

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Many factors influence students' learning engagement, and one of them is the learning environment (Di Pietro et al., 2020). As the online learning is executed, Ferrer et al. (2020) have pointed out how the forced online environments changed the landscape of educational learning with students thriving, or even becoming demotivated and disengaged. Most schools and universities in Indonesia are likely used to traditional learning and only implement online learning when it is necessary (Abidah et al., 2020). Because of the sudden shift of a whole traditional learning to online learning exclusively due to a pandemic, students in Indonesia happen to have new experiences. Even though previously online learning was not common in Indonesia, it is also not completely disregarded. In higher education, such a requirement of using technology is a must to meet the demand of the ever-growing teaching and learning activity in the 21st century (IESALC, 2020).

Relating to students' learning engagement and subject of study, language skills are always the tough one for foreign language students to learn (Jeff, 2019; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Along with the new online learning environment, students' learning engagement is once again challenged. Many case studies have been carried out before on how blended-learning is beneficial for students' learning engagement and/or the learning outcomes in listening and speaking courses (King, 2016; Gördeslioğlu & Yüzer, 2019). Meanwhile, due to the new regulation of full online learning, an aspect is shifted and there are still limited studies on how the students maintain engagement and what affects the student engagement in a full online class as Clark and Sousa (2018) noted.

The researcher has dug something related to the online learning in Indonesia that started since the news was spread on March 2nd, 2020 to be exact and still going (Ratcliffe, 2020; Reuters, 2020). Preliminary data were taken from

the lecturer of the course by her experiences in teaching Academic Listening and Speaking in 2020. Prompt from her that the moment the online learning started, it was confirmed that she found troubles in seeing how her students engage in online learning. Synchronously, she observed the students' engagement through students' facial expression and students' gestures, such as unfocused gazings and also hands palming their chins even though she could not see it whole because some students had their camera off for reasons. Meanwhile asynchronously, she observed their engagement in the interaction of when she shared information to their WhatsApp group, she got many responses in this matter. She concluded that the Academic Listening and Speaking course in 2020 was successful and great for her, in the midst of online learning. In particular, she saw the great efforts of her students in consulting their project material and their performances on the final test in the form of a web seminar. The webinar project was really great for her as she could see their engagement through their project: very positive from cognitive, behaviour, and also affective aspects. In all it was well organized till the end (Preliminary interview, March 1st 2021).

Empirically speaking, there have been various studies of learning English listening and speaking and/or student engagement (Bloomfield, 2016; Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017; Mounika & Thamarana, 2018; Chamorro, 2018; Gördeslioğlu and Yüzer, 2019; and Ting, Tan, & Voon, 2020). Conversely, inadequate investigative attempts have concentrated on student engagement in academic listening and speaking skills, notably in Indonesian higher education context and also in online learning. The Academic Listening and Speaking course is chosen instead of other courses because the researcher refers to the expert claims and also the phenomenon I have found in ALS course, that specifically this course has conference as its final exam and thought that it would be worth, appropriate and correct to investigate this course and hoped to find more the additional findings of its students regarding their engagements in online ALS course with its final exam that was webinar. For this reason, the current study strives to delineate how students engage in the online learning of the Academic Listening and Speaking

course. Besides, it also focuses on the factors affecting students' engagement in such an online course.

1.2 Formulation of the Problems

The researcher mulls on problems:

1. How do students engage in the online learning of the Academic Listening and Speaking course?
2. What factors affect students' learning engagement in the online learning of Academic Listening and Speaking?

1.3 Operational Definitions

- 1.3.1 Students' Learning Engagement** : Students' learning engagement is a term of how students engage and perceive in their learning, based on their behavior, cognition, and affection, to achieve their learning goals.
- 1.3.2 Online Learning** : Online learning is a teaching and learning activity which occurs face-to-face in online spaces, by using Skype for example, not in the traditional classroom.
- 1.3.3 Academic Listening and Speaking course** : One of the courses of the English Education Department in a state university focuses on providing student teachers a variety of spoken texts multimodally presented in academic contexts, which enlightens their encyclopedic knowledge, more specifically, teaching practices and academic presentations

1.4 Aim of the Study

The study investigates further on how students engage in the online learning of the Academic Listening and Speaking course and the factors affecting their engagement in the course.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical use

This study contributes to the existing theories such as Redmond, Heffernan, Abawi, Brown, & Henderson's Online Engagement framework (2018) from Indonesian EFL students' perspectives, especially in online learning situations.

1.5.2 Practical use

This study elaborates on how the students manage their engagement and the factors affecting it in an online learning course.

1.5.3 Empirical use

This study contributes and complements the empirical findings of previous studies on EFL learners' learning engagement in online learning.