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## Ignatian based online learning: An alternative to maintain the 'presence' in the distance learning

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#### ABSTRACT

*The Covid-19 pandemic has urged the government to establish a new regulation related to the teaching and learning process in Indonesia. Based on the Joint Ministerial Decree on Learning Guidelines during the Covid-19 pandemic, academic units in the orange and red zones are prohibited from conducting face-to-face learning. This policy requires academic units to switch the approach used in the teaching and learning process, and distance learning is applied as an effort to maintain the educational services during this Covid-19 pandemic. An effective approach should be applied and good preparation must be done to ensure that the teaching and learning process can run smoothly and effectively. Considering this situation the writer is interested in conducting classroom action research on the implementation of Ignatian Based Online Learning, which is developed based on the experience of Ignatius Loyola, to maintain the 'presence' in distance learning. The writer believes that distance learning should be more than just sending online home paper packets to the students. The teaching and learning process should be interactive to maintain the connection and to help teachers and students feel part of a group. It is expected that by implementing Ignatian Based Online Learning, the teacher and the students can feel the presence of each other and can work together to reach the course objectives even though they are separated from each other.*

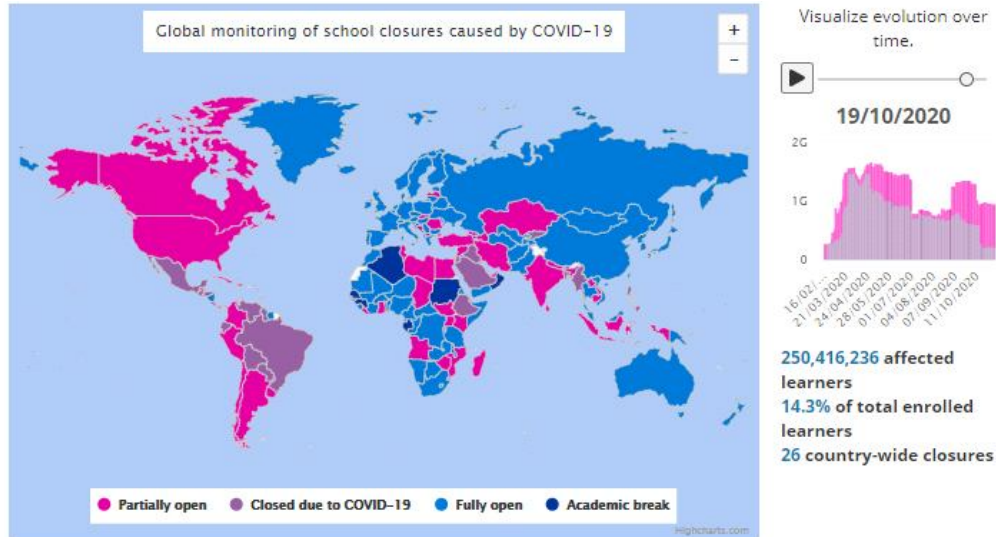
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## 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has been worldwide and affected many aspects of our livelihoods not only public health but also socio-economic condition, culture, politics, and education. This pandemic has urged most governments to implement strategic policies to restrain the spread of the Covid-19 virus. One of the policies is to close educational institutions temporarily. Based on UNESCO's data, as can be seen in the following figure, the worldwide school closures have impacted hundreds of millions of students. In Indonesia, 57% of students are still in the red zone, and the other 43% are in the green and yellow zones. It means that most of the students in Indonesia are also affected by this pandemic.

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Anna Fitriati



**Figure 1.** School closures caused by Corona Virus  
(Source: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>)

To minimize the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and to maintain the educational service in Indonesia, the Indonesian Government has established the Joint Ministerial Decree of Four Ministers that regulates the learning implementation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the physical distance policy, educational institutions are required to shift the method of learning from face-to-face learning to distance learning, whereby learning is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms.

The sudden implementation of distance learning urges educational institutions to adapt quickly to ensure that the teaching and learning process can be run smoothly and effectively to reach their objectives. Choosing the most appropriate approach and method is required since some challenges must be faced in implementing distance learning. The challenges are not only limited to the distance learning management and the difficulty accessing the learning resources due to the electricity, internet connection, and cost; but the challenges may also be related to the psychological impacts of this pandemic to teachers and students.

To cope with this situation, Universitas Sanata Dharma also amends the teaching and learning policy. Online learning is fully used in the odd semester of the academic year 2020/2021. Universitas Sanata Dharma is the only Jesuit university in Indonesia, and as one of the Jesuit schools, the pedagogy that is implemented at Universitas Sanata Dharma is Ignatian Pedagogy.

Ignatian based online learning is online learning which applies the principles of Ignatian Pedagogy. Ignatian Pedagogy itself is inspired by the life of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. Though Ignatian Pedagogy is a model in Jesuit schools, it does not mean that it is limited to those who share the same faith since this pedagogy is universal (Institute, 2014).

This pedagogy aims to transform young people to be men and women of competence, conscience, and compassion. It means that the goal is not only to develop students' competence or



knowledge, but it is also designed to help students capture the meaning and the essential values of what is being studied so that the conscience of the students' can be formed. Having excellent competence and conscience is not enough if it is not applied in real action. Therefore, encouraging students to act based on the meaning, attitudes, and values they have learned is another goal of Ignatian Pedagogy. It is essential to develop students' compassion so that they can serve others. The implementation of Ignatian Pedagogy is characterized by a cycle that consists of five stages, as illustrated in figure 2.

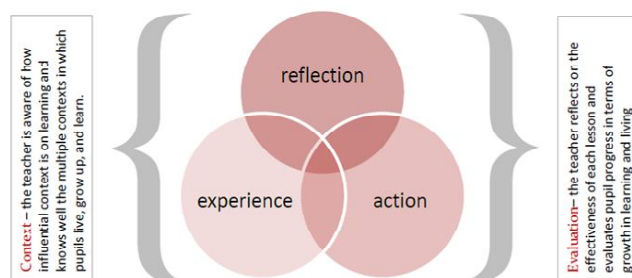


Figure 2. The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm ( (Institute, 2014)

In Jesuit education, personal care and concern for the individual is a distinguishing characteristic. To do so, the teacher is required to know the CONTEXT within which the learning is conducted. It is necessary to understand the students' background and identify the factors that may influence the process of learning so that the teacher and the students can work together and support each other.

The next stage is EXPERIENCE. In this stage, the teacher designs the conditions that will enable the students to collect the materials and information of their own experience to obtain the facts, meanings, values, and insights. Experience can be stimulated from direct experience obtained from interpersonal experiences such as discussions, laboratory work, observations, and projects. Students can also learn from indirect experiences in which they need to use their imagination (Institute, 2014). At this stage, the teacher should find the most appropriate way to involve the students in the teaching and learning process.

Then, the information, memory, imagination, understandings, and feelings are utilized to grasp the meanings and values. This step is REFLECTION. The reflection should be formative for this stage will help the students and also the teacher to discern the positive values and to take action. Taking an ACTION is very important since the goal of Jesuit education is to help young people to be men and women who can contribute actively to the welfare of society (Jesus, 1987). The last stage is EVALUATION. Periodic evaluation is needed to evaluate not only the students' progress in academic achievement but also the students' growth in attitude. As an intrinsic element of teaching and learning evaluation can provide information that will be useful for the future direction of classroom practice, for course planning, and also for the management of learning tasks and students (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1993). This paper aims to identify the effectiveness of Ignatian based online learning as an alternative to maintain the 'presence' in distance learning. Smith (2016) stated that a strong presence

should be maintained in online learning since engagement is one of the indicators of the success of learning.

## 2. Method

This research is a classroom action research. It is conducted in two classes of the Introduction to General Linguistics at the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta. Introduction to General Linguistics is a compulsory subject and a prerequisite for the students to take other subjects related to linguistics. The participants of this research are 79 third semester students

The instruments used to gather the data needed are questionnaires, evaluation rubrics, and reflection sheets. The questionnaires are distributed to figure out the context of the students: their backgrounds, their opinions toward the class, their preferences, and also their motivation. The evaluation rubric is used to measure the students' competence in mastering the knowledge. In contrast, the reflection sheet is used to identify the students' conscience and compassion.

## 3. Results and discussion

As stated in the first part of this paper, five stages characterize Ignatian-based teaching and learning activities. The first step is identifying the context. The writer tried to figure out the students' context by gathering the data related to their GPA, socio-economic backgrounds, learning preferences, and motivation to join the class. The data gathered from the questionnaire are summarized in table 1.

As shown in Table 1, the participants have an excellent academic background. The overall GPA's average score is 3.23, and 84% of the participants can obtain a higher overall GPA higher than 3. In terms of internet access, most participants do not find any difficulty in accessing online learning. However, 38.2% of them still have some problems in accessing distance learning due to the poor internet connection and lack of internet quota. A positive point that can be identified from the context identification is that 67.3% of the students are interested in joining this class. However, most of them do not have adequate background knowledge of linguistics.

Table 1. Summary of the context

No	Data	Total Number
1	The average score of the overall GPA	3.23
2	The number of students whose overall GPA higher than 3	84%
3	The number of students who do not live in Yogyakarta	52.7%
4	The number of students who have some problems with the implementation of distance learning	38.2%
5	The number of students whose poor internet connection	38.2%
6	The number of students who are interested in studying this subject	67.3%
7	Average spending for internet data in a month (more than Rp50.000,-)	92.8%
8	Length of internet access in a day (more than 3 hours)	71.1%

Based on the context identification, it can also be seen that the students are longing to have a face-to-face class since they miss their friends and also the situation when they can interact with others directly. They get bored of doing the online class. Some of them find it a bit difficult to adapt to the new situation in which they have to manage themselves and be more independent.

The data found in the context identification are used to design the materials, the tasks, and the teaching and learning activities, to select the method that will be used to deliver the materials, and also to determine the type of evaluation that will be used to measure the progress of the class. This step is necessary so that the students will be able to experience a fruitful learning process that will develop their competence and form them to be a better person.

The materials and the tasks are designed in such a way to help the students understand the materials better and to develop their conscience and compassion. The references and materials used in this class are uploaded to the LMS of Universitas Sanata Dharma before the semester begins. The purpose is to enable students to access them before the class so that they will be more prepared when the class is conducted since they can read the references and do the warming up activities before class. The students are also assigned to do some activities and tasks that will help them restore their past life experiences and discover new experiences that will be useful for their self-development.

In the learning process, the students are emboldened to optimize their potentialities, be more active, and be more self-independent. The students are given some meaningful activities and inputs such as watching movies, conducting simple observations on language usage, analyzing some cases related to language use, solving some simple linguistic problems, making reports, and presenting their ideas.

Finding that some of the students have some difficulties to access the internet, the teaching and learning activities are conducted in both synchronous and asynchronous methods so that those who cannot join the class as it is scheduled can access the material and study by themselves. The synchronous learning is done via ZOOM Virtual meeting. In contrast, the learning management system of Universitas Sanata Dharma that is [belajar.usd.ac.id](http://belajar.usd.ac.id) is used to facilitate the asynchronous activities. These methods are also used as a means to maintain the feeling of being present and to minimize the 'distance' that may occur in online learning.

The synchronous session is conducted via the ZOOM Virtual Meeting to have simultaneous discussions and allow the students to meet virtually. This session is also used to build the bonding between the teacher and the students and among the students. The 'presence' in distance learning is also created through the discussion in the asynchronous session facilitated by the Forum in the Learning Management System. This facility enables students to share their work, to review other friends' work, and also to give comments. In other words, asynchronous discussions can also create interaction and build a learning community (Liu, 2015).



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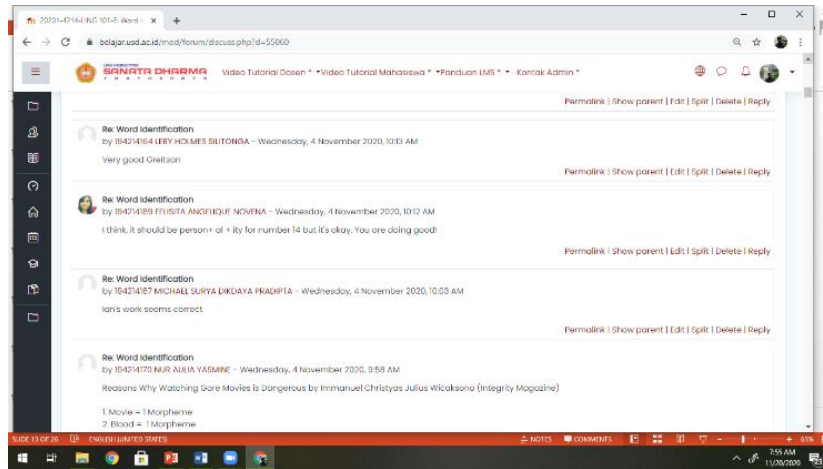


Figure 3. The example of asynchronous discussion via the LMS

Another way to build a feeling of being present is by giving personal care and concerns to every individual in the class. Greetings and small talks about the students' feelings, health, and activities effectively build intimate interaction. The communication among the class members is also done through the WhatsApp Group and the chat room in the LMS. These facilities enable the teacher and the students to communicate quickly at any time. When the students feel that they are involved as members of the class community, it easier to build a positive atmosphere.

YouTube videos used in the class are modified to build student-lecture engagement and student-material engagement. The lecturer inserts some questions in some parts of the videos so that the students do not only watch the videos as they are but also feel the lecturer's presence while they are watching it. The lecturer uses *edpuzzle* to crop and customize the videos.

Lecturing is conducted by the use of annotated power-point presentations and videos which are uploaded to the lecturer's YouTube channel. The purpose of this action is to give a chance for the students to meet the lecturer asynchronously. By doing so, the students can watch the videos or the presentation repeatedly to help them understand the materials.

At the end of the session, conclusions are drawn and reflection is conducted. Both the teacher and the students do the reflection to internalize the knowledge and also to reflect the value of life which is learned from the learning process. This opportunity is the time to discern the goodness and rightness of a particular action. There are some values that can be identified from the reflection. The students realize that God loves humans by giving us such a wonderful language. They also realize that there are many languages in this world with their own complexity. This point makes them understand the importance of respecting diversity. When they learn about phonemes, the students said that they can appreciate the value of small things.

As a result of the reflection, the students try to implement the values that they have identified into some acts. They start to use language more carefully when they communicate with others. They also stop making jokes on their friend who speaks in different accents. The students also become

meticulous. The actions might be simple and do not directly give an impact on society, but at least the learning process can improve the students' personality.

The evaluation is conducted periodically. The assessment to measure students' competence is done through the tests and the assignments while questionnaires are used as a tool to evaluate the learning process. The average score of the tests and the assignments which are given until the end of October 2020 is 74. It means that their academic achievement is good. The data which are gathered from the questionnaire show that 94.5% of the students are satisfied with the learning process. 85.5% of the students said that the materials and the activities are given are relevant to achieve the objectives of the class. 96.3% of the students stated that the interaction among the students can be built from the learning activities and the interaction is good and intensive. 96.4% of the students consider the interaction between the teacher and the students are good and intensive. It can also be identified that some students who are introverted when we had face-to-face learning feel that online learning makes them braver to express themselves. Based on the results, it can be seen that the learning process can help the learner to develop their competence, conscience, and compassion. At the same time, it can build intensive interaction among the teacher and the students so that the 'presence' in the distance learning can be maintained.

#### **4. Conclusion and Suggestions**

To be able to reach the objectives successfully, distance learning should be managed carefully. Ignatian-based online learning can be used as an alternative to conducting distance learning, especially to maintain the feeling of being present because Ignatian-based online learning emphasizes personal care and concern to every individual involved in the learning process. This online learning can also be applied to help students improve their competence and their conscience and compassion so that they can be men and women for others.

There must be some obstacles in conducting the distance learning process, such as the internet connection, the cost, and motivation. As a teacher, it is necessary to prepare plan A and plan B so that when a problem occurs, the learning process can still be run.

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