

**EXPLORING DISTANCE LEARNING: THE CASE OF VIRTUAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM OF *KAMPUNG INGGRIS* INDONESIA AND US UNIVERSITY FOR EFL STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Directed to the few numbers of studies in online exchange programs on EFL students, this study purposely investigates about the remote learning between two institutions in *Kampung Inggris Pare*, Indonesia and a US university. The exploration of this distance learning highlights on the basic motivation of the virtual exchange program with the primary focuses on the learning impulsion between both stakeholders, the pursuit of the virtual exchange program, and the learning outcomes for EFL students affected by the virtual exchange program. Data were gained from the interview, documentation and observation for 6 weeks and were analyzed descriptively. The result of this study unpacks that the main encouragement of both institutions is (a) to construct an international-vibe class, (b) to enhance the EFL students' cross-cultural understanding and (c) to broaden the intercultural knowledge. The program exertion utilized the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol) and this country-mile learning brought more implications for the institutions, teachers and EFL students, particularly in confidence of speaking and listening.

Keywords: distance learning; *Kampung Inggris*; US university; virtual exchange program

**INTRODUCTION**

This study intends to make a point of virtual exchange program implementation between two institutions, *Kampung Inggris* (English village), Indonesia and US university in improving the EFL students' skill in Indonesia. This online exchange program is formed as one of the impacts from pandemic Covid-19 and it is part of solution of two enactments (Kusumawati, 2020). *Kampung Inggris Pare* in this research is represented by BEC (Basic English Course) as the pioneer and the earliest built course. There are hundred English courses in *Kampung Inggris Pare* and most of the courses used to have speaking practice program with foreigners in another location such as Yogyakarta or Bali and required their students to practice their English with the foreign tourists or native speaker visitors. Its purpose is to improve the speaking skill of students and their confidence. As a result, more and more students from all over

Indonesia urge themselves to participate in learning English at this full-English community (Pratiwi et al., 2020). At the same time another higher education located in USA has a study course of TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language) through literature and films class and this course implements project-based assessment namely English tutoring practice to non-English speakers as part of their collaborative learnings (Izzah, 2021).

After pandemic Covid-19 hit the entire world, it has dramatically changed people's aspects of life. This tremendous disaster has replaced all in-person activities to be virtual ones and by replacing the conservative face-to-face class to be online language learning, this can result better in language skill (Manegre & Sabiri, 2022). As many parts of educations starts to wake from pandemic impact and rethink about academic future of the world, the e-learning has become the only solution to pursue the education process (Naidu, 2022). Furthermore, *Kampung Inggris Pare* (English Village Pare), one of the most incredible places in Indonesia for learning English, was significantly affected by pandemic and so was US university. Before pandemic occurred, both institutions used to conduct in person classes.

However, they have changed the offline classes to be virtual ones as well as implemented the blended class, which mixes synchronous and asynchronous class (Andujar & Nadif, 2022). This class-changing experience will only adopt the design of learning and teaching scenarios, curriculum and developments (Naidu, 2022). Since BEC needs native-speakers to make a betterment of their students' speaking skills and self-efficacy and US university needs students to be taught for the purpose of teaching practice. Both institutions agreed to create a virtual exchange program to fulfil each of their need.

Since there is a lack of study numbers regarding online classes from two different countries, this study investigates the implementation of virtual exchange program between BEC from *Kampung Inggris Pare* and US university (UR) in the term of learning motivation, the process of the program, and the learning results for EFL students.

## **METHOD**

This section is going to discuss about the research method, the location of research, the research instruments, the data collection procedure and data analysis. The research methodology used in this research is intrinsic qualitative research. Qualitative methodology focuses on human behavior that occurs based on the context. Qualitative inquiry is started from a different perspective of the subject things of the society or human sciences. In addition, the most important for qualitative research in the social field of study is to understand and take a portrait of the meaning that is made by all people involved in specific social location or programs.

Furthermore, qualitative research approach used in this research is intrinsic case study research. The case studies explain a deep description of one matter. This matter might be a person, a community, a site, a group of students, a policy, an event, a procedure, an organization, or a society. There are 9 students from US university and 45 students from BEC who take a part in this research. One Richmond student led five students from BEC in every session. So, in total there are 5 groups in this virtual exchange program.

The research location is virtually located in BEC, English Village. This course needs the English-speaking partner. Started by contacting the Indonesian teaching assistant who is coincidentally placed in one of US universities, this English course seeks help to get some native Americans that are willing to be speaking partner for BEC students. In the same time, the university in America has a class called TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language). The purpose of this class is to prepare American students to be English teacher and able to teach English through literature and films. The professor of this class has the same idea to give more chance to her students in the class for having teaching practice with the students from another country. Therefore, American students in university agreed to be learning peers and conduct virtual exchange programs with BEC from English village.

The research instruments used are observation, documentation and interview. The observation data was gained by supervising the virtual exchange programs for 6 weeks. The second research instrument is documentation, which collects the attendance list of English village students' and US university students' names, the lesson plan from US university students, and the learning materials used during virtual exchange program.

Another research instrument is interview, which collects the data from English tutors in BEC, professor from TEFL course, the US university students and students from BEC.

The data collection was obtained within six weeks. The observation was conducted through joining every session for six times. Some screenshots and screen recordings were used to take observation data. Meanwhile, all the administrative stuff like lesson plan, list of participants, learning materials were taken to collect the documentation data. To acquire data from interview, the stakeholders of BEC and US university as well as their students were given relevant questions regarding the virtual exchange program.

The data then was analyzed by using pattern coding (Miles et al., 2013). It organizes the codes based on the addressed study question. This coding helps to label the data as well as select the relevant data. The process of analyzing data begins by collecting the data and reading the interview transcripts to get the general point of view from all the interviewees. Later, it continues by discovering and grouping the ideas as well as the concepts of interviews to construct themes in the data. Also, the validity and reliability of the data analysis is presented on the following finding part. The interview results are carefully selected as addressed crucial theme of the research. The data from both observation and documentation were added to help drawing a result summary of research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

After data collection and data analysis were completed, this research finally gained the results. From the interview, relevant documentation as well as the observation. The results are classified in three essential points as the addressed aims of the research. Those are the fundamentals of the virtual exchange program, the implementation and the learning result of virtual exchange program.

The first result gained from this research is the motives from BEC as representative from English Village Pare and US university. Both of the institutions have learning motivations as their primary reason. The similarities of ideas coming up from two institutions have created the virtual exchange program.

### **The Basic Motivations of Virtual Exchange Program**

From the perspective of head of research and development in BEC as the Indonesian supervisor stated in the interview that the basic encouragement to create this virtual exchange program is to build the international network with another institution from overseas. This virtual exchange program aims to enlarge the relation of sharing and learning with more diverse perspectives. Furthermore, this distance learning is purposely expected to create an intercultural experience in applicative and cooperative way, which can give tremendous effect to English village students globally and BEC students particularly.

The TEFL (Teaching English as Second Language) class of US university requires teaching practice as part of their course syllabus. A professor of TEFL class, who also initiates this virtual exchange program, explained that US university students particularly in TEFL course has several learning objectives. One of them is teaching practice. This virtual exchange program is to provide an opportunity for US university students to practice the teaching second language acquisition principles they studied in class. Having a real-life opportunity to put the lessons to use is very advantageous. This program also can enhance the “human touch” of empathy and cross-cultural learning. By engaging in this exchange, both the U.S. students and the Indonesian students learned about each other, cultural differences, and a small amount about the world.

Then, this program presents an opportunity for BEC students to conduct language and cultural exchange with beginner teacher-students from the U.S. This exchange allows the BEC Indonesian students a chance to hear and practice authentic language.

### **The Performance of Virtual Exchange Program**

From the interview result of both US university professor and head of BEC as well as the observation. The implementation of the program was conducted via online platforms. US university student-teachers were coupled with a small group of BEC students. The ratio of the group division is 1 US university student-teacher faces 6 BEC students. A mutually convenient time to meet was determined with the help of the US university professor and the BEC Head. The 12 hours difference of Indonesia and USA makes this step challenging, but everything was well-set up after some discussion between both stakeholders. The media used is Zoom and US university students sent

Zoom links to their group of BEC students. The UR students were required to create lesson plans and any accompanying materials and submit them to the US university Professor ahead of time. After they executed the lesson, they wrote a reflection on how it went, what methods they used, and what they would change for next time as betterment. Another online platform is also employed such as WhatsApp as a back-up application that would be used every time Zoom faced a technical trouble. The US university students and BEC students sometimes used WhatsApp to exchange materials too.

Additionally, from documentation data, the students of US university used lesson plan with the method of SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol) by Echevarria, Vogt and Deborah in Nguyen (2011). This SIOP is applied in the virtual class with BEC students. This is how the SIOP lesson plan by one of US university students looks like below.

Table 1  
Example of Lesson Plan

**SIOP LESSON PLAN**

<b>Date:</b> March 26 and 29, 2022	<b>Level/Subject/students:</b> Intermediate students
<b>Unit/Theme:</b> Student sharing – Vocabulary and Fluency building	

**Content Objective(s):**

The student will (be able to):

1. Develop specific vocabulary (see key vocabulary)
2. Gain confidence in speaking (long-term goal)

**Language Objective(s):**

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of vocabulary through a “would you rather” game, using the vocabulary words and explaining their choices.
2. Show understanding of the materials via a reflection of the session through the exit ticket.

<b>Key Vocabulary</b>	
On-campus apartment	Off-campus apartment
Meal plan	Housemate
Roommate	Resident Assistant (RA)
<b>Review Vocabulary</b>	

<b>Supplementary Materials</b>	
Video and session PPT	Exit ticket
Reading materials: word bank, introduction, script	Photos
Paper and pencil	

	<i><b>SIOP Features</b></i>	
<i><b>Preparation</b></i>	<i><b>Scaffolding</b></i>	<i><b>Grouping Options</b></i>
<i>Adaptation of Content ✓</i>	<i>Modeling ✓</i>	<i>Whole Class ✓</i>
<i>Links to background ✓</i>	<i>Guided Practice</i>	<i>Small groups</i>
<i>Links to past learning</i>	<i>Independent practice</i>	<i>Independent</i>
<i>Strategies Incorporated ✓</i>	<i>Comprehensible Input ✓</i>	<i>Partners</i>
<i><b>Integration of Processes</b></i>	<i><b>Application</b></i>	<i><b>Assessment</b></i>
<i>Reading</i>	<i>Hands-on</i>	<i>Individual ✓</i>
<i>Writing</i>	<i>Meaningful ✓</i>	<i>Group</i>
<i>Speaking ✓</i>	<i>Linked to objectives ✓</i>	<i>Written ✓</i>
<i>Listening ✓</i>	<i>Promotes engagement ✓</i>	<i>Oral</i>

**Lesson Sequence**

1. *Introductions and ice-breaker*
  - a. *I will introduce myself using visuals from a PowerPoint*
  - b. *Ask students if they have any questions/comments*
  - c. *Go around and ask students to introduce themselves*
    - i. *Photo (optional)*
    - ii. *Name*
    - iii. *Age*
    - iv. *Where you are from*
    - v. *Future goals (Do you study anything else besides English? Dream job?)*
    - vi. *Hobbies*
2. *“Rules of our sessions”*
  - a. *Respect the learning process – we are here to learn and share.*
  - b. *Make mistakes! That’s how you learn!*
  - c. *Support each other.*
  - d. *Feel free to ask questions.*
  - e. *Do your best to speak at least 2 times during the hour.*
3. *Introduce objectives.*

4. *Pre-lesson warm-up*
  - a. *“What is something you like and/or dislike about where you live?”*
5. *Introduce your topic. “Today, we are going to talk about....”*
6. *Key vocabulary review – review vocabulary -set up pictures/photos to make sure they can identify and use the vocabulary. Have them repeat the vocabulary after you. Use them in sentences.*
7. *Lesson – video tour of apartment*
8. *Repeat or stop if necessary*
9. *Open questions*
10. *Application: Scenario/Would you rather?*
  - a. *Using the key vocabulary, students will imagine themselves as a UR or American university student to make decisions about housing- they will apply their knowledge of the key vocab to explain their choice and discuss with the class*
  - b. *Question 1: Would you rather live on an on-campus apartment or off-campus? Or dorm? Why?*
  - c. *Question 2: Would you rather buy a meal plan or cook for yourself?*
  - d. *Question 3: Would you rather have your friend/someone you know as a roommate/housemate or have someone random?*
11. *Provide exit ticket. (Google Form) – no name*
  - a. *Which session are you reflecting on? (Date)*
  - b. *What is one thing you learned today?*
  - c. *What is something you still have a question about or want to know more about?*
  - d. *What, if anything, made you feel comfortable speaking today?*
  - e. *What, if anything, made you feel uncomfortable speaking today?*
  - f. *Additional comments?*

Regarding SIOP lesson plan, the US university student when interviewed revealed that the virtual exchange session was a success. By using SIOP, the students were engaged and active to ask lot of questions. The Indonesian students participated very well on every session and tried their best speaking.

### **The Learning Outcome of Virtual Exchange Program**

Based on the BEC students' interview, they gained several improvements after participating in virtual exchange program. Previously, the students of BEC only study with local English teachers and barely have opportunity to learn with native English speakers directly. Before pandemic came, the BEC students had annual field trip to another city in Indonesia like Yogyakarta to meet with foreign tourists and practice their English. As matter of fact, they have to stay inside the school with tight healthy protocol regulation so they almost had no chance to do the field trip in another city.

In the interview, BEC students stated that they obtained an improvement in the listening skills because they can interact directly with native speakers. For example, they know how to use word connection when speaking English although sometimes they hardly comprehend the conversation when the US university students speak too fast.

Furthermore, the speaking skill became the most affected skill for the BEC students. Their speaking is much more controlled because in this exchange program they got a lot of inputs and encouragements when speaking such as being rush in speaking English is not necessary. Also, the students felt dramatically proud of themselves since they can talk with native English students and understand their speaking. This creates pride and encourages them to speak the best English they can.

As a result, the BEC students stated that their confidence to speak English is significantly improved. Apart of the speaking skill enhancement, the cultural knowledge about another country as well as specific natives' habits in speaking English is broadened

### **Discussion**

This part discusses and compares the relevant research of the previous completed researches to this research. A study by Salomão and Viana da Silva (2020) stated that a



virtual exchange program between university students from US and Brazil required the urge of employing the educational media to demonstrate better intercultural feminism understanding. The study only revealed the virtual exchange program effect to the feminism comprehension between two host institutions. However, this study offers the new findings on English improvement of listening and speaking for Indonesian students after participation in virtual exchange program.

Virtual exchange program also showed the types of commenting on youth dialogue (Kreikemeier & James, 2018). Three main points on how young people communicated on the intercultural online exchange program figured out the youth identity pride, globally competitive vibes, and ability of digital communication. This study somehow focused on observing the youth attitude in discussing with peers in online platforms. Meanwhile, one of research focuses here is how the US and Indonesian students collaborated in a virtual exchange program using SIOP lesson plan within 6 weeks as well as its impact on English skill.

Another study revealed that virtual exchange program enhanced students' learning motivation on cultural studies (Schenker, 2013). Although the students were fully aware of the importance of learning culture before the virtual exchange program, the students found an online exchange program helps them to integrate the culture and language. However, this previous study missed the specific part of English as impacted part of virtual exchange program. Then, this research is trying to complete the gap on English skill enhancement through virtual exchange program.

The virtual exchange program contributed positively on pedagogy between Chinese and American students (Luo & Yang, 2022). Several benefits gained showed the demonstration of cultural learning, the Chinese language betterment, the increasing learning impulsion and creating a learning environment. Apart of Chinese culture and language learning, the current study unpacked the American and Indonesian students' cross-cultural understanding and a teaching practice of SLA (second language acquisition) by American students to Indonesian students.

The virtual exchange program was conducted by the US and Thai university students. These undergraduate students can improve the cross-cultural understanding, ability to think critically, cultural globalization, the competence development of global collaboration, and learning experience as the advantage of participating in virtual

exchange program (Duffy et al., 2022). In this study, it completes the former research. The result showed not only did a virtual exchange program influence the intercultural understanding but also it can improve the particular skill of languages as well as the confidence of speaking with the natives.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this research is that any kind of formal or informal institution where English program is offered can implement the virtual exchange program. The findings such as Indonesia-US virtual exchange program background, the implementation process, and the improvement of English skill through virtual exchange programs, show that this online face time can contribute to the EFL students' language as well as the multicultural knowledge. Regardless which country the participants are from, the benefits of virtual exchange program mostly outweigh the disadvantages. Especially, for Indonesian students whose English has been significantly improved by communicating with American students through this online exchange program.

The suggestions are given to the future researchers. The former one, the future researchers are highly recommended to deeply research about the effects of virtual exchange program on other specific English skill, whether the virtual exchange program with natives would replace the in-person teacher or the preference of students on virtual exchange program for improving the language skills.

Later, the implication of this research is beneficial for some reasons. The institutions, which prefer to implement virtual exchange program, either formal or informal should be open-minded and accept any open-learning activities because not all institutions are acceptable with the fact of culture difference, especially in teaching. The second, there should be a teacher or authority from institutions to involve in an international forum first before recommending the foreign teachers to teach their students. This is to assist the teacher as representative of schools to understand the pros and cons of inviting an English teacher from another country and help them to engage with the local students. The last, the students must be ready to join international forums since the main language used in the virtual program is English, the students should be prepared in understanding the basic English. In hope, they will not get huge language

barriers in listening spoken English and in expressing their thoughts and ideas in English.

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