Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter contains general information related to the research. This information consists of the background of the study, which includes why the researcher does the research. The identification and the problem's limitation explain the study's focus. Furthermore, this chapter provides the research question, the research objective, and the study's significance.

Background of the Study

In early March 2020, the Covid-19 Pandemic started in Indonesia. This Pandemic is spreading very quickly and widely. This Pandemic had a massive impact on several sectors in Indonesia. One of the sectors that have been heavily affected by the Pandemic is the education sector. The Covid-19 Pandemic has had a significant impact on the world of education, and the learning process cannot be done face-to-face in the classroom to avoid the spread of Covid-19 (Rulandari, 2020, p. 243). Formal education in Indonesia initially required students to go to school or campus by running a face-to-face learning system in the classroom. However, since the Covid-19 Pandemic started in Indonesia, the government has required face-to-face learning to become distance learning. It is done to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Based on this policy, various educational institutions in Indonesia implement a distance learning system that requires students to learn from home.

This distance learning system is known as online learning or virtual learning. Online learning is a distance learning method that is carried out using online media or technology as a learning medium, and usually, this method requires an internet connection. According to Cojocariu (2014), "Most of the terms (online learning, open learning, web-based learning, computer-mediated learning, blended learning, and m-learning.) have in common the ability to use a computer connected to a network, that offers the possibility to learn from anywhere, anytime, in any rhythm, with any means". Additionally, online learning requires students and teachers to communicate interactively by utilizing information and communication technology, such as computer media and the internet. It is a system that can facilitate students to learn more through the facilities provided by the system so that students can learn anytime and anywhere without being limited by distance, space, and time. Usually, the learning materials that are studied are more varied, not only in verbal form but also more varied such as visual, audio, and motion (Riyana, 2020, p. 14).

Faced with the situation and conditions during this Pandemic, several universities in Indonesia took action to shift offline learning to online learning. In implementing an online learning system, several universities use various online learning media such as Zoom meetings, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and other platforms. Online learning is asynchronous and synchronous (Aliyyah et al., 2020; Basri et al., 2021; Nieuwoudt, 2020). An *asynchronous meeting* is an online learning process carried out without meeting face to face. Asynchronous learning is usually a video lecture, and students spend class time working on problems

(Young et al., 2014, p. 939). Basri et al. (2020) also stated that an asynchronous classroom is a learning model that requires students and teachers to upload and download materials using a stable internet connection. So the students can study without being limited by time.

Meanwhile, this research focuses on synchronous meetings. Synchronous meetings are meetings held by lecturers and students directly face to face but through video conferences such as Zoom meetings, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams. Synchronous learning is done through direct interaction between teachers and students using online forms such as conferences and online chats (Aliyyah et al., 2020). In this synchronous meeting, the lecturer explains the material directly to students, and students can also interact and ask questions directly to the lecturer. In synchronous meetings, online learning is expected to remain interactive, such as face-to-face learning in class. Teachers and students can communicate online during live synchronous sessions (Nieuwoudt, 2020).

In addition, synchronous online learning requires lecturers and students to interact actively and discuss even though they are not in the classroom but in their respective homes using video conferences. However, the problem is that many students tend to be passive during synchronous learning. Adiyanto (2020) argued that when learning begins, attention is only at the beginning of the class opening. When the material has been discussed, students feel confused, and some students tend to ignore it and choose to leave the meeting. To overcome this problem,

several lecturers in Indonesia have used the breakout room feature to divide students into small groups to be more focused during synchronous learning.

A *breakout room* is a virtual space different from the main online tutorial room (Chandler, 2014, p. 16). Anas et al. (2020) argued that the breakout room feature is usually used for group discussion activities. In online discussion activities, students can simultaneously conduct online discussions in real-time and the same virtual room. Usually, this breakout room is made by several lecturers to provide discussion space for students related to understanding the material during online learning. The breakout room is filled with only a few participants in online classes, so students can freely express their opinions and be active in the discussion forum. According to Lee (2021), the breakout rooms helped students improve their communication, provided more opportunities for communication, and could engage students in completing the class assignment in groups.

Despite a few studies on the use of breakout rooms in synchronous online learning already existing, research on the same topic in the EFL context, especially in Indonesia, still needs to be developed. In addition, the use of the breakout room feature, which was recently discussed during the pandemic, made the researcher interested in further researching the use of breakout rooms in synchronous online learning in the Indonesian EFL context. Therefore, the researcher also involves different methods, settings, and participants from previous studies.

Based on the researcher's observations at one of the English Education Departments of a private Islamic university in Yogyakarta. Some lecturers used the Microsoft Teams breakout room feature when conducting synchronous meetings. The researcher saw that many students were passive when the synchronous meeting happened in the main room, just listening to the material. Only a few students responded to the lecturer. Meanwhile, when students are divided into a breakout room, they become more active in participating, talking, and interacting with their friends during the activity. The researcher is interested in researching the use of breakout rooms for synchronous online learning from the student's perspective. This research will provide helpful information about using breakout rooms in synchronous online learning.

Identification of the Problem

The use of breakout rooms in synchronous online learning, especially in Indonesia, has emerged since the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the researcher's experience while attending some courses during synchronous online learning, the researcher saw that when the synchronous meeting took place in the main room, many students were passive, just listening to the material. Only a few students responded to the lecturer. Meanwhile, when students are divided into a breakout room, they become more active in participating, talking, and interacting with their friends during the activity.

The researcher noticed that using breakout rooms has an important role that can involve student interaction in synchronous online learning. Besides that,

using breakout rooms in synchronous online learning is certainly new for students, especially in Indonesia. The researcher is interested in examining the use of this breakout room feature based on the subjective experience of students participating in breakout rooms in synchronous online learning.

Delimitation of the Problem

This research focused on breakout rooms for synchronous online learning. Some lecturers have used breakout rooms in the English Education Department for their students' activity during synchronous online learning during the Pandemic. Usually, the lecturer explained the material to the students in synchronous learning in real-time. Then the lecturer made a student discussion group session by dividing students into several groups, and group discussions were carried out in the breakout room feature. In this research, the researcher focused on exploring the students' activity in the breakout rooms and the significant use of breakout rooms for synchronous online learning.

Research Question

There are two research questions in this research:

1. What activities do the English Language Department students perform while having synchronous online learning breakout room sessions?
2. How do the English Language Department students perceive the significant use of breakout rooms for synchronous online learning?

Objective of the Study

Based on the research question, the researcher has two objectives:

1. To identify the English Language Department students' activity while having synchronous online learning breakout room sessions.

2. To investigate the English Language Department students' perception about the significant use of breakout room for synchronous online learning.

Significance of the Study

This research is expected to give benefits for students, teachers, institutions, and future researcher.

For Students

The students can get current information about using breakout rooms for synchronous online learning activities. This study can help students know about online platforms that can be used to conduct online activities in synchronous learning. After they understand, they can learn and apply the breakout room features for online discussion in their activities.

For Teachers

This research can provide another insight into the teacher and help the teacher organize the student activities using breakout rooms. This research can provide an idea for the teachers about activities carried out in the breakout rooms

and the significant use of the breakout rooms so that the teacher can adapt and apply the breakout room as a medium for synchronous activities during online learning.

For Institution

This research is expected to be useful for institutions. It can provide an idea to support the teaching and learning process quality, especially for synchronous meetings during online learning. Institutions can provide supporting facilities for teachers and students so that teachers and students have easy access to use breakout rooms for synchronous activities during online learning.

For Future Researchers

This research is expected to be a reference for future researchers. In addition, this study can provide helpful information for future researchers who research this topic to support their research. The results of this study are expected to inspire and provide new insights for researchers who want to research topics related to this study.