EXAMINING EFL LEARNERS’ MOTIVATION
IN ONLINE DISCUSSION IN FLA UKSW

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan

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INTRODUCTION

Online discussion has been widely used as a communication system that provides communication through computer network at anytime and anywhere. Over the past few years, the interest in using internet and communication technology tools (ICT) is increasing rapidly. ICT is being used along with face-to-face lectures to augment and support classroom learning (Balaji, 2010). In short online discussion forum can also be used in hybrid setting or even in fully online class. As stated by Thomas (2002), students can learn as much from one another and from course material or lectures in a virtual learning environment within the use of online discussion forum. Nowadays, the use of internet is very common to support the learning process because students are familiar with it. Online discussion is the new tools to learn.

The use of online discussion forum (ODF) has emerged as a common tool and an effective way of engaging students outside the classroom. ODF is an e-learning platform that allows students to post messages to the discussion threads, interact and receive feedback from other students and instructor, and foster deeper understanding towards the subject under study (Balaji, 2010). It seems that students enjoy online discussion because they use it often and it attracts their interest. In addition, from the perspective of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning, various studies show that students' interactions in SNSs (Social Networking Sites), known as Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) in linguistic studies, could bring positive impacts to students' learning (Sumakul, 2013). However, some researchers concerned that students in an online environment may feel isolated, confused, and frustrated and that student’s interest in the subject and learning effectiveness may be reduced. Thus, students’ competence in using the online discussion tools becomes an important issue that may influence students’ motivation to participate in the discussion (Xie, DeBacker & Ferguson, 2005). It was expected that lecturers can give direction for the students during the online discussion.
Online discussion is also common in the learning process in Faculty of Language and Arts (FLA) in Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW). This study aims to investigate students’ motivational levels regarding to their participation in online discussion forum. It is believed that motivation is an important issue regarding to their participation in online discussion forum. This study might be helpful for FLA UKSW teachers to create certain online discussion environment that will be useful in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation

Motivation is responsible for determining human behavior by energizing it and giving it direction. Motivation theories in general seek to explain no less than the fundamental question of why humans behave as they do. Meanwhile, motivation is widely recognized as a variable of importance in human learning, reflected in goals and directions pursued levels of effort invested, depth of engagement, and degree of persistence in learning. Motivation is also related to people’s beliefs, perception, values, interests and actions. The attribute that moves us to do or not to do something is another definition of motivation by Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (2004).

There are two types of motivations, which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (1985), intrinsic motivation is defined as “the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence”. People who are intrinsically motivated usually show “more interest, excitement, and confidence (Xie, DeBacker & Ferguson, 2005). If people are intrinsically motivated, it means they derive their inner desire to do something. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is a phase when students engage in tasks in order to earn incentives such as rewards, positive feedback, or good grade,
or to avoid punishment or unpleasant consequences, they are said to be extrinsically motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, intrinsic motivation comes from one’s inner part and extrinsic motivation is a result from outer factors.

One significant development of the theories on motivation is the Self Determination Theory it is better known as SDT (Ryan & Deci, 1985). SDT is about a contemporary theory of situated motivation that is built on the fundamental premise of learner autonomy. SDT argues that all humans have an intrinsic need to be self-determining or autonomous (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT postulates that autonomous and controlled motivations differ in terms of both their underlying regulatory processes and their accompanying experiences, and it further suggests that behaviors can be characterized in terms of the degree to which they are autonomous versus controlled. Autonomous motivation and controlled motivation are both intentional, and together they stand in contrast to amotivation, which involves a lack of intention and motivation. Motivation is an important factor that determines students’ participation in online discussion.

**Online Discussion**

Online discussion forum is a tool where the instructor and the students have the opportunity to engage in various activities and create new dimension for interaction—active and higher-order thinking. The online discussion forum changed the way students interact, motivating them to be more immersed and active in the process of learning. Online discussion forum is virtual learning environments that can help students learn from each other as much as they want to and also from the lecturer or materials provided. Research suggested that most active and effective online discussions are highly purposeful and task oriented. Online discussion forum could also help students reflect about their thinking and experience from their peers and instructor. Anderson (2004) stated that online discussion forum individualizes
students’ learning experience facilitating development of deep level learning and ‘new knowledge structures’.

The online discussion board has the potential to facilitate learning communities and to promote collaborative among students outside of the classroom. It provides learners with various benefits to help them in the learning process (Horton, 2000; Murphy, 2004). First is varying oral language skills more equal opportunities to participate in discussion, facilitate the use of language that is lexically and syntactically more formal and complex than that found in face-to-face discussion. Students can reflect on their thoughts in a more formal format, which may foster their metacognitive and the last is critical thinking skills. Students could learn with their own pace according to their preference style of learning (McDuffie & Slavit, 2003). This represents the knowledge-centered view of online learning theory.

A well facilitated and guided online discussion will lead to a successful discussion forum that will make the discussion is informational and also interesting. In a discussion forum, the instructor should provide feedback to questions, the issues to be discussed and suggestion for further development (Benfield, 2002; Horton, 2000). However, students have to play the main role of the discussion and instructor should only guide or direct the discussion. This kind of discussions is more likely to become valuable and motivating for the students but it can make the students feel over control by the instructor. That is why online discussion may need to find a balance between task-oriented and self-directed approaches.

Previous Studies on Motivation in Online Discussion

Xie, DeBacker and Ferguson (2005) investigated students’ motivation related to online discussion. The participants were 32 students from two sections of an undergraduate instructional technology course at a large Midwestern university. The participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire and interview. The aim of this study was to investigate students’
intrinsic motivation and other critical issues related to participating in online discussion. It was found that if students perceived the online discussion as valuable, interesting and enjoyable, they were more likely to participate. Those findings supports Ryan and Deci’s hypothesis that people who find a task intrinsically motivating, show high level of motivation. Xie et al. study also indicated that peer interactions in the online discussions contributed to their positive attitude. Meanwhile, Gedera, Williams and Wright (2013) carried out a study took place in 2012 with seven students and one lecturer to participated in this study. The aim was to find out factors that affect students’ motivation and engagement in specific online learning environment. The data was collected using individual interview, observation of online learning activities, online profile questionnaire and document analysis. The findings of the case under study suggested that students’ motivation and engagement were affected by the tools—Adobe virtual classroom and the Learning Management Style (LMS) that facilitated the design of the course and forum discussions.

A study by Hartnett, George and Dron, (2011) using questionnaire and interview found that both intrinsic motivation and external motivation were found to be co-existing and were highly sensitive to situational influences. It means that perceived importance, relevance and utility value of the activity were just as important as the interest or the enjoyment of the tasks. In line with Hartnett et al, a study by Lee, Cheung and Chen (2005) in Hongkong discovered that extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation have the same role in affecting students’ motivation to participate in online discussion. Meanwhile Shroff, Vogel and Coombes in 2008 stated that online discussion provides unlimited opportunities for quick exchange of ideas. In the study by Shroff et al, intrinsic motivation was found to be a significant type of motivation in online discussion along with the study by Chen (2009).
THE STUDY

Research Question

What are the motivational levels of students in online discussion in FLA UKSW?

Context

The research was a descriptive study on students’ motivational levels in online discussion. Borg and Gall (1989) stated that descriptive research describes natural or man-made educational phenomena that are of interest to policy makers. The study took place in English Language Education Program, Faculty of Language and Arts (FLA), Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW). The university is located in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. English is often used in the teaching and learning process. Students are also encouraged to use an online platform in several classes to mediate teaching and learning process outside classroom. It makes the students accustom to do online discussion or learning. Therefore, FLA UKSW was chosen because majority of the classes use online discussion as part of their teaching and learning activities.

Participant

The participants of this study were 10 students from batch 2014 from English Language Education Program (ELEP) of Faculty of Language and Arts (FLA) in UKSW. The participants were 10 students who had enough experience in online discussion as they were in their fourth year of study. It was expected that more experienced students were able to answer the questions given. This study was not limit the gender of the students or the age of the students.

Instrument of Data Collection
The data was gathered using semi-structured interview. The interview was adapted from Guay, Vallerand and Blanchard (2000) questionnaire which is The Situational Motivation Scale (SIMS). The SIMS is designed to assess the constructs of intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, external regulation, and amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) in field and laboratory settings. *(Appendix 1)*

**Data collection procedure**

The 10 participants were asked if they were ever did an online discussion before. The platform can be Schoology, Edmodo, Facebook, Whatsapp, LINE or anything that could be used to mediate the online discussion forum. The researcher and the participants made an appointment to do the interview. In the interview, participants could express their thoughts and answered based on their experience.

**Data analysis**

The findings from the interview were grouped into four categories of The SIMS which would measure the participants’ intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, external regulation, and amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991). After that the results were able to answer the research question which was to find out students’ motivational levels in online discussion forum especially in academic speaking course in Faculty of Language and Arts, UKSW.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents findings and discussions about students’ motivation in online discussion. The answer of this study will be shown and discussed descriptively. It is found that there are 4 types of motivation which affect students’ motivation. Intrinsic motivation, external regulation, identified regulation and amotivation by Ryan and Deci’s Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is used in this following section.
From the table below (table 1), it can be seen that there are 2 types of motivation that have quite high value. It is intrinsic motivation and amotivation. From this result, participants’ participation in online discussion is either intrinsically motivated or amotivation. However, the answers are utterly diverse. Further discussion will be elaborated in each section’s types of motivation which will be supported with the interview results.

Table 1. Overall Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Types of Motivation</th>
<th>Frequency Participant</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>2 4 1 4 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>External Regulation</td>
<td>1 0 1 0 2 1 0 2 1 0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identified Regulation</td>
<td>0 1 2 2 1 1 1 2 1 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Amotivation</td>
<td>2 0 0 2 3 2 1 1 3 1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, it could be seen that external regulation has the lowest score amongst 4 types of motivation. The score is 8 and it means that the participants do not really see online discussion as something to get rewards or punishment from. Meanwhile, the difference between Intrinsic Motivation and Amotivation is only one. Intrinsic motivation scored one point higher than amotivation, it is 17 and 16 points. It means that the participants usually enjoy or like the online discussion from themselves or not enjoying it at all. In this following section, there will be deeper analysis based from each types of motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation
Intrinsic motivation refers to performing activity in order to experience satisfaction and pleasure for oneself rather than for some separable consequence (Xie, DeBacker & Ferguson, 2005). A person who is intrinsically motivated is engaged in an activity for their own sake. It is mostly associated with positive outcomes and based on oneself (Xie, DeBacker & Ferguson, 2005). In this study, it was found that intrinsic motivation was quite high to the students participated in the interview.

The result from the interview regarding to the high degree of intrinsic motivation as participant 02 said is that,

Figure 1.1 Excerpt from participant 02 in Intrinsic Motivation

“Tapi kadang dosen juga ada sih yang pakai online discussion. Cuma dia nggak mewajibkan mahasiswanya. Tapi karena aku suka online discussion jadi ya ikut2 aja, nggak terpaksa”

“Some lecturers use online discussion, but sometimes the lecturer did not ask us to do the discussion. However, because I like the online discussion I willingly participate in an online discussion.

Another evidence that participant 04 mentioned which is,

Figure 1.2 Excerpt from participant 04 in Intrinsic Motivation

“Sepertinya berguna, karena di online discussion itu kan juga kita bisa belajar lebih banyak lagi tentang vocabulary terutama. Kalo group discussion untuk belajar kelompok itu biasanya saya yang sering ngajak temen saya, yuk kerjain yuk”

“I think it is useful, because in online discussion we can learn a lot of things, for example vocabulary. I can learn new vocabularies from doing the online discussion. If there is a group discussion, I will ask my friends to join and to do the task together”

From the excerpts of the interview, it can be seen that participant 02 and 04 are willingly participate in the online discussion because they like online discussion. It is also stated that participant 04 can learn new things from doing the online discussion. Even though the lecturers did not ask them to do online discussion, they initiatively create their own group discussion because they want to.
Based on the result of the interview above, most of the participants said that online discussion is useful. They initially do the online discussion because they think they will need it and it is better than doing face-to-face group discussion. Compared to the study from Hartnett, George, and Dron (2011), they found out that the result of the intrinsic motivation was moderately high. It was shown that the participants interested and enjoyed the learning environment. It was similar with this study that the participants like online discussion because they are more comfortable doing online than the face-to-face discussion. On the other hand, Shroff, Vogel and Coombes (2008) found that the online discussions were found to lead to a more positive perception of an individual’s interest. Certain subjects may have had a more positive perception of their interest in the online discussions, as they may have been more motivated to do so across time and in different situations, so their behavior may have been intrinsically motivated and consequently, directed by a deep, long-lasting interest that emanated from within (Renninger, 2000). It is similar with the answer from participant 04 that he found something interesting online discussion so he found out that online discussion was fun.

**External Regulation**

The term external regulation or motivation is in contrast with intrinsic motivation. The motivation itself comes from outside of each individual. External regulation refers to an activity performed in order to gain some separable outcomes. (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It occurs when behavior is regulated by rewards, positive feedbacks, and good grades or in order to avoid consequences and individual experiences an obligation to behave in a specific way. (Guay et al, 2000).

The result of the study could be seen, as participant 09 said,

Figure 2.1 Excerpt from participant 09 in External Regulation
“Kalo itu otomatis saya ikut, satu dapet nilai, karna kalo saya gak ikut discussion saya jelas gak dapet nilai”

“I automatically joined the online discussion, first, it is graded. If I did not join, I would not get the mark”

It was found that participant 06 wanted to avoid consequences and get a mark.

Figure 2.2 Excerpt from participant 09 in External Regulation

“Kalo yang sama dosen itu lebih karna itu tugas dan harus dikumpulin. Jadi, karna paksaan juga sih, karna biar dapet nilai jadi harus ngumpulin”

“The online discussion with the lecturer is a task and need to be submitted so I must submit it. It was like a perforce because I have to get a mark.”

The excerpts from the interview above could be seen that participant 09 and 06 did the online discussion because it was a graded task or exercise. They did it to get a mark and avoid consequences from the lecturer. Participant 06 even said that she was perforce because it was graded and she needed to get a mark. Meanwhile participant 09 said that if the online discussion was graded, he will automatically join the online discussion to get the mark.

A study by Lee, Cheung and Chen (2005) found that both intrinsic and external motivation exhibited equally strong impacts on students’ attitude and intention to use Internet Learning Medium (ILM). However, in this study, intrinsic motivation and external motivation did not have the same value as the participants have more intrinsic motivation than external motivation. The participants in this study only think of online discussion as a mandatory to avoid punishment or to get rewards only. It was different with intrinsic motivation whereas participants’ think of online discussion as a fun or pleasant thing to do for them. On the other hand, a study by Hartnett, George, and Dron, (2011) found that the high degree of external motivation was not necessarily because of reward or avoiding punishment but also from the
activity, lecturers’ role and also supports from their peers. It was because of the importance of meeting assignment deadlines and gaining passing grade. The study by Hartnett et al was found to be similar with this study. As it was seen from the interviews’ excerpts above, participants tend to join online discussion because they have to submit their tasks and get a mark from the lecturers.

**Identified Regulation**

Identified regulation occurs when a behavior is valued and perceived as being chosen by each individual (Guay et al, 2000). The motivation itself is an extrinsic motivation because the activity is not performed for them but as a means to an end. It is expected to be better maintained and to be associated with higher commitment and result (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Below is the explanation of identified regulation found in this study.

From this statement below, Participant 05 think that,

"Ya berguna lah. Apalagi kita kan harus kenal sama teknologi, kalau misalnya kita pakai cara lama terus gimana kita berkembang? Terus kan kita juga perlu biar kita kreatif biar nggak gitu2 aja, nggak bosen kalau waktu ada activity."

"It is useful (online discussion). Now we have to know technology well, if we use the old way all the time how can we develop? We also have to learn to become a creative individual so we would not get bored if there is an activity"

Also, what Participant 10 thinks about online discussion is,

"Aku ga bisa describe whether itu sukarela atau terpaksa sih, aku lebih merasa kaya ini tanggung jawabku yaudah kenapa engga."

"I cannot describe whether I voluntarily doing the online discussion or not, but I feel like it is my responsibility so I have to do this."
From the statements above given by the participants, it could be seen that participant 05 and 10 thought that online discussion is something they want to do because it is good for them and it is their responsibility to do it. Especially from participant 05, it is clear that he did the online discussion because it is useful and beneficial for him. As for participant 10, she thought that doing online discussion is a responsibility for her so she decided to do it. Those two statements indicated that the participants saw online discussion as an identified regulation. They did it for themselves because of responsibilities or the impact for them.

In a study by Hartnett, George, & Dron (2011), it was discovered that the participants found value in the task and felt reasonably competent in undertaking it. The value, relevance and importance of the task were reflected in the high score of identified regulation. The participants thought that the activity performed in online discussion was significantly important and meaningful. From the study by Hartnett et al, it could be seen that the participants were doing the task because of they found value and it was important for them. Thus, in this study, the result of identified regulation is considered moderate but the findings were able to describe the participants’ view of online discussion. It was as an important task for them and it was their responsibilities to do the task.

**Amotivation**

The last type is amotivation. Amotivation is a motivation that least-determined because there is no sense of purpose and no expectation of rewards (Guay et al, 2000). Amotivation can thus be seen as similar to learned helplessness where the individual experiences feelings of incompetence and expectancies. In short, amotivated person is neither intrinsically or extrinsically motivated.

From the interview, it can be seen that Participant 05 felt amotivated from the statement below,

**Figure 4.1 Excerpt from participant 05 in Amotivation**
“Sering kali mis-komunikasi, soalnya kan kadang temen kita ada yang nggak mudeng sama apa yang kita omongin terus pas kerjaannya di eksekusi waktu jadi ga sesuai sama yang kita inginkan.”

“Miscommunication is often occurred in online discussion because sometimes one member did not understand what we were talking about. When it was the time to do the task, it did not meet our expectations.”

Another statement by Participant 10 which said that,

Figure 4.2 Excerpt from participant 05 in Amotivation

“Trus kalo online discussion yang sama temen-temen itu juga kadang-kadang masalahnya diwaktu. Misalnya kan udah ditentuin nih jam nya, tapi kadang-kadang juga ada yang ga fast respon dan kadang ada yan gga komen juga.”

“The problem of online discussion with peers is time. For example we had an agreement about the time to do the online discussion, but sometimes their peers were slow response and sometimes did not give comment.”

From the short excerpts above, what participant 05 said indicates that online discussions often led to miscommunication and the outcomes did not meet the group’s expectation. As it was stated before that amotivation can be shown by individuals’ incompetence and expectations. In addition, participant 10 showed that she had no motivation to join the online discussion as she thought she was perforce to do so. The statements stated by participant 05 and 06 can be categorized as amotivated because of lack motivation and individuals’ incompetence and expectancies.

Students’ amotivation in online discussion was also found in the study by Hartnett, George, & Dron, (2011). The amotivation scale from Hartnett et al’s study have a low score which indicates that participants found value in the task and felt reasonably competent in undertaking it. The value, relevance and importance of the task to participants were also similar with the identified regulation. In addition, a study by Chen (2009) also found that participants
have low score in amotivation. In contrast, this study found that the participants did not see any value of the tasks given in online discussion. Participants felt that doing the online discussion was a perforce and they sometimes feel pressured to do so. Different with previous studies from Hartnett et al (2011) and Chen (2009), the participants in this study was lacking motivation and felt incompetence with the discussion. It was because of the group did not meet one’s expectation that led into amotivation of the online discussion.

**Intrinsic Motivation VS Amotivation**

Based on the findings and discussion above, participants’ motivation in online discussion was ranged and diverse from one another. The intrinsic motivation and amotivation was found to have the highest value with only one point different. It could be seen that the participants joined online discussion because of their inner motivation. Online discussion attracted their interest and pleasure. It was found that the participant thought that online discussion is important and they like it a lot. Participant 02 and 04 were found to have the highest intrinsic motivation score. They like online discussion because it is a lot more practical. They did not have to meet in person and the task did not have to be printed. Participant 03 and 04 said that in online discussion they can express their thoughts better than in class or in a group discussion. It was because they can prepare it beforehand so everything they said will be more organized. In addition, they can also learn another thing while doing online discussion. Particularly participant 08 said that he could open the internet if he did not know something from the online discussion. However, there were several things that the participants did not like about online discussion that created amotivation to participate in the discussion. The things that the participants did not like because it often led into the feeling of self incompetence and ones expectancies were not accomplish. Those two things made the participants do not want to do online discussion. Like what participant 07 and 06 said, sometimes the members of the online group discussion did not response fast enough, it amotivated her to do the task. To summarize
the findings in this study, almost all participants have all four types of motivation that made them do the online discussion. However, intrinsic motivation and amotivation scored the highest compared to identified regulation and external regulation. It means that the participants’ were mostly intrinsically motivated but several things outside the online discussion amotivated them to do so. The four types of motivation by Ryan and Deci (2000) were all found in this study.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze students of English Language Education Program (ELEP)’s motivation in online discussion. The study was conducted by interviewing 10 participants from 2014 batch randomly. The interview questions were adapted from “The Situational Motivational Scale (SIMS)” by Guay, Vallerand and Blanchard (2000). The result of this study shows that there were two types of motivation that affected students’ motivation in participating in online discussion. Intrinsic motivation and amotivation were found to be the highest motivation amongst the participants.

In the end, this study concludes that most students have intrinsic motivation to do the online discussion but things outside the online discussion itself sometimes amotivated them to do the online discussion. However, despite the high degree of the amotivation, not all of the participants have it. Unlike intrinsic motivation, all of the participants were intrinsically motivated in participating in the online discussion. From the findings, it could be seen that even though the amotivation scored high, it did not mean that all of the participants felt amotivated to do the online discussion. The pedagogical implication of this study might be a useful suggestion for the scholars, lecturers or researchers to improve students’ motivation in online discussion in the future. It was found that intrinsic motivation and amotivation were the highest of all four types of motivations which means, students’ were intrinsically motivated to the online discussion but some factors outside the online discussion itself were made them
uncomfortable and did not enjoy the discussion. There are some considerations for the lecturers such as encouraging students to do the online discussion as a fun activity with their peers, make policies to the students so they will do their tasks with maximum efforts and avoid technical problems. Lastly, online discussion is an important part of learning as we know that we can learn anywhere and anytime, it is best for students to use online discussion as a medium of learning.

There were some limitations in this research. First of all, the context of this study is very small. It is hoped that in the future, researchers can explore bigger context and participants to analyze deeper in students’ motivational level in online discussion. Secondly, the interview questions are limited only from The Situational Motivational Scale (SIMS) which was based from a series of questionnaire. For further study, the interview questions can be added with some more questions regarding to the context used by the researchers. The interview questions and participants could make a different even just a small one.

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References


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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. Do you like the online discussion?

2. What do you like about the online discussion?
3. Do you think the online discussion is useful?

4. How does it useful?

5. Did you asked to participate or you are willingly participated? Why?

6. What you do not like about the online discussion? Why?