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EFL teachers' perception towards online classroom interaction during covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract. The spread of Covid-19 is affecting education systems around the world and transform the learning from face-to-face to online learning. Interaction is important pattern to share knowledge between teachers and students. Previous research has said that interaction could also encourage students to master the subject matter. This study aims to describe the EFL teachers' perception towards classroom interaction during Covid-19 pandemic especially on how the interaction between teacher-student, student-teacher, and student-student synchronously which is assisted by Google Meet. The research method used in this study is descriptive case study and taking data by conducting observation, interview, and documentation. Based on research result, teacher perceive online classroom interaction in balance emotion, exploratory talk tends to be implemented in online classroom interactions, Indirect talk of asking questions is the dominant online classroom interaction.

Keywords: Online Classroom Interaction, Online Learning, teachers' perception

INTRODUCTION

The spread of Covid-19 outbreak in almost all countries around the world recently has affected the learning systems of some educational institutions from face-to-face into online learning (Rusmiati et al., 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). According to Verawardina et.al (as cited in Alkhalil et al., 2021), state that by using the internet and communication tools, online learning methods allow students to learn virtually. This allows students to access subject matter without limitation of time and place and helps them to limit their physical contact. Based on Leederman (as cited in Mishra et al., 2020), said that, due to the Covid-19 crisis and through digital intelligence, teachers and students are in a situation that forces them to embrace digital academic experiences as a concise teaching and learning virtually. Interaction is an important pattern in language classroom because it contact between students and teachers to share information and knowledge. This leads to an effective language learning and teaching process because the funds for active participation between students and teachers are two-way involvement in the classroom activities (Rido, Akhyar & Sari, 2018).

There are 4 types of interaction in online learning based on Akarasriworn & Ku (as cited in Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017) that are including the interaction between students and interfaces, student interaction with content, student interaction with instructors, and interactions between students and students. Canter, Voytecki, & Rodriguez (as cited in Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017) add that the common method of communication is the online interaction between students and instructors. In online learning, there is real-time interaction between instructors and students, such as video streams, audio streams, and chat. Besides, it can be in an asynchronous form which is a method of interaction at different times such as discussion boards, e-mails, and forums. Guidance, support, evaluation, and encouragement are several forms of this kind of interaction. Roberts, Irani,

Telg, & Lundy, 2005 (as cited in Hasan & Khan, 2020), claim that the interaction between students and teachers, peers, material, teaching method, technical support, and support service are factors that influence students' satisfaction with online learning. Cole, Shelley, & Swartz (as cited in Hasan & Khan, 2020) add that although convenience is an advantage of online learning, based on the students, lack of interaction is the biggest disadvantage of online learning implementation. Compared to face-to-face interactions, online interactions have a better time to interact and can increase closeness (Febrianto et al., 2020). However, this is contrary to the results of a study conducted by Febrianto, Mas'udah & Megasari (2020). In their study, respondents stated that face-to-face learning is better than online learning. This shows that in the implementation of online learning, interactions in the classroom should receive attention.

Classroom interactions have recently been studied among researchers. A study conducted by Sundari, (2017) reports that both classroom, institutional, and national context policies related to language teaching and learning, directly and indirectly, can influence and have implications for teacher preferences in building interactions with students and classroom discourse itself. Using Flander's Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC), Huriyah & Agustiani (2018) found out that the English teacher dominates in the classroom by giving lots of questions and the language that is dominantly used is Indonesian. In Some-Guiebre (2020) study, elicitation techniques and controls exercised by the teacher determine the nature of the interaction but often limit opportunities for communication. In investigating the quality of interaction and feedback, Vattøy & Gamlem (2020) found out that there was an interdependent relationship between the quality of feedback and instructional dialogue despite the difficulties in supporting student feedback internally and self-regulation. Improving dialogue feedback in L2 is a challenge for EFL teachers. A Study Conducted by Wang (2016) to identify how interactive approach may enhance English learning and investigate the relationship between interaction and English Learning in China. To encourage English learning for Chinese EFL classrooms can be used an interactive approach. In addition, interaction can also encourage students to master the subject matter. Teaching EFL at school has been elaborated by Susanto (2019) about a qualitative study of efl english teacher's perceptions towards teaching vocabulary using word games for junior high schools in Semarang central java: to use or to reject?

Teachers not only act as mentors, facilitators, and advisors in the classroom (Rido, Akhyar & Sari, 2018). Rido (as cited in Rido, Akhyar & Sari, 2018), mentioned that when teachers do their activities, they also have to give suggestions and ask questions They provide examples of target languages, set the direction and pace of learning, monitor and improve student performance (Rido, Akhyar & Sari, 2018). This means that teachers have a crucial role in teaching and learning activities as well as in establishing good interactions in the classroom. Considering the importance of the teacher's role in the classroom, therefore it is important to know the teacher's perception of online classroom interaction. Learning activities that teachers use to improve classroom interaction can affect student learning outcomes then become input for the next learning process (Solheim et al., 2018). Several studies have found that incompetent teachers in English are a major problem in English classes. The teacher does not provide effective interactions. The consequence is that students fail to understand the material (Rido, Akhyar & Sari, 2018). It means that teacher not only competent in language but also competent in creating classes with good interactions to avoid students' difficulty in understanding the teaching materials.

Flanders developed interaction analysis categories to investigate verbal classroom interaction. Students and teachers utterances are recorded during the teaching and learning process. Divided into three, verbal classroom interaction consist of teacher talk, students

talk, and silence or confusion, FIACS consists of ten categories for classifying verbal interactions (Girija, 2020). Flanders draws the categories as follows.

Table 1. Flander's Interaction Analysis Categories

		Category number	Activity
Teacher talk	Response	1	Accept feeling: Students' feelings and tone both positive and negative are accepted and clarified in a non-threatening way.
		2	Praises or encourages: give praise and encouragement to students such as nodding their head or saying 'umhm?'. give jokes that can reduce stress without sacrificing others.
		3	Accepts or uses ideas of pupils: provide clarification and develop ideas given by students. If students' ideas are included but the teacher gives more of their own ideas, then it belongs to category 5.
		4	Ask questions: give questions to students about the material or procedures with the aim that students respond with answers.
		5	Lecturing: give opinions or suggestions regarding materials or procedures including giving personal ideas and asking questions in a rhetorical form.
		6	Giving direction: requests, directions, or instructions with the aim of make students to obey.
		7	Criticizing or justifying authority: give a statement with the intention of changing student behavior from bad behavior to a good one.
Pupil talk	Response	8	Pupil talk in response to teacher: student's utterance in responding to the teacher. Teacher try to interact with students and asks student statement
	Initiation	9	Pupil talk initiated by the pupil; students initiative in giving statements or utterance. This can determine the student's turn to speak. The observer must be able to determine whether the student wants to speak. If yes this category can be used.
	Silence or confusion	10	Silence or confusion: short periods, pauses, or confusion in communication and the observer does not understand the situation.

(Adopted from Girija, 2020)

METHOD

This present study used a descriptive case study as a research design. The goal of descriptive case study is to provide a complete, context-specific view of specific phenomena (Lamb, 2011). It means this design portrayed online classroom interactions thoroughly. The participants for the study were four EFL teachers in one of Vocational school in Bekasi. The participant and site of the research presented in anonymous. The detailed information informed in participants' demography information.

Table 2. Participant demography information

Participants	Gender	Age	Linguistics background	Educational Background	Length of English	Socioeconomic Background
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					Learning experience		
Mr.A	Male	27	Indonesian English	Undergraduate studies	10 years	Mediocre socio-economic status	
Mr.B	Male	55	Indonesian English	Undergraduate studies	35 years	Mediocre socio-economic status	
Mrs.M	Female	31	Indonesian English	Undergraduate studies	13 years	Mediocre socio-economic status	
Mr.S	Male	53	Indonesian English	Undergraduate studies	35 years	Mediocre socio-economic status	

(Adopted from Yanto & Pravitasari, 2020)

To collect the data, observation, interview, and documentation were conducted as a technique of data collection. The researcher observed teaching and learning activities. The researcher included as a participant in teaching and learning activities but the function is only to observe and taking field notes of the online learning activity which is assisted by Google Meet. To support the observation researcher also used documentation. The interview was conducted face-to-face after the observation and documentation were complete. The researcher used open-ended interviews or in-depth interviews to explore EFL teachers' perceptions towards online classroom interaction during Covid-19 pandemic deeply, especially about teacher talk, student talk, and silence that occur during teaching and learning activities. The observation and interview refer to FIACS (Flanders interaction analysis categories).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher found that there are some general pattern findings of this study. The first was online classroom interaction perceived by EFL teachers in balance emotions. The implementation of online classroom interactions was perceived in balance emotions. That is the implementation of ineffective online classroom interaction for some reason. It is demonstrated in the representative of interview transcription below.

Teacher A: A lot of people are still confused, whether they really understand or stay confused. How do I handle it I'll just ask directly, do you understand or not? If you don't understand which one do you not understand? Because it's a bit difficult, it's even difficult in this online learning. Talking directly and direct interaction that's so hard.

Teacher B: Of course. Especially we don't meet face to face, it's difficult for them to understand, and there are some materials that they don't answer, no one responds, either because they're shy or because they don't understand or they aren't there, so some of them are only joint but they really don't attend or maybe there are those who join too but they don't understand, so they are shy to ask questions like that.

(Interview data 1)

Based on the interview transcription above, it is clearly stated that the implementation of online classroom interaction was difficult for some reason. Teachers perceived students tend to be silent in the classroom because they are shy or did not understand the material. Besides that, students were silent because some students only join the online learning but did not participate in learning activities or because they have not finished the task. This is also supported by the results of the observations below.

Teacher: Could you present directly please?

Students: ... (Silent)
Teacher: Hello, where is TKJ 4? Hello, I will wait, don't be too long, come on.
Students: ... (Silent)

(Observation data 1)

Based on the observation result above, student interaction in online learning looked passive. Even though the teacher tried to encourage students to participate in online learning, but students still did not participate. The teacher looked difficult to ask the student to interact with him. It is in line with the result of (Wut & Xu, 2021), research which found that online interaction and behavior of students was limited because of hesitant student behavior to participate in learning using public platforms. Affective social presence also could not be formed because of some students hiding from the camera or not even attending online meetings at all. Moreover, another teacher perceived that students were difficult to monitor because of large size classes and time constraints. This is evidenced by the results of the documentation of the implementation of online learning below.

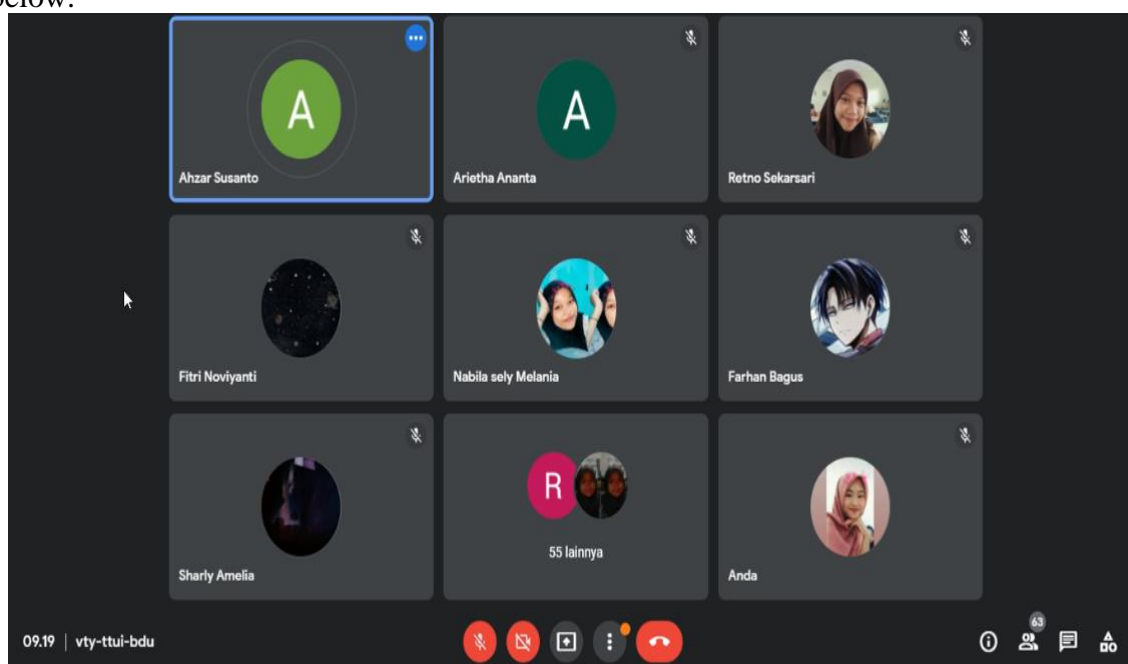


Figure 1 Number of students attending online learning

From the picture above, it could be seen that the implementation of online learning was attended by 63 students. The student consisted of several classes at the same level. Therefore, the teacher should check the attendance of students by calling students randomly to make sure they still participate in the learning activities. It is same as the result of Sundari (2017). She also found that class size also affects the interaction between teachers and students. Teachers preferred to choose whole-class interaction in large classes rather than interacting with students one-on-one because of time constraints.

On the other hand, the implementation of online classroom interaction creates an attractive atmosphere. Teachers create fun online learning in their own way to reduce the tense of the learning atmosphere. The detailed information is presented in the interview transcription below.

Teacher: Yes, we can turn a tense situation into a responsible and fun atmosphere. Of course, we as a teacher have to give what is called an interlude in learning whether it is a song, a puzzle, or a riddle, but in English so that the students is not too stress in learning English.

Obviously, there must be jokes, including those that make the situation not tense because the students need a comfortable and fun situation. Learning must be fun, not stressful.

(Interview data 2)

From the interview above, it could be seen that during online teaching and learning process, teachers used various ways to create an interesting learning atmosphere. The teacher also gave jokes to reduce the tense of the learning situation. It is supported by the observation result below.

Teacher: Are you twins deva devi? Are you twins?
Student: No, Mrs
Teacher: Pardon? Twins?
Student: No, Mrs
Teacher: Oh, No hahaha okey

(Observation data 2)

In the results of these observations, the teacher gave a joke to the students. This is enough to reduce a stressful situation after listening to the teacher's directions and materials. This condition was also found by (Rido et al., 2020) in their research. To provoke student participation and motivation, the teacher used funny things and jokes so that the learning environment becomes conducive. According to Lovorn & Holaway (as cited in Rido et al., 2020), in facilitating the relationship between teachers and students in learning, using humor in icebreaking was considered effective.

The second finding is exploratory talk tends to be implemented in online classroom interactions. The implementation of online classroom interaction, exploratory talk occurs a lot in the classroom. English teachers stimulated learners involved actively in classroom interactions through exploratory talk. It was described in the teacher's statement below.

Teacher: If students answer, I usually don't directly give them a score but I give it to other students first. I let the other students provide their opinions about the answers of the first students. After that may be one to five students who will provide their opinion and response to the first student's answer. I, as the mediator will answer, fairly the correct answer.

(Interview data 3)

From the interview transcription above, it concluded that there is exploratory pattern that occurs in the classroom. That was in the form of people sharing relevant information. Before assessed the students, the teacher allowed students to give their opinion. Then, some students respond to other students' ideas. In the end, the teacher acts as a mediator who provides the correct answers to the students. This can also be seen in the results of the observations below:

Teacher: I said before that in general, the suggestion was in the form of a statement and the offer was in the form of a question. It is usually like that. However, it is not always like that. I will give two examples that are not like that. So, for example like this. Can someone answer this? Who can answer, I will give a score. Come on.

Student: Isn't it B, sir?

Teacher: B is not correct

Teacher: Who? Try to say your name

Student: I'm Mr. Elisabeth. The C is not it, sir?

Teacher: Elisabeth? Yes, the answer is C. Why don't we go to the library?. Let's take a look at this sentence first. Why don't we go to the library? Do you think it's a suggestion or an offer?

Students: Offer

Teacher: Suggestion. That's a suggestion. Suggestion to take him to the library but he is in the form of a question. Yes, in the form of a question like I said before.

(Observation data 3)

Based on the results of these observations, it could be seen that the teacher provided opportunities for students to provide their opinions through questions. Students tried to answer questions based on their ideas. Other students tried to justify the incorrect answer from other students. Then the teacher gave directions for the correct answer. This was also found in research conducted by (Rido et al., 2020) which found that teachers provide opportunities for students to speak. Besides sharing relevant information, exploratory talk also appears in the form of students encouraged to contribute to the teaching and learning process. Teachers encouraged students to contribute by provoking the students' initiation to express their opinions in various ways. It is presented in the interview transcription below.

Teacher: To provoke students to submit an opinion related the teaching materials of course, through questions. Questions asked by the teacher to students in order to they really search for the answers. Maybe the answer is based on their opinion either correct or incorrect we need to respect it because it could be they are in the learning stage or maybe they don't understand what the teacher say. Then they consider to ask about the material that has been taught.

(Interview data 4)

Based on the interview above, teachers provoke students' initiative to express their opinions by asking questions. The questions were given in the hope that students seriously search and found the answers. Every student's answer is appreciated by the teacher because the student was still in the learning stage or the teacher realized that the explanation given by the teacher was not clear enough and made students ask questions to make it clear. This could be proven from the results of the observations.

Teacher: So here are five of the many expressions used in suggestions. The first is let's which means come on. Then I suggest, I suggest. I recommend I recommend. Then I purpose, does anyone know what purpose means? Who knows I will give an additional value for the daily test. What about? Yes, who?

Student: Elisabeth

Teacher: Oh yes Elisabeth, what does purpose mean?

Student: Propose

Teacher: Yes, purpose. Thank you Elisabeth.

(Observation data 4)

In the results of these observations above, the teacher gave questions to students about the teaching material. The students answer the question with their initiative. The student's answers were appreciated by the teacher with thanks. In addition, appreciation was also found in this online classroom interaction. The teacher appreciates every student's idea or opinion. It could be seen from the interview transcription below.

Teacher A: I really appreciate those who ask and give the answers. I'm happy if they respond to me like that.

Teacher B: All ideas are limited to the ability of students, we still respect that if the student gives a good answer, we give the reward. Give one reward to the student who does not give an imperfect answer, we still give or make an incorrect answer. We value it.

(Interview data 5)

Based on the interview result, the teacher perceived that the ideas from students either correct or incorrect treated with respect by the teacher. Teachers accepted student's opinions or ideas. The teacher also rewarded the students as a form of appreciation. Either the answer is correct or incorrect, the teacher still gave his respect to students. It could be supported by the observation results below.

Teacher: I want to hear, try it. Like Samuel, it was good.

Student: Hello everyone I want to introduce myself to you all guys. My name is Kahfi, you can call me Kahfi. I was born in Bekasi, December 17th, 2005. I live in Bekasi at Duren Jaya, RT 17 RW 05 number 17 Bekasi Timur. My ambition is to be a film producer and my impression during online learning is quite pleasant because I can..... thank you.

Teacher: Very good, that's good, It can be seen that the pronunciation is also pretty good, the content looks pretty good, the speech is quite understandable. Samuel and Kahfi were good enough. I'm glad although you don't study offline, you can introduce yourself. You should be able to do it. Don't let you can't do it at all especially if you have the good material. Come on whom else? Zakia? Are you ready Zakia?

(Observation data 5)

From the observations, the teacher gave appreciation to students who were brave to participate and interact in the online classroom. The teacher gave praises the student for their ability. The teacher gave praise to students to motivate other students to contribute and participate in online classrooms. This is in line with research conducted by Sagita (2018) where the teachers accepted and used student's ideas. Furthermore, the implementation of online classroom interaction, students also asked questions to the teacher after the teacher delivered the teaching material. The teacher facilitated the students to have more questions. It is represented in this interview transcription below.

Teacher: Yes, of course, I expect that the student's attitude after finishing the lesson is the student will ask what parts they don't understand from the material that I have delivered because the teacher is very happy if the students want to ask after the explanation process. If there are students who do not understand, the teacher is very receptive and very responsive to the student's questions to the teacher. On the contrary, fewer students are asking, maybe because they don't pay attention or something like that I don't know but the one who automatically asks is surely they who are listening, maybe my explanation is not clear, so there are questions.

(Interview data 6)

From the interview transcription above, teachers perceived that most students were silent rather than asked a question. However, teachers perceived that there were students who asked questions. Students who asked questions were usually students who pay attention to the teacher's explanation and he felt unclear so he asked to the teacher. Even though the teacher expected questions from students, unfortunately students rarely asked questions to the teacher. It could be proven from the observation results below.

Teacher: Do you have any questions? I suggest you ask me so you will understand better or would you like help on this topic. Is there anything you want to ask? Is it understandable?

Students: ... (silent)

(Observation data 6)

In the result of the observation below, the teacher seemed to provide opportunities for students to asked questions at the end of the lesson to checked their comprehension of the

teaching materials. However, students tend not to ask questions and prefer to be silent whereas by asking questions students would be able to better understand the topic of learning. To create natural classroom interactions and to check students' comprehension and attention, asking questions is also a form of teacher talk and a fundamental discursive tool in communication (Rido, Akhyar & Sari, 2018).

The third finding was indirect talk of asking questions was the dominant online classroom interaction. In the implementation of online classroom interactions, the thing that often happens in classroom interaction is asking questions. Ask questions from the teachers to the students. The questions asked varied from asking about the students' condition and health, student readiness in learning, student comprehension, to asking questions related to the teaching material. It is similar to the teacher's statement in the interview transcription below.

Teacher B: t's not much different when we teach either in the offline class or through online learning. First, we did say hello, after that we ask some students how were their condition and how they were prepared to study and how their health conditions were.

Teacher D: It's always in starting learning, it should ask about their condition, how well they were and their health because learning requires health and readiness to learn.

(Interview data 7)

The teacher describes that teacher asking questions related to students' condition or feelings, health, and readiness for learning. Teachers should ask this question because in learning students must have the readiness to learn. It could be seen from the observation results.

Teacher: Hello, good morning class
Students: Morning
Teacher: How are you today? I hope everyone is fine. For the next year with me again. Do you still remember me?
Students: Of course

(Observation data 7)

Before started the lesson, the teacher asked the students conditions or feelings. This is done with the hope that students are in good condition to attend the online learning activity. Moreover, the teacher also asks students questions related to the material. In giving questions to students, every teacher has their way. It is similar to the interview transcription below.

Teacher: To ask a question, it is usually in the form of volunteers. For example, if there is a question, then I give it to the forum that who are students who brave to answer or not. From there, they will respond if there is no response at all, then I will point it out to students whose English skills were already seen from the start.

(Interview data 8)

From the interview above, the teacher asked questions to the students and students can answer voluntarily to make students respond to teachers' questions. If there is no response, the teacher gave the opportunity for students who have good English skills to answer the question. It is supported by the observation result below.

Teacher: The third is I'd like to introduce myself. Let me ask you, there is a coma in I'd, what is the abbreviation for?

Student: I do
Student: I would

Student: I would like

Teacher: I would like. You give a round sign there guys that stand for I would like. The word I would like. The word would like is the same as want, but in the formal version, so basically want. So you can use number one, number two and number three it's up to you. Ok for example like good morning I'd like to introduce myself my name is Martha Astuti, you can call me Mrs. Marta like that. I want to mention a little about the greeting problem. Below that you write greeting. Do you know what are greetings mean? What are greetings, guys?

Students: Greetings

Teacher: Greetings, that's right. Greetings in English are good morning, what else. Good afternoon, good evening, and good night. My question is do you know good morning?

Student: Good morning

Teacher: Okay, good morning. What about good afternoon?

Student: Good afternoon

(Observation data 8)

From the results of the observations above, it could be seen that the teacher gave questions to students. The teacher provided opportunities for all students to asked questions. Students answer them voluntarily based on their knowledge. This condition is also found in the research conducted by Winarti (2017) that asking questions was the thing that dominates teacher talk that occurs in the classroom. This results in the conclusion that asking questions and responding to specific questions from teachers dominate teaching and learning activities. Even though students speak one word, sentence, or longer words in conversation, asking questions by the teacher can encourage students to speak and provide space for verbal interaction in the classroom (Al-Zahrani & Al-Bargi, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This present study investigates teacher's perception towards online classroom interaction during Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers perceived that they experience several obstacles in online classroom interactions both from students or factors outside of students. However, the teacher tried to create a pleasant learning atmosphere for students. Implementation of online classroom interaction was still dominated by teachers. Exploratory talk occurs in online classroom interaction appeared in the form of sharing relevant information, encouraging students to contribute in teaching and learning, appreciating student's opinions and ideas, and asking questions. Asking questions of teacher were the most common in online classroom interactions.

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