

## **The Application of Asynchronous Learning for English Language Teaching in English and Non-English Study Program**

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### **Abstract**

The condition of the COVID19 pandemic has changed the habits of the world, including the education sector in Indonesia. For schools with strong economic strength, both students and educators will have no significant difficulties in implementing face-to-face online learning in a full manner (synchronous). On the other hand, there are many obstacles to implementing synchronous learning in schools with low economic abilities for both students and educators. One learning method that can be done with minimal barriers is asynchronous learning. Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap and IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, both schools have low economic strength, both students and lecturers. This study aims to see the benefits and problems that arise in applying asynchronous learning in Maritime English II of Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap and English I of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon course. The researcher uses Google Classroom, YouTube, WhatsApp and Telegram media in lecture activities. The researcher then conducted a mini-survey to find out the advantages and obstacles experienced by students. The data is then explained using a qualitative descriptive method. The results showed at least 5 (five) advantages and 1 (one) weakness in asynchronous learning. The five benefits are material enrichment, access to learning materials, social interaction, personal interaction, and ease in discussing student work. Meanwhile, the constraints found were related to cost-effectiveness.

**Keywords:** *Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap; Asynchronous; English I; IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon; Maritime English I; Synchronous*



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### **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 Pandemic is considered the greatest downfall of global health which has impacted many aspects of life. The on-going pandemic has affected 36,237,403 people since its first outbreak in 2019, in Wuhan, China, and has taken 1,054,868 lives ([World Health Organization, 2020](#)). This distressing situation has sent people around the world into lockdown to cut the chain of the coronavirus transmission. With the physical distancing policy, the world is facing a great challenge in every facet, including education. The education system before the pandemic required students to have in-person interaction where students and teachers had classes at school or

campus. However, the current situation demands a great change for it has closed almost all schools, colleges, and universities. This closure has led billions of students and educators to move their classes to virtual platforms.

With the rapid development of technology, an online class is not impossible to be implemented. An online class is not a new term in education. There had been schools, especially for higher education, offering remote classes before the COVID-19 outbreak. Only during the pandemic are online classes rising in number. Schools, which start in the morning and usually end in the afternoon, have shifted their traditional classes. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Education found that most schools in Indonesia, or 97.6% of schools surveyed, have moved to remote learning during the pandemic (Cahya, 2020). Series of lessons are now delivered through video conference or teleconference platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, Cisco Webex, Skype, and WhatsApp. Those sites and applications offer students and instructors synchronous learning model where they can have real-time interaction in online classes, just like the one they have in more conventional classes. Synchronous learning is seen as “all types of learning in which learner(s) and instructor(s) are in the same place, at the same time, for learning to take place. This includes in-person classes, live online meetings when the whole class or smaller groups get together” (Finol, 2020). In a synchronous learning environment, students usually go through the learning path together and their instructor accompanies them, providing support while they are completing tasks and activities. This model would be successful to be implemented virtually with the help of good internet connectivity and supporting techs, such as computers, laptops, and cellphones.

However, synchronous e-learning is still difficult to take place in Indonesia, especially during this novel coronavirus pandemic. Many factors contribute to the difficulties, from the socio-economic background of the participants, in this case, students and the educators themselves, to the inadequate access to the internet. Indonesia is one of the developing countries whose over half of the population lives with middle-low income. It has become worse since the pandemic outbreak in Indonesia at the beginning of March. “More than 3 million Indonesians have lost their jobs due to businesses closing down and the large-scale social restrictions (PSBB)” (Callista & Bernandus, 2020). This situation has set many families in struggles to feed themselves, let alone to provide the children with everything they need for online classes. Also, people who live in remote areas are experiencing bad signal reception and laggard internet connection. Proper devices, internet data, and good internet connection now seem to be luxurious items for some people in this pandemic era. Hence, creating synchronously virtual classes is hard and burdensome.

Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap and IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon are two educational institutions encountering the hardship. Both the students and educators have middle-low economic strength. Many of them have to take part-time jobs to support their daily needs due to the pandemic. Some can work part-time from home, but some have to risk themselves outside. Some students also live in remote areas where internet connection is often down. Thus, synchronous learning method is almost inapplicable. Given the conditions, the writers conducted a study on asynchronous learning in those two institutions. Asynchronous learning refers to a method in which an interactive learning community is not limited by time, place, or the constraints of a classroom (Shahabadi & Uplane, 2015). It is believed that this learning method is the most suitable way. Hence, this research

aims to see the benefits and problems arising in the application of asynchronous learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

With the emergence of Industry 4.0 and the proliferation of digital technologies, online learning, whether it is the synchronous learning or the asynchronous one has received substantial attention. Considerable research has been conducted on asynchronous learning before the pandemic: students' perception towards asynchronous group discussion (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2003), TESOL graduate students' participation in conversation during asynchronous learning (Ho & Swan, 2007), the effects of asynchronous learning on vocabulary retention and recall (Gorjian, et al., 2011), a comparison between asynchronous learning and blended online learning (a mix between asynchronous and synchronous learning) in a remote English class (Ge, 2012), students' perceptions and attitudes towards an asynchronous digital tool to improve grammatical skills (Pinto-Llorente, et al., 2017), and the effects of asynchronous learning on students' speaking skills (Bakar et al., 2013; Buckingham & Alpaslan, 2017). These studies suggest that asynchronous learning in all its forms is beneficial for English language learners.

Attention to online learning seems to increase exponentially since the pandemic began. This is evidenced by the substantial amount of research dedicated to examining online learning, both synchronous and asynchronous at all levels of education. A transition from classrooms with in-person interactions to the online classroom using the Google Meet platform in a private school with 950 students in Georgia, USA was closely examined (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). The result shows that the school has undergone a successful transition from a more traditional learning form to online learning. This is due to a well-structured online class system where a permanent link is created for each class. The teachers can enter the classroom link at the scheduled time and the link is also sent to students and parents. The attendance of these synchronous online classes are more than 90% (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

Another research in response to the school closure was conducted by Yi and Jang (2020). One of their focuses is on how English teachers in South Korea shift their classes to online learning. It was reported that the online EFL classes varied from one school to another. Some teachers offer synchronous learning via video conferences and some offered asynchronous classes. South Korean government is in full support by developing online materials distributed through EBS (Educational Broadcasting System), the educational television channel in South Korea.

The cases from Georgia, the USA, and South Korea show relatively smooth transitions, in which schools, teachers, students, parents, as well as government partake in reshaping the education during the COVID 19 outbreak. Relatively sophisticated online learning can be done in educational institutions in both countries, synchronously and asynchronously. America and South Korea have developed countries and it is assumed that the Socioeconomic Status (SES) of the students there are better than the SES' level of students from developing countries such as Indonesia.

The next question is how teachers and students in Indonesia do cope with this sudden outbreak amidst the uneven access to digital devices and the Internet? Several studies have been conducted to investigate how various educational institutions shift their teaching and learning practices to online learning in the Indonesian context during the COVID 19 outbreak: Instagram caption to enhance extended writing skills (Bestari et al., 2020), online platforms used in the

teachers training program (Gunawan et al., 2020), the effects of digital content on students' motivation and interest (Fansury, et al., 2020), WhatsApp group as the online learning platform (Wargadinata, et al., 2020), EFL graduate students' perceptions on synchronous online learning (Rinekso & Muslim, 2020), English teachers' paradigm on TELL (Supriadi et al., 2020), and university students' perception on online learning (Almanar, 2020).

All these studies show that there has been a plethora of research devoted to investigating the transition from face to face classroom learning to online learning. However, very few studies have focused on asynchronous learning as one of the possible solutions to the uneven access to digital devices, internet connection, a sophisticated online learning management system, and relatively low socioeconomic background of students and teachers in the education context in Indonesia. This study attempted to map out the advantages and disadvantages of asynchronous learning during the COVID 19 outbreak.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Nowadays, distance learning which was first recognized around 2000 has become more pivotal in education than it was before. Especially during the pandemic when physical interaction is highly avoided and face-to-face learning is limited, the idea of distance learning is inevitable. One of the buzzwords related to distance learning is blended learning. Graham (2006) defined blended learning as learning which mixed the 'face-to-face (F2F) instruction with computer-mediated instruction.' Similarly, Friesen (2012) argued that blended learning encompassed circumstances by incorporating the uses of 'Internet and digital media' in the classroom demanding sessions where the teacher and students could physically meet. Staker and Horn (2012) pointed out that blended learning conveyed two important parts, namely (1) a 'formal' learning process enabling students to partially study employing online 'content and instruction' delivered through some components of their discretion of 'time, place, path and/ or pace' and (2) teacher's distant monitoring on students' brick-and-mortar learning.

The keys needed to be highlighted in this definition are 'formal', 'content and instruction', and monitoring. Blended learning is formal in the sense that it is different from other informal learning programs where students can join educational games on their own, for instance. The essential part of this definition is the notions of 'time, place, path, and pace'. Time deals with the learning period which is not limited to school days. Place deals with the learning location which is not limited to the school environment. Path reflects the way of learning which is not limited to a teacher as the only knowledge resource, yet it can involve other tools. Pace refers to the learning speed which can be adjusted to student's self-ability (Digital Learning Now as cited in Staker and Horn (2012). Also, blended learning covers the delivery of 'content and instruction' which distinguishes it from the mere use of the internet and it also includes teacher's distant monitoring on the online learning before the brick-and-mortar one. In other words, blended learning is a learning system that mixes face-to-face and monitored online instruction.

Valiathan (2002) suggested three models of blended learning categorized by NIIT. They include skill-driven learning, attitude-driven learning, and competency-driven learning. Skill-driven learning blends students' self-paced learning with the teacher's guidance to build certain knowledge and skills. In attitude-driven learning, several learning events and media are used to

deliver certain attitudes. Competency-driven learning combines online tools with a teacher's guidance to acquire tacit knowledge. These models are carried out through various learning activities and modes of delivery.

The modes of delivery in distance learning can be mainly classified into two. Those are synchronous and asynchronous modes. Synchronous online teaching occurs when students situated in a remote place can connect and experience a classroom-like atmosphere with their peers and teacher through video conferencing or audio-conferencing tools. On the other hand, asynchronous teaching is 'individually-based' teaching making it possible for students to work with the learning materials based on their own time and pace under the teacher's control (Murphy et al., 2011). Furthermore, Chauhan (2017) defined synchronous learning as a process where students exchange knowledge with one another at the same time. This is done through video conferencing and chats media. In contrast, in asynchronous learning, students carry out the learning process according to their own pace.

Similarly, Perveen (2016) proposed a definition of synchronous e-learning as teaching or learning activities that occur concurrently through certain electronic tools. Asynchronous e-learning, on the other hand, provides students more flexible learning experience by providing readily accessible materials that can be retrieved at any time suited to students' pace. Thus, synchronous learning can be regarded as a real-time teaching and learning process requiring the presence of both the teacher and the students, whereas asynchronous learning is a flexible learning model that provides students with materials that can be studied at any time according to their own pace.

Both synchronous and asynchronous learning have their advantages and disadvantages. Hrastinski (2008) summarized the advantages of synchronous and asynchronous learning in a continuum. The benefits of synchronous learning comprise increased arousal, motivation, and convergence on meaning. Its disadvantage is related to the limited amount of time allocated for learning which requires them to set their learning schedule. The benefits of asynchronous learning include increased reflection and ability to process information, whereas the disadvantage of this learning model is regarding students' feelings of isolation. Due to a lack of face-to-face meetings, students may feel isolated because they work with their devices instead of their friends. Despite its weakness, asynchronous learning's flexibility has made it the most common type of learning mode in online learning (Hrastinski, 2008). In short, synchronous learning can improve personal participation resulted from live interaction between the teacher and students and among students themselves, while asynchronous learning can enhance cognitive participation resulted from more time available for the students to process the learning materials and to do some reflection on them.

Chauhan (2017) noted five advantages and disadvantages of synchronous learning. The advantages include cost-effective (low cost), convenience (no physical constraints), immediate feedback enhancing knowledge retention, high motivation resulted from real-time interaction, and a sense of community. Besides those advantages, the disadvantages shared by this mode of learning involve strictly technology-based learning, demand for a high-speed internet connection, local time constraints, a demand for careful planning, and a challenge for quitter students to communicate. Asynchronous learning also has some advantages including the development of students' self-control towards their learning, development of self-reflection on students' learning, convenience

(no presence needed), less social obstacles (for introvert students), and interactivity regardless of the time and place constraints. In contrast, the disadvantages of asynchronous learning are a lack of immediate feedback, a lack of personal interaction, no live collaborative activities, a lack of motivation, and a demand for self-discipline.

The topic of e-learning was conducted by numerous researchers in the field of English Language Teaching. [Cai \(2012\)](#) discovered how teachers modify their educational strategy to increase the understanding of students rapidly and effectively through e-learning in English language instruction. According to [Chhabra \(2012\)](#), instructors are able to increase student involvement inside the classroom thanks to the innovative ELT approaches and the usage of e-learning technologies. In addition to the classical face-to-face system, [Zakarnah \(2018\)](#) showed that e-learning was more successful in ELT.

Every educational setting may have different preferences regarding the learning mode chosen for their distance learning. They may prefer applying one of the learning modes or even both simultaneously. The decision may deal with socioeconomic factors, teachers' planning, and available facilities provided by the institution. Considering the feasibility, the present research studies students' perception of the implementation of asynchronous English language learning.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In the mid-even semester period, namely March-May 2020, the researcher collects study data from Maritime English II of Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap lectures and English I of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon lectures. In the course material regarding maritime English, the researcher uses the MarEng Learning Tool software. To have supplemental material from numerous books and even for task entries, Google Classroom is used. The researcher has used the [Staker and Horn \(2012\)](#) numbers 4 and 5 blended learning process. In Maritime English II lectures there were no face-to-face sessions, but students had access to materials that they then discussed on the Telegram channel every week.

The researchers submitted a survey related to the implementation of the lecture learning during the middle of the semester. There are 6 (six) statements put forward, namely: (1) pedagogical richness, (2) access to knowledge, (3) social interaction, (4) personal agency, (5) cost-effectiveness, and (6) ease of revision. The researchers used a Likert scale to measure and analyzed those statements. The researcher also provides a separate column in the survey sheet to receive input freely. The score ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree.

Table 1. Number of Respondent of Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Respondent</b>
Male	23
Female	7
Total	30

A mixed approach is the analysis method used in this study. The researcher uses a quantitative descriptive approach to show the findings of the inquiry performed by the scholar

during the middle of the semester to 30 (thirty) students at Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap and 28 (twenty-eight) students at IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. To explain the survey results collected, the descriptive qualitative method is used.

Table 2. Number of Respondent of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Respondent</b>
Male	15
Female	13
Total	28

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was given to students of the IAIN English intensive program at the IAIN Syekh Nurjati Language Development Center (PPB). Respondents in this study were 28 semester III students who were spread across several departments, including English Language Education, Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, Islamic Counseling Guidance, History, and Hadith Science.

In contrast to the analysis conducted at AMN Cilacap, the learning media used by IAIN Syekh Nurjati during the pandemic consisted of three types, namely Syekh Nurjati Learning Management System (LMS), Google Classroom, and Whatsapp. However, in this research, Google Classroom and Whatsapp are the media that are tested for their effectiveness. Apart from the fact that Syekh Nurjati LMS is being developed, these two platforms are the ones most widely used by lecturers in teaching.

The findings in the study indicate the important data regarding the effectiveness of online learning with the support of paid and free platforms. As in the following figure:

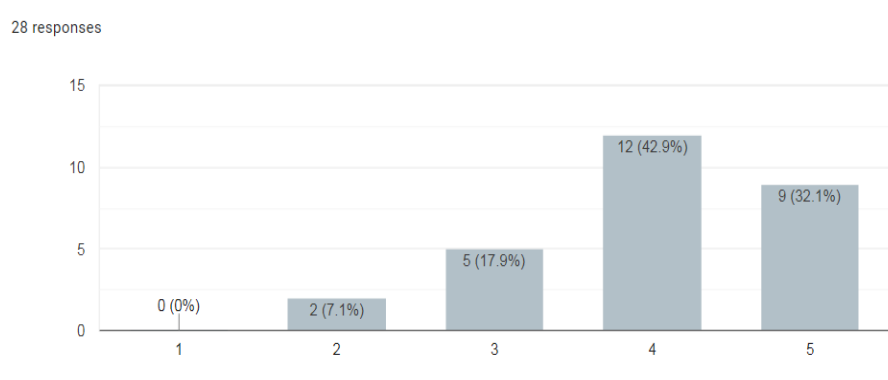


Figure 1. Material Enrichment

Figure 1 explains about learning English I using the WA Group application and Google Classroom can provide enrichment material that is following the curriculum. This is indicated by the large percentage at levels 4 and 5. It means that most students can enrich learning materials with the curriculum, even though it is done online.

Furthermore, learning English I using the WA Group application and Google Classroom provides the widest possible access to the material that is under the curriculum. As illustrated in the following figure:

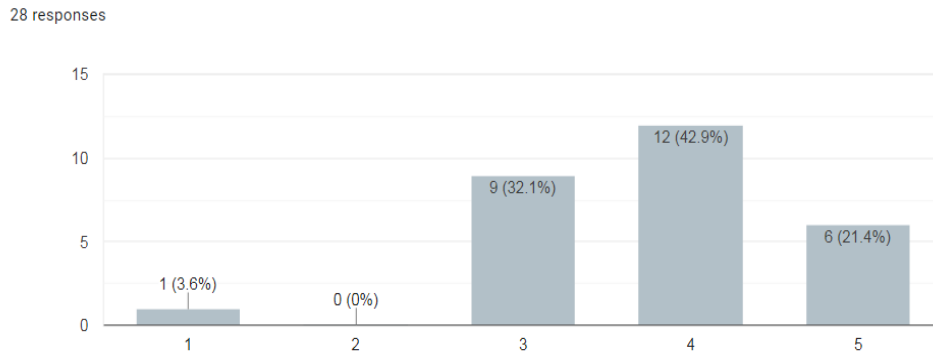


Figure 2. Access to Knowledge

Figure 2 indicates that most students consider online learning to be able to provide the breadth for them to explore as many learning resources as possible. Besides, lecturers also suggested accessing some references outside the textbooks, which support the learning process.

Learning English I using the WA Group and Google Classroom applications was able to provide the widest possible access to the interaction during and after the lecture process. It shows the antithesis for the notion that online learning is not interactive and communicative. As in the following figure:

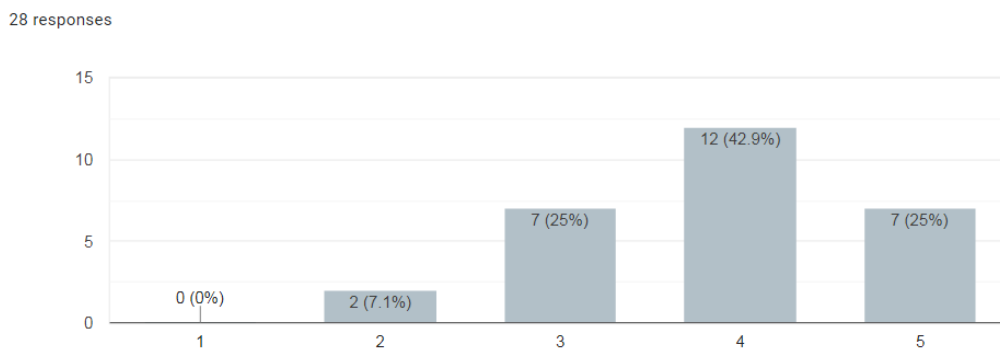


Figure 3. Social Interaction

It can be seen from Figure 3 that data shows that most students think that communication and interaction can also be done intensively through online media platforms. This is done through WA group discussions or direct communication with lecturers.

Other than that, English lecturer I opened the opportunity for the widest possible discussion during and after the lecture process. This is as stated in the following figure:



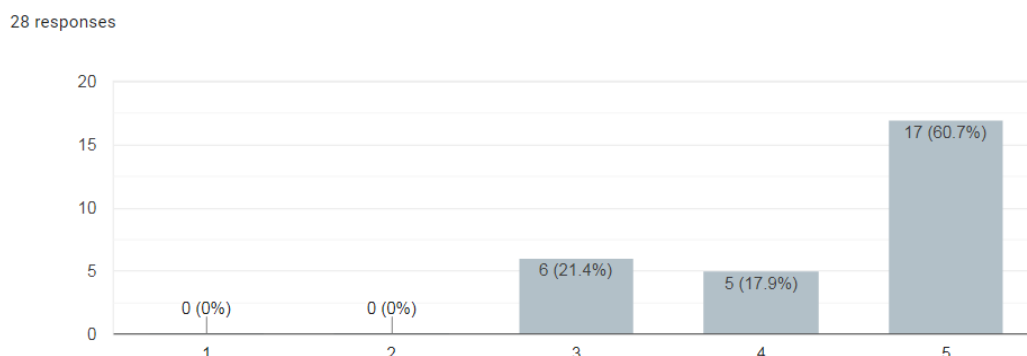


Figure 4. Personal Agency

Figure 4 shows that most of the students facilitated the need for discussion. Online learning still provides an opportunity for an interesting and continuous discussion process. After giving the material presentation, the lecturer always opens personal and group discussion forums. So that learning continues to be active.

Another thing is the access fee. Given that learning is carried out online, the need for data access is important. As in the following figure:

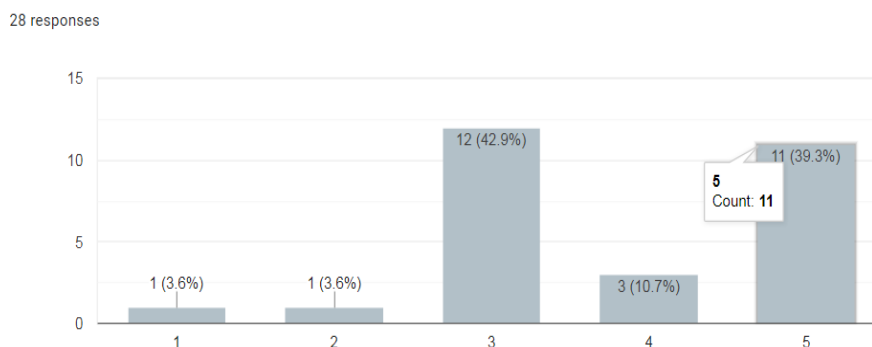


Figure 5. Cost-Effectiveness

It can be seen from Figure 5 that 11 students do not mind about data access costs using the WhatsApp Group application and Google Classroom. However, some others are still moderate, because of the diversity of student's economic backgrounds

Then, learning English I using the WA Group and Google Classroom applications can make it easier for students to work on and revise lecture assignments. As in the following graph:

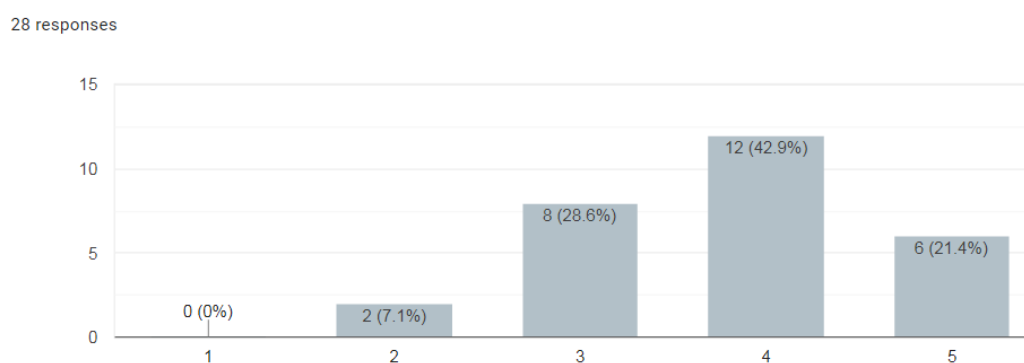


Figure 6. Ease of Revision

Based on Figure 6, it shows that most students consider the task revision process to be easier to do with online media. Lecturers also apply the paperless concept, to minimize other costs. This is considered very helpful for students in learning.

The outcomes of the mixed learning process depend strongly on the expected results and the circumstances. Some contend that mixed learning is good in teaching and learning, but not a few contend that mixed learning is not enough. Researchers have found that different findings have been obtained based on the survey.

Graham's first advantage of mixed learning is pedagogical wealth. Out of the 30 (thirty) pupils, 12 people approved, and the remaining 18 decided to agree firmly on the assertion. Pedagogical wealth itself is connected to the method of enriching learning about the given content. The primary content of the MarEng app includes unique maritime science materials. The students can improve their expertise by additional content other than maritime science, such as vocabulary in conversation and more grammar instruction.

Google Classroom plays an important part in making access to additional content simpler for pupils. This approach also takes a lot of time for boring students compared to learning that depends entirely on face to face. This leaves it lazy for students to locate additional information sources. The second advantage to mixed learning, i.e. accessing information, is this. Twenty people agreed in all and ten were very much in agreement.

Graham seems to have shifted the benefits of social interaction and personal agency in this pandemic age. Social interaction was historically characterized as face-to-face meetings with friends, but social interaction is restricted to telegram networks in this pandemic period. Nevertheless, once a week the review still has a well-developed interaction between teachers and students. 20 people have agreed to agree and 10 are firmly in support. It is often easier for teachers to review student work because of their ease of social contact.

Cost-effectiveness is one thing that is interesting and under discussion. In particular, 20 people objected and 10 people voted for neutral treatment. The preference between students is based on the ability of students who currently benefit from the COVID-19 pandemic. They cannot download or upload materials because of economic difficulties. Due to a lack of internet quota, you also find it difficult to access additional content.

## **CONCLUSION**

The use of asynchronous learning media such as Google Classroom, WhatsApp Group, Telegram and others has proven to be effective in delivering course material. Although there are some that are still constrained by the economic conditions of the family, the use of some of these media is still more effective than Zoom, Google Meet and the like.

By using Google Classroom media, lecturers can upload some lecture materials and even textbooks into their "classrooms". This simplifies the learning process because students can easily access the lecture materials. Access to knowledge remains wide open.

Although the interaction between lecturers and students is not as easy and smooth as face-to-face, the use of Google Classroom, WA Group, and Telegram has proven to be effective in communicating with each other. In addition, the "poll" feature on Telegram makes lectures more colorful.

The thing that is quite tiring from face-to-face meetings is that lecturers have to give manual assessments related to student assignments and exam results. By utilizing the LMS that has been provided, these assessments can be seen immediately by students. So that it makes it easier for lecturers and also minimizes errors due to boredom.

## **LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH**

The limitations of the study are those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the interpretation of the findings from your research. Further research should suggest the number of gaps in our knowledge that follow from our findings or to extend and further test of the research.

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