

EFL Lecturers' Method for Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning through Moodle on Intensive Reading Course

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates intensive reading instruction at Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia, using Moodle-based synchronous and asynchronous methods. The qualitative approach was carried out through classroom observation involving 67 students and conducting interviews with 10 students. The study found that students' reading skills enhanced by engaging in virtual meetings and discussions during synchronous classes, while asynchronous learning allowed them to freely determine when and where to study, access educational resources such as YouTube, e-modules, some files related to materials, quizzes, and feedback. Besides that, various challenges during asynchronous learning such as students often becoming inactive on online screens, experiencing delays in receiving lectures, difficulty finding a location to improve stable internet connectivity, and inadequate access to computer devices, laptops, or smartphones that require installing and uninstalling applications repeatedly that interfere with their learning process. Challenges in asynchronous learning include difficulty understanding the learning material, excessive workload, and lack of motivation. The study recommends integrating both learning approaches for reading classes and other English classes by leveraging more of Moodle's available LMS features, as well as highlighting the importance of improving infrastructure such as stable internet and device compatibility.

KEYWORDS

Synchronous and Asynchronous; Moodle; Intensive Reading Course

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menginvestigasi pengajaran membaca intensif di Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia, dengan menggunakan metode sinkron dan asinkron berbasis Moodle. Pendekatan kualitatif dilakukan melalui observasi kelas yang melibatkan 67 mahasiswa dan melakukan wawancara terhadap 10 mahasiswa. Studi ini menemukan bahwa keterampilan membaca siswa meningkat dengan terlibat dalam pertemuan dan diskusi virtual selama kelas sinkron, sementara pembelajaran asinkron memungkinkan mereka bebas menentukan waktu dan tempat untuk belajar, mengakses sumber daya pendidikan seperti YouTube, e-modul, beberapa file terkait dengan materi, kuis, dan umpan balik. Di samping itu, berbagai tantangan selama pembelajaran asinkron seperti mahasiswa sering menjadi tidak aktif di layar online, mengalami keterlambatan dalam menerima kuliah, sulitnya menemukan lokasi untuk meningkatkan konektivitas internet

KATA KUNCI

Pembelajaran Sinkron dan Asinkron; Moodle; Intensive Reading

yang stabil, dan akses ke perangkat computer, laptop, atau smartphone yang tidak memadai sehingga perlu menginstal dan menghapus aplikasi berulang kali yang mengganggu proses belajar mereka. Tantangan dalam pembelajaran asinkron meliputi kesulitan memahami materi pembelajaran, beban tugas yang berlebihan, dan kurangnya motivasi. Studi ini merekomendasikan pengintegrasian kedua pendekatan pembelajaran untuk kelas membaca dan kelas bahasa Inggris lainnya dengan memanfaatkan lebih banyak fitur LMS Moodle yang tersedia, serta menyoroti pentingnya peningkatan infrastruktur seperti internet yang stabil dan kompatibilitas perangkat

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INTRODUCTION

Reading within a scientific context is essential, as it aids in the development of intellectual skills and capabilities, alongside self-actualization during the process of socialization. Reading is considered the fundamental entry point to the field of science and provides a foundation for language proficiency. Moreover, reading is part of everyday life and has a significant impact on a person's academic, personal, and social experiences (Kozak & Recchia, 2019). It can be deduced that the importance of reading as a source of information is crucial for humans to remain informed about current global developments. Through reading, people can acquire knowledge about various areas of science. Moreover, reading can influence the future because a reader with a broader view faces more life choices.

Intensive reading is fundamental reading skills thought at the first-semester college students and also a technique for improving reading comprehension. In the college curriculum, Intensive reading is a required course offered at the University Islam Riau. Intensive reading is regarded as the key course and impacts other courses like listening, writing, and speaking (Insuasty Cárdenas, 2020).

Intensive reading education emphasizes textbooks and lecturers as key learning resources, with students simply absorbing and following the directions given by their lecturer. Moreover, learning takes place with minimal interaction between lecturers and students because of the lecturer's overwhelming intervention in the classroom. This leads to students' non-intellectual aspects being insufficiently engaged and makes them too bored to participate in classes (Yang et al., 2012).

Related with the issue, Lampariello (2017) claimed that education can be viewed as a social process that evolves dynamically under the progression of the times. The learning process does not only occur within a classroom setting, but lecturers can take advantage of internet technologies and different applications that can assist them in the educational process. Advancements in technology enable lectures to be held outside traditional classrooms; for instance, they can be accessed from home or any location with internet connectivity.

Learning in the 21st century highlights the importance of students developing critical thinking skills, linking science to real-life situations, mastering information technology, and being effective in communication and collaboration. Acquiring these skills can be accomplished by utilizing suitable learning techniques regarding the mastery of content and abilities. Choosing the appropriate learning method, media, and resources, is equally crucial for attaining an effective teaching and learning experience. Moreover, employing learning media will be more engaging and can enhance student motivation. Moreover, the educational resources will be more comprehensible, enabling students to grasp the content effectively and achieve their learning objectives more successfully. This will encourage greater engagement in learning activities, as students will not solely rely on lectures for information.

Using digital environments is one way to enhance students' reading abilities through innovative collaboration and engagement. It highlights that computer platforms make reading more enjoyable, allowing peers to contribute and improve existing work, which fosters critical and innovative thinking. Additionally, it notes that students lacking confidence in reading skills can overcome these barriers by employing effective reading strategies, leading to increased self-regulation and responsibility for their learning process (Babiker, M., & Elmagzoub, 2015).

The determining factor that affects students' reading success is prioritizing the effective use of the technological platform to enhance reading comprehension abilities. The effectiveness of learning can be affected by how synchronous and asynchronous technologies are utilized (Ene, E., & Upton, 2014). The influence of synchronous and asynchronous learning indicates that students' reading comprehension increases.

Asynchronous learning refers to online education that takes place indirectly and is non-interactive. This signifies that the students do not engage with instructors or classmates and are not able to communicate with each other through an online platform. Asynchronous learning occurs in various locations and at different times. The school can provide content online, enabling students to access it whenever they wish. Consequently, the students can study at any time and location they choose. In other words, asynchronous learning is when the student interacts with the different aspects of the teaching-learning process at their own pace and convenience (Amiti, 2020). Learning does not take place at a set time (Malik et al., 2017). Therefore, students have extra time to review and finish the learning materials (Yin, 2015). Asynchronous learning can be delivered through various methods, including online video courses, self-paced lesson modules, and published articles or research papers. Educational institutions can offer students easily accessible resources such as audio and video lectures, handouts, and PowerPoint presentations. There are three key elements for the effectiveness of online courses: a well-defined and consistent course structure, frequent and constructive interaction between lecturers and students, and engaging, meaningful discussions. Additionally, it was suggested that student satisfaction and learning in online courses are influenced by three types of interactions: with course content, with instructors, and among peers. By engaging in asynchronous learning, students are afforded the opportunity to apply critical thinking skills in their responses. This method allows students to formulate their replies thoughtfully rather than reactively, as they are not constrained by time and can engage with the material at their convenience. Consequently, asynchronous learning fosters a self-paced, independent, and student-centred educational experience (Perveen, 2016).

Synchronous learning mainly involves discussions, instant messaging, and blogs, which play a crucial role in making online courses more captivating, thus replicating the interactive quality of in-person classrooms and promoting social interaction among participants. This engagement takes place not only between students and lecturers but also among classmates. To understand this process, it is often necessary to reference particular application, media, or software that supports synchronous learning. Synchronous learning is defined by real-time, hands-on instruction that is generally planned in advance and encourages active learning exchanges. In this approach, the educational experience is both immediate and interactive. The principles of synchronous learning are shaped by three main influences: traditional classroom experiences, media, and conferencing technologies (Hyder et al., 2007). Some researchers provide a detailed definition of synchronous e-learning that highlights two key components: interaction and time (Shahabadi, M. M., & Uplane, 2015).

Moodle is one of the applications that can facilitate the learning process. One of the key strengths of Moodle is its ability to effortlessly combine both synchronous and asynchronous learning formats. This dual capability allows lecturers to create a dynamic and flexible learning environment that caters to diverse learning preferences and schedules. Synchronous learning, which occurs in real-time, enables students to engage in live discussions, participate in virtual classrooms, and collaborate with peers and instructors instantaneously. This immediacy fosters a sense of community and encourages active participation, which is particularly beneficial in intensive reading courses where discussion and interaction are crucial for comprehension and analysis (Prohorets & Plekhanova, 2015).

Moodle is one of the numerous Learning Management Systems that has achieved considerable recognition in the educational sector (Satriani et al., 2021). On the other hand, Moodle's asynchronous features provide learners with the flexibility to access course materials, complete assignments, and engage in discussions at their own pace. This is especially advantageous for intensive reading, as it allows students to revisit complex texts, reflect on their understanding, and engage with supplementary resources without the pressure of real-time constraints. This immediacy fosters a sense of community and encourages active involvement, which is particularly beneficial for intensive reading courses where discussion and interaction are crucial for comprehension and analysis (Prohorets, E., & Plekhanova, 2015).

Students participate in Moodle for various motivations. At the university, the engagement on Moodle is categorized under the Dimensions of Flexibility (USP Flexible Learning Policy, 2017). It clarifies that participation on Moodle occurs across seven categories. These include engagement between learners and content, engagement between learners and instructors, engagement among learners, engagement with learning environment, engagement with assessment activities, engagement with feedback, and engagement with the institution. This research focused on the initial six types of engagement.

Numerous researches have examined participation in synchronous learning and asynchronous learning by recognizing and classifying the elements within these two types (Fabriz et al., 2021, Flora Amity, 2020). Nonetheless, there is a lack of evidence regarding the study of synchronous and asynchronous learning by using Moodle that focus on engagement (content, lecturers, other learners, learning environment, assessment activities, and feedback). Consequently, this study examines these two learning method synchronous and asynchronous in relation to different types of engagement based on the following assumptions.

Research examining synchronous and asynchronous online learning within intensive reading courses at the university level remains in its early stages. This study aims to address the existing gap in the literature. The primary goal of this research is to uncover the dynamics of intensive reading instruction in a university setting, with particular emphasis on the technological applications of Moodle in both synchronous and asynchronous formats, as well as the challenges encountered by students. This study seeks to answer the following research questions: i) what application Moodle features are employed for synchronous and asynchronous intensive reading instruction at the Universitas Islam Riau? and ii) what challenges do students face when engaging synchronous and asynchronous learning through Moodle at the Universitas Islam Riau?.

METHOD

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the characteristics of synchronous and asynchronous learning in intensive reading courses at Universitas Islam Riau, particularly from the students' perspectives. This methodology prioritizes an emic approach that related with qualitative research (Perakyla & Ruusuvuori, 2013). Qualitative research pertains to the ideas, perceptions, opinions, or beliefs of the participants, none of which can be quantified. As (Creswell, 2014) noted, qualitative research serves as a means to explore and comprehend the significance that individuals or groups attach to social human issues. In qualitative research with emic approach design, sample selection is carried out by purposive sampling or snowball sampling, with a focus on understanding the perspectives, cultures, and experiences of the group being studied

This research was conducted at Universitas Islam Riau in Indonesia, focusing on students enrolled in intensive reading courses. The sample selection is carried out by purposive sampling consisted of 67 students who participated in these courses through both asynchronous and synchronous learning methods using Moodle. The data for this study was collected through classroom observations to obtain first-hand insights into the behaviours, processes, and dynamics occurring in the classroom setting. Specifically, the observations were used to gather direct information about the use of technology in intensive reading instruction through both synchronous and asynchronous methods on Moodle. An action protocol was utilized during the observations to record the presence or absence of certain technologies and activities throughout the observation timeframe. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were carried out with ten students, enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions that arose during the interviews.

Subsequently, the data was analysed following a five-step process adapted from (Bernard et al., 2016). The first step involved creating a database, where data from observations and interviews were organized and stored in a single folder. The second step was open coding, during which the data was meticulously examined and categorized according to the conceptual framework employed. The third step focused coding, involved classifying the data into subcategories. The fourth step entailed organizing the emerging themes, which included the technologies applied in synchronous and asynchronous learning, as well as the challenges encountered by students. Finally, the findings were presented, leading to the formulation of conclusions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that students attend intensive reading classes by utilizing various features of the Moodle application with the presentation of synchronous and asynchronous learning. They also face several challenges when participating in synchronous and asynchronous learning. Synchronous and asynchronous learning on Moodle can be seen in Figure 1.

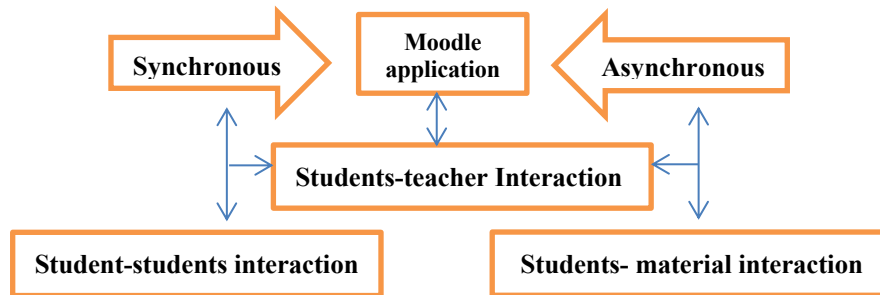


Figure 1. Synchronous and asynchronous learning on Moodle

Synchronous learning refers to a type of education that takes place in real-time. This learning approach involves direct interaction among instructors, students, and peers, similar to conventional in-person classes. These interactions occur through technology, systems, and internet access, commonly using tools such as video conferencing, video calls, or social media platforms (Mishra et al., 2020, N. Ziegler, 2016, Aduba & Mayowa-Adebara, 2022). In contrast, asynchronous learning lacks time limits, enabling students to participate in online activities at their convenience. In this model, educators usually distribute educational materials through a learning management system (LMS) and websites, while students take charge of downloading resources, finishing assignments, and returning their work to the instructors. In essence, students spend a considerable amount of time interacting with the necessary learning resources, while teachers mainly concentrate on offering support and supervision (A. Rido, R. M. K. Nambiar, 2016).

Moodle application of synchronous and asynchronous learning in intensive reading classes

Regarding synchronous learning, this study indicates that video conferencing feature and forum discussions are primarily utilized in intensive reading courses. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

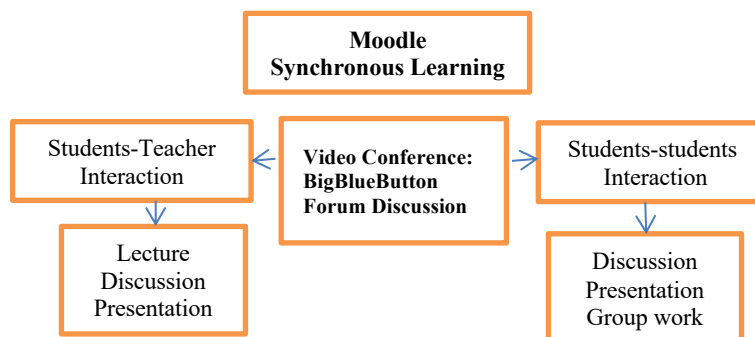


Figure 2. Video conference for Moodle synchronous Learning

Video Conferencing (BigBlueButton) and Forum Discussion are vital resources that enhance interactions among students and facilitate communication between students and teachers. These platforms allow users to attend educational sessions, participate in discussions, and share their research and ideas (Kalay et al., (2020). Furthermore, they promote collaborative work among students. Within the realm of interactions with teachers, students are exposed to intensive reading concepts that focus on specific subjects, which encompass explanations, examples, and the practice of reading skills. During lectures, students are encouraged to inquire and provide feedback, which cultivates deeper discussions and the sharing of ideas. It is common for students to encounter challenges with pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, and they receive constructive suggestions to remedy these language issues and improve their understanding of content. For student-to-student interactions, these tools provide opportunities for synchronous engagement through presentations, discussions, and group activities, all overseen by the teacher. With the increased use of online learning platforms, synchronous tools like Video Conferencing (BigBlueButton) and Discussion Forums go beyond being just educational aids; they fundamentally facilitate two-way communication between teachers and students while promoting real-time interaction among peers.

Additionally, Video Conferencing (BigBlueButton) and Discussion Forums include various supportive features, such as screen sharing, which allows teachers to present educational resources for enhanced understanding, a microphone option for verbal dialogue, and a chat box for written communications and file sharing. These capabilities significantly aid in the development of students' reading abilities. These observations are consistent with the findings of prior research (Simanjuntak & Puspasari, 2020).

This study shows that, in the setting of asynchronous learning on Moodle, students independently access YouTube, e-Modules, and relevant documents shared through Moodle's features from their homes. These resources are mainly used for the purpose of studying and revisiting learning materials, making up 85% of all sessions, as demonstrated in Figure 3.

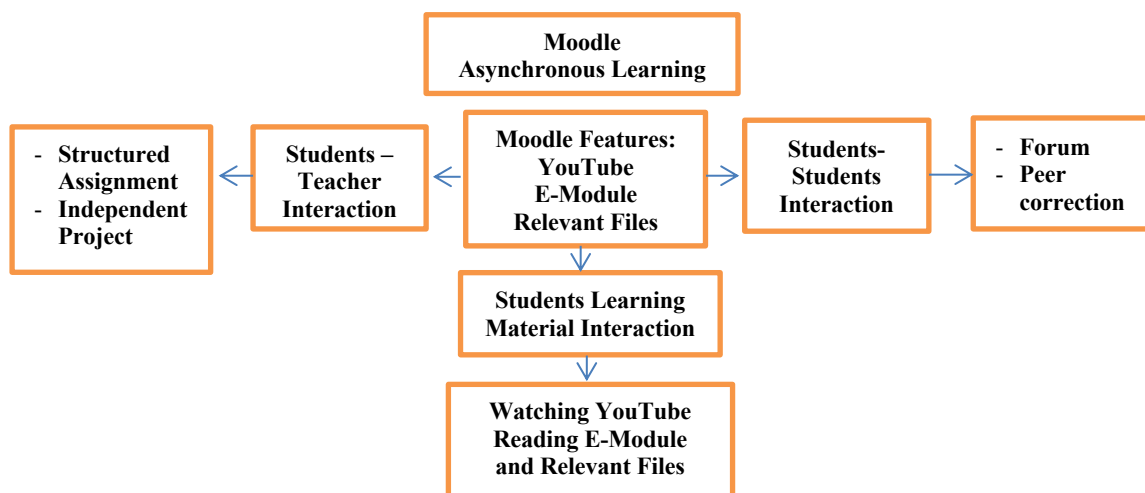


Figure 3. Moodle for asynchronous learning

The features of Moodle are designed to enhance interactions among students and teachers, facilitate peer collaboration, and provide access to educational materials. The platform is predominantly oriented towards asynchronous learning. Students can access YouTube for instructional content, engage with relevant e-modules, and download learning files for their personal databases (Ergün & Adıbatmaz, 2020). They also participate in discussion forums to express their thoughts and ideas on assigned topics. Additionally, students can communicate with their instructors through the chat box, seek guidance on their assignments, ask questions, and take part in assessments such as quizzes and exams (Anggraeni & Sole, 2018). However, issues such as poor internet connectivity and a substantial number of mandatory assignments pose significant challenges to effective time management, as considerable time is required for preparation, study, and completion of all tasks. These results are in line with findings from prior studies (Thongmak & Ruangwanit, 2021, Sipe & Sitthitikul, 2022).

Challenges of synchronous and asynchronous online learning in English language classrooms

This study also highlights the challenges faced by learners in both synchronous and asynchronous settings within intensive reading classes. Many students encounter technical issues, such as unstable internet connections, insufficient device capabilities, and high costs related to internet usage. Furthermore, lack of self-confidence becomes a significant issue, as demonstrated in Figure 4.

Curiously, during synchronous intensive reading sessions held on Moodle, students often become inactive on their screens, experience delays in receiving lectures, and are required to find better locations to enhance their internet connectivity. Additionally, not all students have access to advanced devices like personal computers, laptops, or smartphones that adequately support their educational requirements, resulting in the need to frequently install and uninstall applications that disrupt their learning process. As a result, students often feel reluctant to engage fully, fearing they might miss important explanations and feeling uncertain about sharing their thoughts. However, they show a readiness to take part in presentations and discussions, as illustrated by the students' vocal contributions.

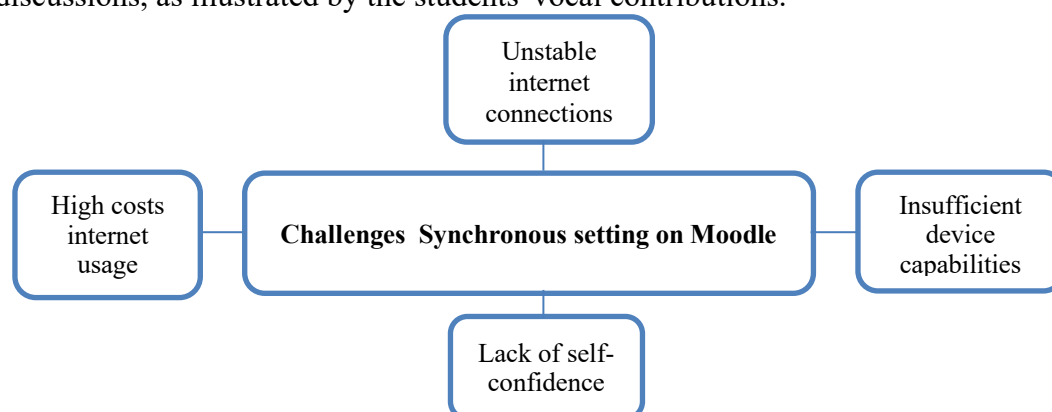


Figure 4. Challenges in synchronous English online learning

- Student 1: "I think that living in a rural area leads to most of my challenges being related to connectivity issues as well as problems with my laptop. There are times when we experience power outages, and we frequently do not have enough battery life to use the laptop. As a result, I face challenges related to both connectivity and my devices."*
- Student2: "In fact, my friends and I encounter numerous challenges, but the most significant one is undoubtedly the signal or network issues. Furthermore, many of us feel that online classes are less effective, as some students do not attend the sessions, resulting in participants being present in virtual meetings without appearing on camera."*
- Student3: "The primary concern is the internet connection, as our ability to study online heavily relies on it. When the connection fails, we miss classes and important materials, and the cost of internet data is also quite high."*
- Student4: "The most considerable obstacle is the necessity of practicing reading skills. During presentations, the clarity of the text displayed is often inadequate, and the examples provided are limited. We were introduced to unfamiliar technology, which made us feel self-conscious during presentations, as we frequently saw our faces on the screen outside of the camera view, except when presenting or when the teacher called on us. Additionally, the internet connection was unreliable."*
- Student5: "In my hometown, the signal tends to be disrupted when it rains, leading to a loss of connectivity. As a result, I often miss out on important information during meetings."*
- Student6: "I believe the primary issue lies with the internet connection. There are times when the teacher attempts to start the class, but we lack internet access. Learning virtually poses challenges for me, as there is an overwhelming amount of material to comprehend."*
- Student7: "We participate in classes through conference meetings and discussion forums. While I can manage many tasks at home without difficulty, going outside requires me to use my mobile data, which can be quite costly."*
- Student8: "Indeed, punctuality is essential. To access the link, we must log in; otherwise, entry into a virtual meeting of this nature is not possible. I believe that a stable internet connection is crucial when utilizing technology for learning, as poor signal quality can complicate the experience."*
- Student9: "Other students may also encounter similar issues. The problem often lies with signal buffering; my cell phone and laptop seem outdate, which may contribute to the difficulties. It appears that either some applications have been improperly installed or uninstalled, leading to various technical challenges."*

Students reported encountering a range of difficulties in the synchronous intensive reading class. A significant number highlighted technical issues, particularly unreliable internet

connections, which are especially problematic for those residing in remote locations. The level of interaction plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of reading comprehension, particularly during the reading process. When direct engagement in a synchronous classroom setting diminishes, it hampers the completion and comprehension of the material, thereby undermining the effectiveness of teaching and learning (Quansah & Essiam, 2021). Language acquisition transcends mere knowledge transfer; it also involves transforming students' attitudes and supporting their personal development throughout the learning journey. Furthermore, students face the burden of high internet costs, exacerbated by the current economic climate, which is characterized by limited financial resources and a lack of budgetary allocations for educational technology. These observations align with findings from earlier research. Additionally, students sometimes miss classes due to power outages. Another challenge is the use of low-quality devices, which complicates the learning experience (Sahoo et al., 2020). The inadequate performance of these devices often leads to battery depletion during lectures or presentations. As a result of their subpar personal devices, students frequently find themselves reinstalling learning applications, which can disrupt the flow of learning and affect their engagement. Moreover, in numerous countries, students are ill-prepared for online education, facing challenges such as insufficient self-directed learning skills, ineffective online communication, and a lack of learner autonomy. Students often struggle to concentrate due to an unsuitable learning environment at home (Zabolotniaia et al., 2020). While participating in videoconference classes, they frequently assist their parents with household tasks, a situation commonly observed in developing nations, particularly in Asia.

Moreover, learners express personal difficulties, such as insecurities when viewing their reflection on the screen and a lack of self-discipline, which results in arriving late to classes and participating in multiple activities at once. This observation aligns with previous studies. Furthermore, in setting of asynchronous learning of intensive reading, students face a variety of challenges. The research identified three primary issues: difficulties in comprehending the material, an overwhelming number of assignments, and insufficient personal commitment to their studies. These challenges are illustrated in Figure 5.

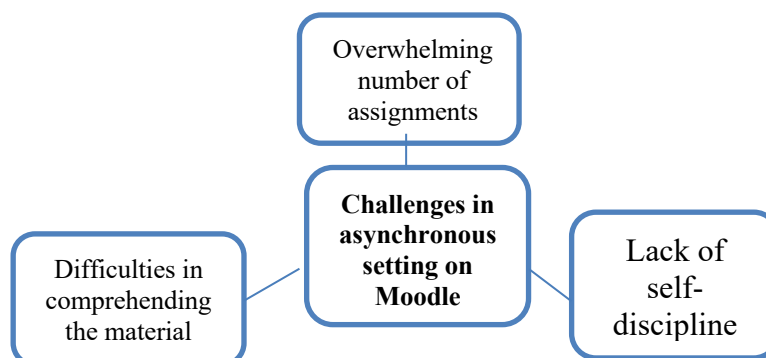


Figure 5. Challenges in asynchronous English online learning

Students have reported encountering various challenges during asynchronous intensive reading sessions. These difficulties significantly affect their academic performance. Feelings of isolation, lack of motivation, and being overwhelmed arise from limited interaction and heavy workloads. The following statements reflect the students' perspectives.

Student1: "My main issue is time management... There is an abundance of homework on Moodle, making time management my greatest hurdle."

Student2,3: "At times, I struggle to grasp the material presented on Moodle; the explanations are insufficient, and the workload is excessive."

Student 4: "Occasionally, we overlook assignments on Moodle because the teacher does not inform us about newly posted materials or tasks. If we fail to check, we risk receiving a zero, leading to confusion as we must independently comprehend the material. We only watch the videos, and often, we do not fully understand the teacher's intended message, especially when the videos are lengthy. This makes it challenging for us to grasp the content."

Student5,6: "The most significant challenge I face is the difficulty in understanding the material provided by the teacher, particularly when no explanations are given."

Student 7: "The primary issue is comprehending the material available on Moodle, as we are expected to learn it independently without teacher guidance. This proves to be quite challenging."

Student 8: "My greatest challenge arises during asynchronous sessions, where I must study alone and conduct research without the ability to ask my teacher questions directly. Sometimes I discuss it with friends, but they often lack understanding as well. Additionally, there are numerous exercises, essays, and papers that need to be submitted."

Student9 : Expressed, "One of the primary challenges we face as students is our tendency to be somewhat lethargic, particularly since we are often completing assignments from home. When studying independently, we sometimes struggle to grasp the concepts being taught, leading us to merely read or watch the provided materials."

Student10: Added, "On Moodle, the instructor supplies materials without accompanying explanations, which complicates my understanding of the content. Additionally, all subjects require numerous assignments, creating an overwhelming workload on a single platform."

Students express difficulty in understanding educational materials, primarily engaging with content individually through reading and videos, while struggling to collaborate effectively with peers. This isolation results in a passive learning experience, characterized by limited class discussions and communication. Furthermore, the lack of awareness about peers' academic progress contributes to feelings of isolation and decreased motivation to learn. In this context, Students in asynchronous online classes face significant challenges, including the inability to receive immediate feedback from instructors, which leads to feelings of

demotivation and social isolation. Time management issues arise from a heavy assignment load, often resulting in missed deadlines and decreased student engagement. This research underscores the negative impact of these factors on learning experiences and highlights the need for improved educational policies that address barriers such as internet connectivity and data capacity. To enhance student motivation and effectiveness in online learning environments, it is crucial for policymakers to invest in better facilities and technology for higher education (Reid, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This research investigates intensive reading instruction at the Islamic University of Riau, Indonesia, focusing on the implementation of Moodle technology through both synchronous and asynchronous methods. The study finds that students enhance their reading skills by engaging in virtual meetings and discussions during synchronous classes, while asynchronous learning allows them to access educational resources like YouTube, e-module, some related files with material, quizzes, and feedback by Moodle. Key challenges identified include internet connectivity issues, data availability, and time management. The research recommends leveraging various Moodle features for a balanced learning approach and encourages support for students facing English language learning challenges. Moodle provides opportunities for students to find reading resources and learn more, can improve reading skills and train students to study independently so that they are able to construct their own knowledge. However, this study notes limitations due to the small participant pool and suggests future studies include a broader range of courses and participants for better generalizability.

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