

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduces basic information regarding the study. It begins with an elaboration of the background to the study followed by the formulation of the problem, the objective of the study, the scope and delimitation, the significance of the study, and the clarification of key terms.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Information technology (IT) in general—learning technology in particular—allows personalization of learning. Compared with traditional teacher-centered learning programs, IT supports more innovative learner-centered programs that rely on high-quality, interactive learning ware, and personalized mentoring (Marom, Saporta, & Caspi, 2005). IT enables flexibility in nearly every aspect of teaching and learning (in kinds of materials, means of delivery, time and place of learning, etc.), thus potentially allowing for a better match between the kind of pedagogy and the student's preferences regarding the learning environment (where, when, how, with whom, what pace, etc.). Moreover, learning preferences is the way to enhance the quality of learning, especially for distance learners (Alper, 2004).

Online learning is mainly provided in two ways—in synchronous and asynchronous environments (Jolliffe, Ritter, & Stevens, 2012). According to Watt (2016), synchronous learning involves students learning together in live environments like lectures, which allows greater engagement and a sense of community at the cost of scheduling and technological issues. Conversely, asynchronous learning allows students to learn the material on their own and discuss it together in forums like emails or discussion boards, which provides time for material synthesis at the cost of community engagement (Offir, Lev, & Bezalel, 2008). However, both synchronous and asynchronous learning formats still confusing teachers to be used properly in the online classroom. Consequently, distance learning which is considered an easier way to learn along with the learning technology development has become a new problem. Due to this reason, it seems reasonable to take a closer look at the issue by figuring out students'

views of the factor affecting their preferences to help teachers set the online classroom properly.

Several studies have been conducted related to the topic. The first study about a comparison of asynchronous online text-based lectures and synchronous interactive web conferencing lectures was conducted by Skylar (2009) which investigating college students' performance, preference or satisfaction, and their technical skill between accessing content presented in a synchronous interactive web conferencing lecture format compared to students that access content in an asynchronous text-based lecture format in California. The result of this study suggested that both types of lectures are effective in delivering online instruction. In addition, almost three-fourth of the students indicated that they would rather take an online course that uses synchronous web conferencing lectures than an online asynchronous text-based lecture course. This finding suggests the importance of interactivity on student satisfaction in a course. Lastly, the study supports the finding that students participating in an online course perceive an increased level of their technology skills.

The second study was held by Kunin, Julliard, and Rodriguez (2014) that examined the preferences of postgraduate dental residents of Lutheran Medical Center regarding the three learning formats: face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous learning. This study found that the postgraduate dental residents preferred face-to-face and asynchronous formats to the synchronous format in terms of effectiveness and clarity of presentations. This preference was directly related to their perception of how well the technology worked in each format. The residents also rated the quality of student-instructor and student-student interactions in the synchronous and asynchronous formats significantly higher after taking the lecture series than they did before taking it. However, they rated the face-to-face format as significantly more conducive to student-instructor and student-student interaction. While the study found technology had a major impact on the efficacy of this curricular model, the results suggest that the asynchronous format can be an effective way to teach a postgraduate course.

The third is the study that was conducted by Malik, Fatima, Husain, and Sarwar (2017). This study aimed to identify students' perceptions regarding

synchronous and asynchronous e-learning resources at the higher education level. The findings of the research figure out that male students' responses show that they found both synchronous as well as asynchronous e-learning resources more effective than female students although both (male and female) equally use the internet in hours per day. Then, students enrolled in different programs found the difference in the effectiveness of synchronous and asynchronous e-learning resources. Besides, it also found that showed that many students found it more effective to learn through books and other library resources than from e-learning resources.

Based on those findings from preliminary data, this study attempts to fill the gap from different insights by investigating students' views of the factor affecting their preference to choose appropriate learning format. The finding of the research may help understand the proper learning format to be set up by teachers to deal with the issues. Also, this study is expected to give additional information that the preliminary research has not found.

## **1.2. Formulation of the Problem**

This study investigated factors that influence college students' preferences for synchronous and asynchronous web-based courses. More specifically, the focus of this study highlights the opinion of synchronous and asynchronous web-based learning on Indonesian college students' choice. To this end, the following question is posed:

What factors affect EFL students' preferences about learning the format in online learning environments?

## **1.3. Objective of the Study**

Concerning the problem above, the objective of this research is to find out factors affecting EFL students' preference in determining the best learning format in an online learning environment.

## **1.4. The Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study was focused on figuring out EFL students' preference of online language learning at University.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The study is expected to give some significance and to raise the understanding both theoretically and practically. First, theoretically, this study is expected to contribute additional knowledge and information for relevant research regarding distance learning. Second for practical significance that begin with the institution, the result can be used by campus academic policymakers to determine the quality of instruction among distance education classes. Then, the findings of this research may assist distance learning instructors in improving the design of the course. Furthermore, it is expected to facilitate students with better quality of instruction they are receiving. And last, it is expected to provide information to conduct future research on the related field.

### **1.6. Clarification of Key Terms**

In order to avoid misunderstanding in this research, there are some terminological explanations related to the issue.

#### **1.6.1. Online Learning**

Many scholars have defined online learning. Benson (2002) and Conrad (2002) define online learning as a newer version or, and an updated version of distance learning which can improve access to educational opportunities for learners who are described as non-traditional. From the definitions above, online learning in this research can be simply defined as an updated learning system involving theoretical and practical basis using certain supporting technologies.

#### **1.6.2. Synchronous Course**

Synchronous learning environment refers to simultaneous learning-teaching through electronic mode. The synchronous model instills a sense of community through collaborative learning (Teng, Chen, Kinshuk, & Leo, 2012, p. 58). The synchronized virtual classroom is a place for teachers and students to interact and collaborate in real-time. Using a webcam and class discussion function is similar to a traditional classroom, but all participants can access it remotely via the Internet.

### **1.6.3. Asynchronous Course**

Asynchronous environment provides students with ready-made materials in the form of audio/video lectures, handouts, articles, and slide presentations (Murphy, Rodriguez-Manzanares, & Barbour, 2011, p. 42). This material can be accessed anytime, anywhere through the Learning Management System (LMS) or other such channels. The opportunity for delayed response allows them to use their advanced learning skills because they can continue to think about a problem for a long time and may develop divergent thinking. Therefore, the asynchronous space leads to self-paced, independent, student-centered learning.