-awareness regarding their language utilization. Given that all interactions were text-based and readily accessible, students experienced heightened chances to read and observe noteworthy facets of grammar, as well as various methods of articulating thoughts in written expression. The significance of this noticing process in second language acquisition has been frequently emphasized in scholarly literature (Ellis, 1997). Computer-assisted learning has the potential to serve as a crucial instrument in facilitating authentic public discourse in the target language, significantly amplifying students' engagement in reading and writing activities throughout their courses. Through CMC, students are provided with structured and secure learning environments where they can practice and grasp peer evaluation techniques. Additionally, CMC proves valuable in aiding international students in adapting to the cultural and academic norms of Western universities, as highlighted by Brine & Johnson (2001). The recognized advantages of cooperative group work and peer evaluation in both second language acquisition and the acquisition of a second culture are well-documented in the literature, as acknowledged by Crandall (1999), Lantolf (1999), Lightbown & Spada (1999).

This study takes place in a secondary private school in Yogyakarta with an international focus. The school features a distinctive curriculum, with English being introduced as a subject starting in the second grade. The English curriculum comprises two sub-subjects: English for Reading-Writing (ERW) and English for Listening-Speaking (ELS). The instructional approach involves a bilingual system during every English lesson to enhance

students' fluency in the language. The decision to collect data in this particular school was based on the belief that the research topic aligns well with one of the English sub-subjects.

December (1996) characterizes computer-mediated communication (CMC) as the exploration of how human behaviors are influenced by information exchange through machines. [McQuail \(2005\)](#) defines CMC as communicative transactions involving two or more networked computers. The past decade has seen the development of theoretical models explaining individual and group adaptation to CMC, relational communication, and collaboration organization ([Birt et al., 2016](#)). Research has delved into internet-based social networking using social software, such as instant messaging, YouTube, email, social networking sites (SNS), and Internet forums e.g., [Chen et al. \(2008\)](#); [Haridakis & Hanson \(2009\)](#); [Hunt et al. \(2012\)](#). Interpersonal motives for internet use encompass interpersonal utility, social utility, social or interpersonal interaction, and chatting ([Ebersole, 2000](#); [Kaye & Johnson, 2002](#); [Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000](#); [Sjöberg, 1999](#); [Wolfradt & Doll, 2001](#)).

Theories related to CMC are categorized based on how users respond to the characteristics of CMC systems, particularly in adapting to cue systems distinct from face-to-face communication. One established classification is the cues-filtered-out theories ([Culnan & Markus, 1987](#)), asserting that systematic reductions in nonverbal cues lead to impersonal orientations among users. Impersonal orientations vary in focus, ranging from asocial to specific social aspects. These theories include Social Presence Theory (Short J. et al., 1976), Lack of Social Context Cues ([Siegel et al., 1986](#); [Sproull & Kiesler, 1986](#)), Media Richness Theory ([Daft & Lengel, 1986](#)), also known as information richness theory ([Daft & Lengel, 1984](#)), The social identity model of deindividuation effects, or SIDE model ([Lea & Spears, 1992](#); [Reicher et al., 1995](#)) and Signaling Theory ([Donath, 1998](#)).

The second group of theories examines how communicator characteristics, interactions, and contextual factors impact perceived capacities of communication systems. The theory is called Experiential and Perceptual Theories of CMC, which include the theory of electronic propinquity ([Korzenny, 1978](#)), the social influence theory ([Fulk et al., 1987](#); [Fulk et al., 1990](#)) and channel expansion theory ([Carlson & Zmud, 1999](#)). Additional theories explore how communicators adapt to or leverage cue limitations in CMC systems to achieve or surpass face-to-face levels of affinity. This theory is called Theories of Interpersonal Adaptation and Exploitation of Media, which include the social information processing (SIP) theory of CMC ([Walther, 1992](#)), the hyperpersonal model of CMC ([Walther, 1996](#)), the warranting construct ([Walther et al., 2015](#)) efficiency framework ([Nowak et al., 2009](#)) and ICT succession ([Stephens, 2007](#)) Lastly, there are new theoretical ideas addressing the utility of different media across usage sequences or relational stages, or comparing media effects based on the relative effort required by different channels. The umbrella term for this category is Challenges to CMC Research.

The utilization of CMC has been substantiated by numerous studies, particularly within the realm of higher education ([Afify, 2019](#); [Rovai, 2007](#); [Tolmie & Boyle, 2000](#); [Williams & Lahman, 2011](#)). Utilizing (CMC) offers teachers the chance to engage in active learning. This involves constructing interactive and collaborative learning environments through the application of a constructivist teaching and learning approach. A study by [Maor \(2003\)](#) demonstrated that establishing a student-centered approach through CMC requires the teacher to act as a facilitator, with students actively participating in peer collaboration. This study suggests that emphasizing interactive engagement between teachers and students is crucial to maintaining the quality of collaborative learning. [Zhu et al. \(2010\)](#) discovered that a key aspect of teachers' roles in the teaching-learning process through CMC is acting as facilitators. In this capacity, teachers guide students, encourage exploration through questioning, and propose alternatives throughout the lesson. [Grasha \(2010\)](#) also explored the

role of the teacher as a facilitator, highlighting the significance of the interaction between students and teachers. A previous study by [Carey \(1993\)](#) highlighted that in technologically-supported collaborative learning classrooms, the teacher's role is crucial for ensuring success. The teacher guides students in planning collaborative learning, introduces topics and tasks, discusses their implementation, observes and intervenes in group work, and assists students in processing their work. This has led to the increasing popularity of the concept of teachers as facilitators in classroom practices. [Marjanovic's study in \(1999\)](#) revealed that teachers, acting as facilitators in online discussions supported by computers, have the potential to transform from information deliverers to promoters of learning. This shift is linked to enhancements in students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. Facilitator teachers also play a role in encouraging students to learn independently and take responsibility for their work. Various researchers, including [Grasha \(2010\)](#), and [Zhu et al. \(2010\)](#) suggest that facilitator teachers often employ discussion methods to aid students in developing critical thinking skills and fostering independent learning.

However, a notable gap exists in the examination of how educators reflect on their strategies for implementing CMC to facilitate online (group) discussions. For over two decades, [Marjanovic \(1999\)](#) has attested to the evidence that instructors who foster collaborative learning tend to encourage students to construct knowledge, deepen their understanding, and enhance their skill development, thereby precluding passive learning. To address this lacuna, this study sets out to investigate the experiences of an Indonesian secondary English teacher in harnessing CMC for online group discussions. It is guided by the following research question: what strategies do an Indonesian secondary English teacher do to accommodate CMC for managing online group discussions? This research endeavors to provide practical insights for educators seeking to harness CMC in their online discussion endeavors, with a particular focus on the instructors' endeavors to create a conducive atmosphere for managing online (group) discussions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative approach, a fitting choice for delving into the "Pluralisation of life worlds" ([Flick, 2014](#)). Qualitative researchers recognize that a world is not a singular entity but holds numerous meanings and interpretations, necessitating the use of "sensitizing concepts" to comprehend the social context under investigation. To understand a teacher's strategies, it was essential to grasp the teacher's views on the strategies to accommodate CMC for online discussion. Qualitative inquiry, considering humans as the primary instruments for data generation ([Lincoln & Guba, 1985](#)), focuses on real-world occurrences involving people ([Richards, 2003](#); [Yin R. K., 2011](#)). This approach allows for the exploration of meanings attributed by participants to the phenomenon and the significance of actions within that setting ([Richards, 2003](#); [Silverman, 2011](#)). [Denzin & Lincoln \(2003\)](#) underscored that qualitative researchers employ a variety of interconnected interpretive practices to gain a better understanding of the subject matter, often committing to using multiple interpretive practices in a study. The applied methods aimed to achieve "round understandings" based on rich, contextual, and detailed data ([Mason, 1996](#)). This study employs unstructured and in-depth interviews to collect data. The decision to employ interviews was motivated by their capacity to facilitate open-ended inquiries and the probing for comprehensive information, thereby enabling a nuanced and comprehensive comprehension of the subject matter. The setting of this study was one international secondary private school in Yogyakarta. This employs a unique curriculum where English subjects are only studied in the second grade, which was divided into two sub-subjects namely English for Reading Writing (ERW) and English for Listening-Speaking (ELS). In each English teacher's schedule for the English lesson, the teacher applied a bilingual system to accommodate students to be fluent in English. The process of negotiation for recruiting the participant was done by sending an enquiry letter to five English teachers in this school.

All information regarding this study was also attached so that the teachers could read and understand how they would participate in this study. From the reply of the enquiry letters, only one teacher agreed to participate in this study. Therefore, the study engaged a participant with extensive teaching experience, spanning more than two decades in the field of English education. The participant had expertise in instructing the English for Reading and Writing course for both science and social science classes. Despite her long-standing tenure as a professional educator, she recognized the unique learning experience afforded by distance education. Her prolonged dedication to teaching English, combined with her wealth of experiences and a predisposition toward a collaborative and flexible teaching style, made her an ideal candidate for participation. The engagement of one participant in this study was under the consideration that this study was within exploratory phases. Therefore, it started with a single participant allowing for an initial exploration of the research topic and providing insights that can inform the development of future studies. This is because qualitative methods aim to deeply understand a phenomenon, focusing on the how and why of an issue without necessarily generalizing to a larger population. In-depth interviews, common in qualitative research, prioritize creating categories from data and analyzing relationships between them to understand the lived experience of participants ([Dworkin, 2012](#)).

Prior to the commencement of the interview sessions, the participant received an oral briefing regarding the study's objectives, the principle of voluntariness, and related matters. Following this, she formally consented to participate by signing an informed consent form. The interviews took place on two occasions during the months of March and April 2022, each session varying in duration between 20 and 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure effective communication.

Considering the focus on the teacher's experiences as the primary objective, the study adopted thematic analysis to scrutinize the dataset. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke [Braun & Clarke \(2006\)](#) served as the chosen methodological framework, enabling the identification, generation, conceptualization, analysis, and reporting of key themes. The analytical process adhered to an inductive approach, with no predefined set of codes at the outset. The process began by transcribing the interviews conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, along with the notation of initial ideas and impressions. Subsequently, the data underwent initial coding in the second phase, involving the categorization and segmentation of significant short phrases or words that encapsulated specific concepts present in the data. These encompassed aspects such as the discussion environment (comprising the nature of the task or prompt and its underlying purpose), the unit of analysis (whether entire posts or messages or individual sentences were under scrutiny), the focus of analysis (distinguishing cognitive processing from social interaction), the means of analysis (involving the adaptation of existing coding schemes or the creation of new ones), and the end goal of the analysis (whether it entailed a one-off evaluation of critical thinking or held practical utility for classroom educators, following the framework proposed by [Williams & Lahman, 2011](#)).

The third phase saw the interpretation and discussion of the teacher's responses to conceptualize emergent themes. These themes were subsequently deliberated upon in the fourth phase to validate their alignment with the coded extracts. The overarching aim during this phase was to structure the themes in alignment with the role of the teacher at each stage, as relevant to the research questions. The themes were then named and their definitions refined. The culmination of this process occurred in the final phase, which involved the selection of illustrative quotes tied to the themes. These quotes were then translated into English, culminating in the production of the research report.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data has yielded four overarching themes, each consisting of sub themes

derived from categorized elements. These themes encompass (1) the teacher's attempts to stimulate students' creativity, (2) the teacher's endeavors to foster students' self-regulation in the learning process, (3) the multifaceted nature of the teacher's efforts encompassing the adoption of technology, the cultivation of an enriching learning environment, the facilitation of active student engagement, and the orchestration of group discussions, and (4) the teacher's attempts to assess process. These subsidiary themes, working in tandem with their respective main theme, collectively coalesce to give rise to a comprehensive overarching theme. A more detailed exposition of these themes is provided in the following table.

Table 1. Parameters, Themes and Sub Themes

Parameter	Themes	Sub Themes
The discussion environment	Attempts to stimulate students' creativity	Activating and maximizing scaffolding
		Encouraging warming up activities
		Promoting creativity
The unit of analysis - message	Endeavors to foster students' self-regulation in the learning process	Giving example and providing procedures
		Ensuring activities related to learning objectives
The focus of analysis - social interaction	Efforts to facilitate students' active engagement, and orchestration of group discussions	Accommodating student's learner autonomy
		Building a great learning atmosphere
The means of analysis - technology	Efforts to adopt technology and cultivate an enriching learning environment	Encouraging students to be actively engaged
		Managing group discussions
The end goal of the analysis	Attempts to assess process	Managing assessment of group discussions

The aforementioned themes and their respective sub-themes receive further elucidation in the subsequent sections. The exposition is sequentially organized, with each theme being addressed individually.

1. Attempts to stimulate students' creativity

a. Activating and Maximizing Scaffolding

In online discussions, the teacher employs scaffolding to captivate students' interest in the

forthcoming subject matter, which pertains to the narrative they are tasked with composing. To this end, the teacher queries students about the story or recent knowledge, as evidenced in the participant's accounts below.

Excerpt 1

This is one of the materials, it is about stories, for example, a fairy tale. So, at that time as warming up activity, I usually ask students what the topic of their story is, maybe a childhood fairy tale or something they recently learned about (Interview 15 April 2022)

Excerpt 1 delineates the teacher's strategy for student engagement through the implementation of scaffolding techniques, particularly by probing the content of students' written narratives. This scaffolding method is employed to encourage active participation in the online classroom and cultivate a rapport between the teacher and students. Additionally, the teacher introduces two specific activities—focused on questioning and constructing coherent sentences—as tools to assess students' proficiency in grammatical sentence construction. The "stringing sentences" activity, aimed at constructing a coherent narrative collaboratively, requires Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). However, generating sentences, particularly as a warm-up, may pose challenges for students with limited English exposure or shyness. In such instances, the teacher plays a crucial role in boosting students' confidence and providing support.

Acknowledging the varying effectiveness of scaffolding, the teacher takes on the responsibility of instructing students in crafting grammatically sound sentences, aligning with the subject matter. When a struggling student is identified, the teacher facilitates collaboration, allowing students to engage in scaffolding activities before expressing opinions. The teacher emphasizes the significance of scaffolding and student-teacher interaction. Successful scaffolding, indicated by heightened student curiosity, prompts the teacher to initiate discussions. By setting expectations and optimizing scaffolding, students become more intrigued about the upcoming topic, enhancing their participation and enthusiasm as the lesson unfolds.

b. *Encouraging warming up activities*

Commencing with a warm-up serves the initial goal of motivating students. As discussed earlier, the teacher may encounter less confident students and aims to provide motivation as an option.

The teacher elaborates this in her following accounts.

Excerpt 2

Commonly I cheer up the students by saying things like "you can do it, have you ever heard about this story? What do you think about it? Now it is your turn to make your own story," something like that and students also can get motivated by seeing their friends bravely stating their opinion (Interview 15 April 2022).

In her accounts, the teacher consistently motivates students by posing essential questions, with student engagement acting as external motivation. To avoid monotony in warm-up exercises, a variety of reference activities, including books, are emphasized. The teacher advocates for engaging activities like stringing sentences to boost enthusiasm and foster critical thinking. Creating a supportive atmosphere empowers hesitant students, impacting their performance and self-assurance. Establishing this environment from the beginning is crucial, as it affects the entire lesson, involving the careful selection of appropriate warm-

up activities and maintaining a positive atmosphere. Normalizing mistakes is also emphasized as part of the learning process. Successful online learning requires realistic material planning, utilizing teaching materials that resonate with students' daily lives. The teacher particularly emphasizes the structure of the past tense for practical use, linking reading and writing subjects to grammatical structure. Stringing sentences, as a warm-up activity, assesses students' grasp of grammar in writing, concluding once their proficiency is gauged – a pivotal element in the learning process.

c. Promoting creativity

Following the warm-up, the teacher initiated material explanation and online group discussions to encourage creativity. The discussion concept was explained in excerpt 3 below.

Excerpt 3

I let students choose, they may practice making sentences based on legend or fairy tales or even they can make a brand new story based on their creativity. Because everyone's thoughts are different, you'll definitely make a new story, right? Each group has a different story. To enhance students' creativity, I make many theme options. The most favorite themes are science fiction and fairy tales (Interview 15 April 2022).

The teacher promotes open expression in discussions, enabling students to formulate sentences based on legendary stories. Emphasizing the nurturing of creativity, she introduces diverse storytelling themes to facilitate idea expression. The school adopts two online learning modes: synchronous online learning for group discussions and blended learning for group work discussions and evaluation. The Zoom platform plays a key role in facilitating interaction. In synchronous online discussions, the teacher cultivates a relaxed atmosphere, creating breakout rooms for private conversations to boost confidence and creativity. Encouraging free sharing in these rooms enhances active participation, with the teacher monitoring group progress and allowing direct submission of discussion results.

The teacher's foremost focus was on cultivating a sense of belonging among students, creating a positive environment for discussions. This emphasis resonates with [Afify's \(2019\)](#) findings on the crucial role of student motivation in online discussions, a notion reinforced by [Jacobs \(2013\)](#). [Afify \(2019\)](#) further emphasizes that successful online discussions contribute to active participation and improved critical thinking skills. The teacher's approach not only treated online discussions as an assessment point but also as a means to foster critical thinking. Incorporating warming up activities, a supportive online environment, and various motivational factors, the teacher aligned with the student-centered instruction concept advocated by [Burns \(2011\)](#). In the realm of online discussions, scaffolding refers to the supportive structures and guidance provided to learners as they engage in discussions. Grounded in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding underscores the importance of assistance to help learners attain higher levels of understanding. Therefore, in online discussions, scaffolding can stimulate creativity by offering structured support and guidance for learners to explore, generate, and express innovative ideas ([Salmon, 2012](#)).

2. Endeavors to foster students' self-regulation in the learning process

a. Giving example and providing procedures

In the initial interview, the teacher acknowledges the challenges of transitioning from offline to online learning, including network issues and low student engagement. To address this, the teacher actively monitors attendance and provides clear instructions for online

discussions to mitigate potential issues. She elaborates this issue in her accounts below.

Excerpt 4

The discussion activity for offline and online class actually is the same, just a different system applied. So, I explain the assignment, there are 15 pictures on the screen and the group must make a story related to the pictures (Interview 15 April 2022).

The teacher stresses the equivalence of offline and online discussions, emphasizing the learning medium's crucial role. Clear assignment procedures are essential to prevent misunderstandings, highlighting the importance of a strong teacher-student relationship in online learning. Though conclusive evidence is lacking, the teacher suggests that online group discussions could enhance speaking skills and grammatical understanding. Zoom is utilized for these discussions and presentations, focusing on grammar in story presentations to enhance fluency and confidence in spoken and written English. The teacher's guidance is vital for avoiding misunderstandings in online learning, prioritizing effective communication of learning objectives.

b. Ensuring activities related to learning objectives

Discussing the efficacy of online group discussions hinges on achieving learning goals, a priority in the interview, highlighting adaptability in online learning. She remarked below.

Excerpt 5

It is quite effective because in this situation we need to adapt to achieve the learning objectives. Maybe students are shy when they have to turn on their camera and then begin to speak, so I decided to maximizing the use of chat room for students to share their opinion but they must type their name first then follow by their opinion. (Interview 15 April 2022)

Excerpt 5 underscores the teacher's perspective on the effective use of synchronous online discussions and the need for rapid adaptation to meet learning goals. Emphasizing teacher-student interaction, teamwork, motivation, and a supportive class environment is crucial. The teacher optimizes time by initiating material explanations through Zoom. Utilizing chat room features enhances interaction, aiding comprehension and encouraging active participation, especially for shy students. This approach creates a relaxed atmosphere for open discourse, as shy students comfortably share their views. The teacher's method of soliciting opinions one by one promotes interactive communication, even in an online learning context, highlighting their pivotal role in managing and facilitating student interactions during discussions.

c. Accommodating student's learner autonomy

Apart from providing motivation and support, igniting students' enthusiasm for learning English is crucial. These elements are interconnected with the aim of fostering student autonomy. In terms of autonomy, the teacher strives to cultivate learning habits and engender students' interest in English, offering them valuable learning experiences during the lesson. The following excerpt shows the teacher's account in this issue.

Excerpt 6

From learning of course we hope that they will get the experience. So do not let the experience of speaking english make them afraid to speak or make them uncomfortable, something like that (Translation version, Interview, 15 April 2022).

The teacher envisions providing practical language experiences tailored for shy and struggling students, emphasizing the crucial role of a supportive online learning environment. Creating such an atmosphere is vital for boosting students' confidence in self-expression, ensuring a positive and engaging learning experience in English during distance learning. Leveraging interactive features like chat rooms, online classes empower shy students to actively participate and build speaking confidence. The teacher employs the friend's recommendation strategy to encourage student opinions, considering individual characteristics that influence confidence levels. In this process, students begin by typing opinions in the chat room and later take turns using their microphones, promoting engagement, allowing progress assessment, and confirming attendance. The teacher consistently employs the friend's recommendation strategy, recognizing its impact on individual student confidence and ensuring ongoing efforts to enhance participation in a supportive online learning environment.

In online discussions, a teacher assumes a multifaceted role beyond information delivery, encompassing the crucial task of guiding students toward learning objectives. This entails the provision of clear examples and procedural steps, catalyzing a pivotal process in online discussions. The application of concepts and principles in such instances cultivates a deeper comprehension among learners. The articulation of clear procedural guidelines ensures that activities align with the intended learning goals. This guidance aids students in navigating the online discussion space, fostering structured and purposeful engagement that significantly contributes to educational outcomes. Essentially, the teacher's delivery of examples and procedures serves as a scaffolding mechanism, providing support as students progress toward mastering specific learning objectives (Afify, 2019; Jacobs, 2013). Observing models allows students to enhance their performance (Driscoll, 2000). Carey (1993) emphasized the teacher's role in collaborative learning classrooms supported by technology, focusing on planning, introducing topics, observing group work, and aiding students in processing their efforts.

Moreover, for success in online learning environments, fostering students' self-regulation in the learning process becomes imperative, granting them learning autonomy. Developing self-regulation involves setting goals, monitoring progress, and adapting strategies for optimal learning outcomes. Advocating for learning autonomy empowers students to take control of their learning process, leading to enhanced academic performance and the cultivation of lifelong learning skills. Encouraging learner autonomy prompts students to establish clear, achievable goals for online learning, encompassing both short-term objectives for individual assignments and long-term goals for the entire course (Zimmerman, 2002).

3. Efforts to facilitate students' active engagement, and orchestration of group discussions

a. Building a great learning atmosphere

Emphasizing great learning experiences fosters motivation and a positive learning atmosphere, promoting student autonomy. As she gave an explanation in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7

Certainly, apart from focus on cognitive aspect while having online group discussion, class situation and students interaction becomes two important aspects. Their interaction and how they are under my supervision. Even an online class, the learning atmosphere should be fun so students would feel comfortable because interaction depends on it and to comply the learning objectives. With their intensity in communication definitely the learning environment is more engaging. Studying English is more engaging if students are active and bravely speaking in English. Learning language certainly learning to convey and the goal is for students to be courageous to speak their opinion. That is the importance of discussions that can increase the intensity of communication (Interview 15 April 2022)

In Excerpt 7, the teacher highlights three key aspects in online group discussions: cognitive learning, classroom ambiance, and student interaction. She emphasizes the importance of an enjoyable atmosphere to meet learning goals and intensify communication. Increased interaction elevates discussions, enhancing student confidence in English speaking. The teacher aims to foster a supportive atmosphere for struggling students, promoting fluency and confidence. Throughout her accounts, the teacher consistently underscores her objective of enabling confident and fluent English speaking. This is achieved by nurturing a supportive learning environment and assisting students in difficulties, aligning with the discussion activities' significance in promoting active speaking.

b. Encouraging students to be actively engaged

Establishing a positive learning environment, the teacher connects daily life materials to empower active student engagement. This would be easier for students to understand the materials as she conveys below.

Excerpt 8

Generally, I ask students materials that is relate with their daily activities, for instance in past tense, I ask students to storytell what were they doing last night, last holiday, last weekend. So they can storytell their real situation (Translation, Interview, 15 April 2022).

In the described scenario, the teacher used real-life situations to engage students, prompting them to share past events to foster participation and assess their understanding of past tense in narratives. In the interview, the teacher discussed student interactions during group discussions and the impact of individual characteristics on their engagement levels. Rejecting the idea of universal class superiority, she emphasized the importance of individual student traits. Consequently, a diverse range of teaching strategies is deemed essential. To maintain engagement in online group discussions, she employs partner rotation, encouraging active participation and boosting the confidence of shy students.

c. Managing group discussions

After being able to activate, maximize, promote, and empower students for group discussion

especially while distance learning, the teacher has a role to manage a successful group discussion. First thing first in managing a successful group discussion was that she decided to make a group in charge system, below she explained briefly how she handled it.

Excerpt 9

In every grouping system both for online and offline learning, mostly I ask them to choose who is going to be the leader of the group, the secretary, and the speaker, so since the beginning of the discussion each of the group members have their own responsibility. I expect they could maximize their role in the group discussion, for example the secretary validate they write all the discussion results, the leader ensure everyone in the group deliver their opinion and asks them to be active while having discussion. Eventually, students that have been chosen as leader were elected by voting (Translation, Interview, 15 April 2022).

In both face-to-face and virtual group discussions, the teacher implements a group-in-charge system, assigning leaders, secretaries, and speakers to enhance control and instill responsibility. This system promotes active student participation and contribution to online group discussions. After role establishment and clarification, the teacher actively monitors discussions, encouraging independent engagement within groups to foster activity and improve speaking skills. Subsequently, the teacher reviews each student's outcomes, confirming their active involvement—an essential element in maximizing short online learning sessions and ensuring successful group discussions. Beyond the group-in-charge system, the teacher assumes additional roles to manage time effectively, aligning with learning objectives and the discussion process. In the context of online learning's time constraints, the teacher efficiently meets objectives and supports successful group discussions. Crucially, monitoring group progress and providing assistance when challenges arise ensures discussion completion. The teacher strategically allocates short learning periods for optimal online group discussions while achieving objectives, designating specific time frames for various discussion phases. The initial 15-20 minutes are dedicated to discussions, with an additional 5-minute contingency period for flexibility in unforeseen circumstances.

Online discussions using Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) impact students' motivation and enhance socialization in the learning environment ([Rovai, 2007](#)). [Tolmie and Boyle \(2000\)](#) assert that CMC fosters student engagement and productivity in online discussions. [Zhu et al. \(2010\)](#) argue that when teachers facilitate engagement, students explore, ask questions, and suggest alternatives. This interaction influences the nature of student-teacher interactions ([Grasha, 2010](#)) fostering self-efficacy as students interact within discussion groups. [Schunk \(1987\)](#) notes that observing multiple individuals discussing and problem-solving related to technology integration enhances students' self-efficacy.

Orchestrating group discussions, according to [Rovai \(2007\)](#), builds strong relationships and collaboration among students. Well-managed orchestration inspires students to contribute to knowledge construction, fostering a positive attitude toward learning. Meaningful group discussions lead to cognitive benefits, engaging students in deep reflections, exchanging ideas, and considering diverse perspectives ([Koschmann et al., 1996](#)). Appropriately managing group discussions encourages students to learn from each other, stimulating more in-depth reflection ([Gokhale, 1995](#)).

4. Efforts to adopt technology and cultivate an enriching learning environment

Using provided features of technology

In addition to Zoom and the chat room, the teacher employs WhatsApp to enhance teacher-student bonds and interaction. She elaborates this matter in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 10

*They also can reach me from WhatsApp (WA) if they found some difficulties. I always told to them that they can send me text any time
(translation version, Interview, 15 April 2022).*

The teacher utilizes WhatsApp for material-related questions, enhancing teacher-student interaction, and incorporates Quizizz for game-based learning. Despite the challenges posed by brief online sessions, Quizizz is valued for assessing comprehension. The teacher emphasizes Quizizz's effectiveness in remote assessment and its role in promoting communication skills and critical thinking. However, optimal use of learning platforms depends on fostering a conducive learning atmosphere.

The communication method utilized multiple platforms: WhatsApp for teacher-student and peer communication, Zoom for online discussions via chat and breakout rooms, and Quizizz for formative assessment after discussions, promoting motivation and collaboration. Assessing students as active learners was crucial, emphasizing critical thinking skills. Adopting constructivist learning, the teacher facilitated student participation. This approach, aligned with 21st-century skills, fosters communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, self-directed learning, and technological proficiency. The findings highlight online discussions' positive outcomes during distance learning, echoing the efficacy of technology-supported problem-based learning and its contribution to a conducive learning environment and students' critical thinking (Afify, 2019).

5. Attempts to assess process

Managing assessment of group discussions

In online group discussions, the teacher discussed her real-time assessment of student performance and the specific aspects she evaluates. She distinctly revealed it in her accounts below.

Excerpt 11

*Certainly, English Reading Writing (ERW) class has a different assessing method with English Listening Speaking (ELS) class. In ERW class, the accuracy of submitting assignment, the quality of assignment, indeed their behavior in the class become one of the assessment aspects. They are aware or understand that everything they do in the class always under teacher's supervision. Teacher always inform in the beginning of the class to maximizing their performance and being active especially when do the discussion or anything else class activity
(translation version, Interview, 15 April 2022)*

In Excerpt 11, the teacher assesses ERW and ELS classes differently. For ERW, submission accuracy, assignment quality, and in-class performance are key. Immediate result submission ensures timely assessment, and assignment quality focuses on correct grammar. The group-in-charge system and Zoom foster active participation. A successful online discussion can impact critical thinking, but students may need prompts. Teacher understanding of individual competence is vital in enabling critical thinking, especially in distance learning.

The use of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) has proven effective in enhancing students' active participation and improving educational outcomes (Williams & Lahman, 2011). Adopting a student-centered approach through CMC can stimulate engaged learning behaviors, elevate learner achievements, and enhance critical thinking skills. Grasha (2010) emphasizes the teacher's role in facilitating students' flexibility to meet their needs and goals in exploring lessons. Collaborative learning activities, especially small group discussions, are recommended for developing critical thinking abilities. Levin's (1995) study supports online discussions, aiding less experienced students in clarifying and elaborating on their ideas about case issues, highlighting the cognitive processes involved in asking questions, providing explanations, and elaborating on one's ideas – all contributing to learning (Slavin, 1996).

CONCLUSIONS

The effectiveness of online discussions heavily relies on the teacher's strategies within a constructivist learning framework. The teacher's ability to strategically create a comfortable environment for students is pivotal in achieving positive outcomes. This research affirms that the teacher's strategies play a significant part in cultivating student motivation, enhancing active participation, fostering critical thinking skills, and ultimately leading to successful learning outcomes that equip students with 21st-century skills. To establish a conducive online discussion environment using prominent CMC platforms the teacher initiates the process with a warm-up activity that serves as scaffolding. This, combined with a supportive online environment, implicitly motivates students to participate actively by encouraging them to share their thoughts with one another. This not only promotes active engagement in discussions but also stimulates critical thinking skills. Given the comprehensive nature of these findings, further research can be directed towards a more focused exploration of specific themes or categories. For example, conducting classroom observations to examine how effectively teachers employ technology to prepare students for the tech-savvy era. Given the continued relevance of online learning, there is potential for more in-depth investigations in this area. Expanding the participant pool and considering the students' perspective can further enrich the dataset and provide a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics.

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