

## Factors Affecting Students' Concentration in Online English Learning

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### Abstract

Concentration is one of the most important aspects determining second language learners' success and performance during language learning. As a result, it has garnered significant attention from teachers and researchers. The recent worldwide health crisis has sparked revolutionary reforms in education, both in schools and universities. Universities and schools are required to conduct online English teaching; this practice has been ingrained in the educational sector and continues to this day. Concentration in online learning is becoming an increasingly important issue. A qualitative descriptive study investigated students' opinions of online instruction and how it affects their focus. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 students from complete classes, 12 male and 18 female. According to the data in this research, the researchers found two main factors influencing the students' concentration in online learning. Those two factors include internal factors; (1) Students' Understanding Ability (2) Students' Interest (3) Students' Physical Aspect and external factors; (1) a Large Volume of Teaching Material in a Session, (2) Teachers' Teaching Method, (3) Lack of Contact and Engagement between Teacher and Student, (4) Digital Technology Devices, (5) Learning Environment.

**Keywords:** *Concentration, English Learning, Online Learning.*

### INTRODUCTION

The global health crisis in the past few years has forced an online learning system. Even after the pandemic, learning activities continue to be carried out. Educators endure new challenges in implementing bold, digital learning. In the unpredictable climate surrounding online teaching, many questions naturally arise regarding its effectiveness and impact on teachers and students. The researchers' focus in this study was students' concentration in a virtual platform that was new to them. Understanding the factors that influence student concentration can help teachers make decisions about learning approaches, designs, and guidelines for implementing effective online learning for students. This phenomenon is explored through qualitative research that helps uncover facts through systematic data collection and classroom evidence (Dikilitaş & Bostancıoğlu, 2019).

### METHOD

This study utilizes a descriptive qualitative research methodology. The main goal of this qualitative study is to examine the determinants that influence the concentration level throughout the learning process. Semi-structured interviews are employed as a research method to understand students' experiences comprehensively. This investigation will focus on students' encounters with learning

English within an online classroom setting. This study encompasses 30 participants of students in SMPN 9 Kota Sorong. Semi-structured interviews are conducted in a group setting. The participants were sorted into six groups and then questioned sequentially. The researchers categorized themes identified in the interview transcripts. The topic analysis was conducted using an inductive technique. Initially, a line-by-line coding approach was employed to meticulously document the cognitive processes of each participant. Subsequently, the academics collaborated to categorize and arrange the codes and topics systematically.

## RESULT

To better understand the factors influencing learners' concentration during online English learning, researchers transcribed and coded semi-structured interviews (SSI) with the students. Two prominent elements emerged. As students discussed their concentration in an online L2 learning classroom, they mentioned internal and external factors. The graphic depicts the main themes and sub-themes in the qualitative data analysis.

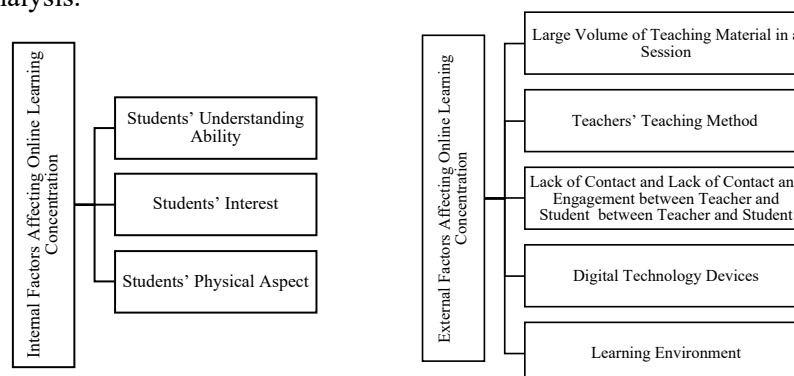


Figure 1: Factors Affecting Online Learning Concentration

### A. Internal Factors Affecting Concentration

#### 1. Students' Understanding Ability

Students frequently referred to their concentration with the ability to understand the content and material. The students with low concentration on learning stated in the interview that they cannot pay much attention to the lesson because they need clarification and find it helps to understand.

"...I was confused because I did not understand the material, so I could not concentrate on studying because the lesson was confusing. Moreover, when studying tenses, I don't understand the use of sentence tenses in English. I can't keep focusing in learning it" (Students' SSI)

"...I cannot pay attention well to the material because it's difficult to understand moreover if the teacher only explains once, I need more and more repetition." (Students' SSI)

The results of the interview above showed that students' lack of understanding of the lesson content can cause them frustration, leading to losing attention to the entire class. Teachers must monitor their students well so they can be helped on time whenever needed. Bad situations also occur when students need help understanding the lesson, but the teacher continues the lesson without paying particular attention

to the student. Therefore, the teacher needs to ensure that the student understands before moving on to the following explanation so that the teacher can provide treatment, especially for these students.

## 2. Students' Interest

Students' interest in learning is one of the factors that influences concentration in learning. Students will be actively involved in class when interested in learning. On the other hand, students who do not have the interest and desire to learn will be easily influenced by things that attract more attention during the learning process. It is in line with the student's statement in the interview.

"I do not pay much attention to certain lessons because I think it is not interesting to learn because there are so many vocabularies and patterns to memorize." (Students' SSI)

"I do not pay attention to the lesson if I'm not interested in the lesson because usually the teacher just explains it, so it is very boring." (Students' SSI)

Teachers must employ various methods in the teaching and learning process to encourage students and keep their attention on the material given. Teachers also have an essential role in helping students set appropriate learning goals so that they are aware of what they will learn. When students know what they will achieve in the learning process and its benefits in real life, they will be more interested in learning.

## 3. Students' Physical Aspect

In every online learning activity, students often have difficulty concentrating. It is caused by students not focusing on following lessons because they are disturbed by physical conditions, such as sleepiness, hunger as illustrated in the following interview:

"I am used to playing games sometimes at night, so when I studies online, I feel very sleepy and it made me not paying attention to the lesson" (Students' SSI)

"if you are very hungry, you may not be able to concentrate because you have no intake nutrients that help us to strong then our body, our concentration too so it's reduced and we cannot receive lesson properly, continue we usually feel weak" (Students' SSI)

"I sometimes, especially now learning online so almost every morning I have breakfast. But once in 9th grade, I went to school did not eat breakfast, then the first hour was English again, I could not concentrate at all, because my stomach was aching and limp. I forgot to breakfast and finally I felt weak and had a stomachache also it makes me unable to take lessons well because lack of concentration in English" (Students' SSI)

Based on the data above, physical disorders such as lack of sleep and hunger significantly affect students' learning concentration. People who do not have physical problems will have a high level of thinking and thinking power when participating in the learning process, which will help them improve their concentration and intellectual abilities.

## B. External Factors Affecting Learning Concentration

The SSIs showed that the participants agreed that affective reasons impacted their online L2 learning concentration. Their expectations and satisfaction with the course content, communication needs, and level of self-determination were frequently implicated and emerged as sub-themes.

### 1. Large Volume of Teaching Material in a Session

The amount of material presented by the teacher in one learning session can affect student concentration. The more material taught, the longer the learning duration, the more impatient and bored students will appear. These negative feelings will primarily distract students from the process of obtaining information, as student said that

"I most often get confused because I don't understand, I can't concentrate to learn, because the lesson is confusing and it is too much material and assignment given by the teacher" (Students' SSI)

The data showed that too much material makes the students difficult to understand the material being taught considering that they need sufficient time to understand one lesson material before moving on to the next material. Apart from that, an unfortunate situation also occurs when students do not understand only one lesson and then ignore all subsequent lessons because usually each lesson is related to each other.

### 2. Teachers' Teaching Method

The teacher's role in the learning process influences student performance in class. Teachers are the first and most crucial component. Teachers who consistently follow one learning approach easily discourage their students and make them less interested in attending class. It shows in the data below.

"Teachers usually only explain the material, so we are less enthusiastic about learning and make us bored since the teaching and learning process is monotonous" (Students' SSI)

Many teachers today still use conventional teacher-centered methods to position themselves as subject matter experts. Teachers who successfully run classes via online conferencing applications such as Zoom often stick with old methods, from teaching with one-way lectures to being limited to physical textbooks. It makes students fail to connect with learning.

### 3. Lack of Contact and Engagement between Teacher and Student

Online learning has limitations in its implementation. One is the need for more direct contact and involvement of students and teachers. It can trigger students' lack of attention in the learning process, affecting their concentration. It is stated by the student in the interview.

"The learning was less interesting because we couldn't interact face to face with the teacher and our friends; the teacher also sometimes did not focus on paying attention to us when explaining. Usually, the teacher focused on the material displayed on the screen." (Students' SSI)

Online learning frequently needs more social connections between students, teachers, and peers. Most interactions occur online via learning platforms; thus, students need the opportunity to learn directly from their classmates. As a result, students' interest in the learning environment decreases. Direct experiences with teachers and students provide a better feeling of belonging and emotional relationships. The lack of engagement with peers causes students to become bored, less enjoyable, and less concerned with learning. Studies also reveal that accessibility, connectedness, and social issues expressed by a lack of touch and involvement with teachers and fellow students influenced students' attention to learning.

#### 4. Digital Technology Devices

Technological devices can refer to all elements involved in the online learning process. The first is online classroom facilities (Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, etc.), internet network quality, and availability of devices that support online learning, such as computers, cellphones, earphones, and other supporting technology. The second relates to the student's skills in operating technological devices. For example, if students need to become more familiar with the tools in the online learning platform. Some students do not need to learn to turn off the audio feature, resulting in noise in the Zoom room or other platforms; these factors still make it challenging to maintain their concentration correctly. The data about the limitation of using digital technology listed below.

"I cannot concentrate when there are disturbing sounds during Zoom, maybe because a friend doesn't realize that the audio is on or maybe he doesn't know how to turn off the audio feature, he should use earphones so that others are not disturbed." (Students' SSI)

"Sometimes I cannot listen to the teacher's explanation because my network or the teacher's internet network is not good, so I miss it and do not focus on the next material."(Students' SSI)

"I usually turn off the camera because when it is on, the teacher's voice is intermittent because the network is bad. If the camera is turned off, I cannot concentrate on studying anymore."(Students' SSI)

Students often need help downloading learning materials, taking online classes, and taking online exams because they need more internet quota. Some students need digital devices that can support the implementation of online learning.

#### 5. Learning Environment

Students need to create learning concentration during online learning. Teachers and parents of students highly support it in creating a comfortable learning environment. The effectiveness of online learning is closely related to aspects of the student learning environment and student learning concentration. A conducive learning environment must be created to impact student learning concentration positively. The below data shows about the learning environment factors affecting the students' concentration.

"I can't concentrate on studying at home because the people at home are very noisy" (Students' SSI)

"I usually study online in my room but there's still a lot of noise from passing vehicles so I can concentrate" (Students' SSI)

"My concentration is disturbed if a friend is being nosy, for example changing the zoom background to something strange" (Students' SSI)

"My concentration is disturbed if a friend keeps joking in the chat column" (Students' SSI)

"There are also a lot of friends who usually act a lot when studying, for example some are busy posing and the camera is on so it's visible on the screen, which is very disturbing" (Students' SSI)

"They are not serious about studying, they only attend class to be absent, so they don't pay attention to the lesson, they just play around and disturb the others." (Students' SSI)

Conditions at home are very different from conditions at school. In schools, a classroom is a unique space for learning which is usually equipped with supporting learning facilities. However, as a place to study, the home has several limitations, such as a lack of particular study space, noisy community activities, and a lack of learning facilities. This condition causes students' learning concentration to decrease.

## **DISCUSSION**

The amount of concentration has quite a significant influence on the learning process. Students need to have a comprehensive understanding of the learning process. Sufficient attention is crucial for students to increase their understanding of the learning process. The validity of acquired knowledge depends on the individual's ability to concentrate effectively, as a lack of attention can result in wasted time, resources, and effort. In the context of various student activities, it is not uncommon for children to experience difficulty in maintaining their attention.

Some aspects may be considered barriers to students' ability to fully engage in the online learning process (Coman et al., 2020). For example, reduced student motivation, delayed feedback or assistance because teachers are only sometimes there when students need online help, or loneliness caused by the physical absence of classmates (Coman et al., 2020). There are two critical factors found in this research, namely internal factors, which include (1) Students' Understanding Ability, (2) Students' Interest, (3) Students' Physical Aspect, and external factors, which include (1) a Large Volume of Teaching Material in a Session, (2) Teachers' Teaching Method, (3) Lack of Contact and Engagement between Teacher and Student, (4) Digital Technology Devices, (5) Learning Environment. These factors include acquired motivation, desire or interest in something; physical, psychological, emotional, and experiential conditions; level of intelligence, surrounding environment, and feelings of anxiety, stress, anger, worry, fear, hatred, and revenge; noisy and messy learning environment; health condition; inability to learn passively; and inability to learn effectively.

The main component in the learning process is concentration, where individuals must focus on understanding the material presented. Each learning session requires focusing the student's attention on the subject, demanding continuous cognitive effort. For this reason, according to Gerschler (2012),

"It is important for teachers to ensure that students have the experience necessary to understand the lesson, and that guidance is provided when questions arise" (p. 7).

Mindfulness practice is essential in several domains, including academics, social and emotional development, and daily activities. Therefore, it is essential to dedicate time and effort to developing concentration skills outside the core curriculum. However, educators sometimes need to pay more attention to giving children opportunities to develop these essential skills.

Concentration in a learning context requires the allocation of focused attention throughout substantial learning and the effective transmission of knowledge from instructor to student. In the classroom, students take a central role in the learning process, and instructors are responsible for facilitating students' understanding of the course material. Rahiminia et al (2019) propose that teachers effectively integrate several learning approaches in the classroom to increase student engagement by maximizing effectiveness and attractiveness. Apart from that, the invited material is also a determining factor in students' interest in learning. Ibrahim et al (2021) argues that teaching materials are essential to learning. Teaching materials must be appropriate to student needs. The more attractive the topic the teacher uses, the more enthusiastic the students will be in learning. Le (2021) stated that students will pay more attention in class and learn more about a topic that interests them if they are enthusiastic and invested. Interesting topics that suit students' needs will increase students' interest in learning.

Concentration is a crucial aptitude that must be used during mastery of English for every learning activity in the classroom. The ability to concentrate allows individuals to maintain concentration on essential lessons for extended periods (Kuswana, 2011). Time management and remaining concentrated for long periods are significant challenges for students (Amir et al., 2020). Students must actively participate in class by focusing on the lesson material to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The surrounding environment is an additional factor that influences students' ability to concentrate well, as stated by (Surya, 2009). Byoung-Suk & Christopher (2012) suggests that the environment influences children's growth and learning. Moreover, research by Souriyavongsa et al (2013) in their research revealed that English language teachers received insufficient training, demonstrated below-standard performance, and failed to influence the level of student engagement.

The next factor is physical condition. Physical conditions make it possible for students to refrain from concentrating while studying. The physical and social environments influence the learning process and outcomes. (Halim & Rahma, 2020; Wahyuningsih & Djazari, 2013). The next factor is physical condition. Physical conditions make it possible for students to refrain from concentrating while studying. Physical conditions such as sleepiness certainly influence students' concentration in learning English. Drowsiness also makes students miss the teacher's explanations, get involved in new discussions, and forget the current learning material.

Apart from that, the primary concern in online learning is the limitations of technology. One of them is the limitations of the internet network. As Mahyob (2020) and Amir et al (2020) found, internet speed is the most significant issue experienced by students; it is because most of the students were from rural locations where the network was unreliable. Fathurrahman et al (2023) said that online learning has many problems that need to be addressed, especially regarding ease of use and effectiveness. There needs to be more support and training for students, as demonstrated by technical challenges such as internet signals and difficulty using the online platform. In addition, the lack of teacher-student interaction and student interest in learning indicate the need for more exciting and efficient learning strategies.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aims to explore students' concentration perceptions regarding online education. Semi-structured interviews showed that students' views were primarily negative regarding online education. The participants stated two main reasons they felt they needed to focus more on the online learning process: (1) Internal factors, including students' understanding abilities, interests, and physical aspects. (2) External factors include a large volume of teaching material in one session, teachers' teaching method, lack of contact and engagement between teacher and student, digital technology devices, and learning environment. In conclusion, online learning presents many challenges in maintaining students' concentration to achieve their second language learning goals. Teachers must consider the factors influencing students' concentration in designing online learning.

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