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# Tutors‘ Perspectives on Camera-Off Behavior in Online English Classroom

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**Abstract.** This research explores the camera-off behavior affects teacher-student interaction (TSI) in online English classroom. While previous research has mainly focused on studnets‘ perspective in formal institutions, this study investigates how English tutors perceive and manage challenges caused by limited visual engagement. This study addresses two research questions: (1) How does camera-off behavior affect TSI in online English classroom, and (2) What strategies do tutors employ to manage this behavior. Drawing on Transactional Distance Theory, data were collected from 18 tutors via questionnairies, interviews and classroom observations. Findings revealed that camera-off practices hinder reciprocal communication, weaken classroom atmosphere, and contribute to emotional fatigue and demotivation among tutors. Tutors reported difficulties in maintaining instructional flow, detecting dishonesty, and fostering engagement. Despite institutional limitations, tutors implemented flexible approaches such as personal check-ins, name-calling, and relaxed camera rules. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on freelance tutors in a non-formal online classroom, where institutional authority is limited, yet the pressure to retain students remains high. The findings offer important pedagogical implications for online language instruction, emphasizing the need for flexible engagement strategies, institutional support, and ethical digital practices to address the challenges of camera-off behavior in non-formal contexts.

**Keywords:** Camera-off behavior, Online English classroom, Teacher-student interaction, Transactional distance, Visual presence

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In online language learning, visual cues such as facial expressions, eye contact [1], [2], and gestures are essential components of effective communication [3]-[5]. Without these elements, teachers often struggle to assess students’ understanding [6], maintain motivation [3], and facilitate interactive dialogue[3], [4], [7]. This condition reflects a broader breakdown in emotional and instructional connection that commonly arises in online settings when mutual visibility and reciprocal interaction are lacking [1]. The absence of visual feedback forces teachers to overcompensate by increasing verbal effort, emotional energy [8], and monitoring behaviors, which contributes to cognitive overload and emotional exhaustion [5], [9]. Without video visibility, the psychological gap between teachers and students widens, leading to less reciprocal interaction and increased teacher fatigue [8], [10].

The previous study about media on ELT focusing on the students’ perspective of using zoom as effective media for speaking English [11]-[13]. The other scholar said that it also better for asynchronous learning when it is recorded. They will improve the skills and do self-reflection [14], [15]. The study about short video for learning listening comprehension. It is effective learning because there is flexibility for student to do anywhere and anytime {Citation}. The interactive learning using media is another teacher’s strategy to force the students know how to write grammatically [16].

Unlike previous studies [17], [6], [18], [19] that focus on formal education or student perspectives, this research offers a novel contribution by examining camera-off behavior from tutor’s perspective within a non-formal context, characterized by flexible rules, minimal enforcement power and freelance teaching. This can give unique complexity and insight into the dynamic of online classroom interaction. This gap highlights the importance of understanding tutors’ perspectives regarding camera-off behavior. Therefore, this study focuses on two research questions (1) how English tutors in a non-formal Indonesian course perceive and manage camera-off behavior, especially in teenage-level speaking classes and (2) What strategies do tutors employ to manage this phenomenon in non-formal educational settings.

# 2. METHOD

## 2.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study approach to explore how camera-off behavior affects TSI during synchronous online English classes. The case study was conducted at *Bahasaku Inggris*, a non-formal language institution offering fully online programs for students. A qualitative design was chosen to allow in-depth exploration of tutor experiences in responding to reduced visual engagement. Data collection involved questionnaires, semi-structured interviews in Bahasa Indonesia, and classroom recordings to support triangulation and enhance the credibility of findings.

## 2.2 Participants

Participants were English tutors at Bahasaku Inggris, with a particular focus on those involved in the Speaking for Teenagers (SFT) program. This population was chosen due to the high impact of camera-off behavior reported in these classes, which made it highly relevant to the topic of online interaction. Purposive sampling was used to select tutors who: (1) were actively or recently teaching in the SFT program and (2) had facilitated a minimum of 50 synchronous classes.

Given the freelance structure of the institution, the number of active tutors fluctuated weekly, ranging between 16 and 23 during the September–November 2024 data collection period. A total of 18 tutors completed the questionnaire, and five of them agreed to participate in in-depth interviews via Zoom. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 50 minutes and was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to promote comfort and clarity in responses. These tutors provided detailed insights into the practical and emotional challenges of teaching with limited visual feedback.

## 2.3 Data Collection Techniques

To ensure a rich and reliable dataset, this study applied methodological triangulation involving questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. First, the process began with the distribution of a Google Forms questionnaire to identify participants and gather initial data. A consent form was included for tutors willing to participate in follow-up interviews.

Second, five semi-structured interviews were conducted through Zoom, allowing for more in-depth exploration of tutors' strategies and challenges in handling camera-off behavior. Finally, video recordings of actual class sessions were collected to observe the nature of classroom interaction. These materials supported the findings from the other instruments and helped verify emerging patterns in tutor-student dynamics.

## 2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data from questionnaires, interviews, and video documentation. This involved coding tutor responses and identifying recurring patterns related to teacher-student interaction, emotional responses, and classroom management. The interpretation of findings was guided by Transactional Distance Theory, which emphasizes the role of dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy in distance learning. TDT model was also used to examine emotional and interpersonal dynamics, while Sulha et al.'s Distance Online Learning framework provided insights into pedagogical flexibility and institutional context. These theories enabled the researcher to interpret how camera-off behavior alters instructional flow and relational distance in synchronous online English classroom, particularly in non-formal education settings.

# 3. FINDINGS

## 3.1 The Impact of Camera-Off Behavior on Teacher-Student Interaction

The absence of visual cues in online learning poses serious challenges to TSI and the overall classroom atmosphere. Tutors find it difficult to read facial expressions, monitor engagement, and build reciprocal communication when students keep their cameras off [3], [10], [20], [21]. This often leads to one-sided instruction, with tutors reporting feelings of speaking to themselves. Mr. T described calling on students one by one without response, while Miss D noted how students turned off their cameras after presenting and ignored requests to turn them back on.

Camera-off behavior also influences peer behavior and contributes to a collective culture of disengagement. Miss R observed that "students who turn off their cameras will trigger others to do the same," illustrating the contagious nature of this trend. In contrast, documentation from class SFT1—where

younger students kept their cameras on—suggests that age and class composition may influence visual participation. Reduced visibility not only hampers two-way interaction [22] but also diminishes classroom spontaneity and connection [10].

The emotional atmosphere of camera-off classrooms is often described as cold and silent [23]. Tutors expressed frustration at being unable to sense students' emotional states or adjust strategies accordingly Miss R shared that the lack of warmth and interaction reduced her motivation. Observational data also showed that classes differed in engagement levels. One's class required constant prompting, while another class found that immediate reinforcement helped. These findings align with studies showing that diminished visibility undermines social presence, cohesion, and the quality of online instruction[9], [17].

## 3.2 The Impact of Camera-Off Behavior on Tutors' Motivation and Emotions

The camera-off phenomenon not only affects interaction and classroom atmosphere but also significantly impacts tutors' motivation and emotional well-being. Most tutors interviewed in this study reported feeling emotionally exhausted, frustrated, and unsure of their teaching effectiveness when faced with black screens and no visual feedback.

Miss R stated, "*Aku udah ngulang pertanyaan yang sama sampai 3 kali loh… sampai saya cek koneksi, takutnya saya yang salah*." ("I repeated the same question three times… I even said 'Can you hear my voice?' and checked my connection, thinking maybe I was the one at fault.") Such uncertainty caused tutors to feel lost when delivering lessons, unsure whether students were understanding or even paying attention[8]. She added, "*Kelas itu rasanya seperti satu tembok tertutup."* ("The class felt like one closed wall.") This metaphor powerfully illustrates the emotional distance and frustration caused by one-sided interaction[1]. Teachers perceive that interaction becomes rigid and overly formal, creating a pressured atmosphere in which they must constanlt guess students' reactions [24].

Miss N highlighted how prolonged exposure to unresponsive classes can affect mental stamina: "*Kalau banyak kelas yang begitu, bisa ngaruh ke mood aku."* ("If there are many classes like that, it affects my mood.") Similarly, Another tutor found, "*Kita capek bukan karena banyak kelas, tapi karena banyak kelas yang pasif*." ("We're not tired because of the number of classes, but because many classes are passive.")

These emotional impacts are strongly supported on previous studies[10], [22], which stresses the importance of reciprocal communication and emotional presence in sustaining effective relationships. When communication becomes one-sided and visual feedback is absent, tutors find it harder to maintain emotional connection and responsiveness—elements critical for sustaining engagement in remote learning environments. The NWI Journal [25] confirms that continuously using video cameras in virtual meetings contributes significantly to virtual fatigue, influencing participants' willingness to engage visually.

The absence of non-verbal feedback in online learning often results in emotional fatigue for educators [26]. This is particularly problematic in language-focused classes, where emotional tone and interpersonal connection play a crucial role.

## 3.3 Students' Reasons for Turning Off the Camera

Interviews with the five tutors revealed that students' reasons for turning off their cameras vary and cannot be generalized. Despite institutional policies requiring camera-on participation, many students consistently keep their cameras off, citing various explanations [18], [27]. Miss R observed that students frequently give technical excuses such as poor connectivity or broken cameras. However, she questioned their credibility, especially when the same students repeatedly use similar justifications. *"Yang matiin kamera itu orang yang sama—satu orang bisa punya banyak alasan."* ("The one who turns off the camera is the same person—one person with many reasons.") This suggests that turning off the camera has become an entrenched habit despite repeated reminders. She also explained that recurring lesson topics led to disengagement. For example, when students were asked to share about holidays or weekend activities, they seemed unmotivated. *"Kadang mereka gak antusias karena topiknya mirip—mereka kehabisan ide, bosan cerita yang sama."* ("Sometimes they're not enthusiastic because the topic is similar—they run out of ideas and get bored telling the same stories.")

Miss N highlighted a behavioral shift between the early pandemic period and the present. *"Dulu waktu awal pandemi mereka excited nyoba Zoom, sekarang udah bosan dan ngerasa ini hal biasa."* ("Back when the pandemic started, they were excited to try Zoom. Now, they're bored and see it as routine.") This reflects a decrease in novelty and growing fatigue with online learning platforms[9]. From a social-emotional perspective, Miss D noted that some students lacked confidence to show their faces, due to personal appearance or noisy environments at home. *"Ada yang malu karena belum mandi, ada juga yang bilang suasana rumahnya rame."* ("Some are shy because they haven't showered, others say the house is noisy.")

These tendencies reflect broader patterns observed in recent studies, where camera-off behavior is often linked to discomfort, self-consciousness, and concerns over privacy [28]. Another study stated that many students turn off their cameras due to physical or emotional discomfort, such as feeling unpresentable or being in a state they consider unsuitable for others to see (e.g. lying in bed or not having washed up) [24]. Additionally, feelings of exhaustion from prolonged virtual sessions have been identified as contributing factors to students' reluctance to appear on camera[1]. Classroom documentation confirms these findings. Students with cameras off were typically less active, did not respond unless addressed directly, and appeared disconnected from the class flow. This indicates that camera-off behavior is often a sign of broader disengagement and emotional distance from the virtual learning environment [29].

## 3.5 Implications for Learning Quality

Camera-off behavior in online learning affects not only interaction but also has serious consequences on learning quality. Tutors reported that when students are invisible and fail to show facial expressions, it becomes challenging to assess whether they truly understand the material or are merely present in name. Miss N emphasized, "*Kalau kamera mati, aku nggak tahu apakah mereka paham atau tidak. Kita nggak bisa lihat ekspresi mereka."* ("If the camera is off, I can't tell if they understand or not. We can't see their expressions.") The absence of visual feedback prevents tutors from making real-time adjustments or gauging students' readiness to proceed with the lesson[20].

Moreover, tutors suspected dishonest practices, particularly in speaking classes. Some students appeared to read from scripts or use translation tools and even artificial intelligence (AI) to answer questions. Miss R stated, "*Mereka bisa ngomong kata-kata susah kayak synchronize, tapi nggak bisa ngucapin dengan benar dan nggak ngerti artinya."* ("They can say difficult words like 'synchronize,' but they were not able to pronounce them properly or understand the meaning.") Mr T added that in camera-off conditions, students can rely on Google Translate without the tutor knowing. He mentioned that some student responses seemed too structured and unnatural. "*Ada yang jawabannya bagus banget, padahal sebelumnya mereka jarang ngomong."* ("Some gave excellent answers, even though they rarely spoke before.")

This concern has been found in recent research, where the misuse of AI tools and translation software was found to produce responses that seem fluent but lack depth in communicative competence [26]. Under such circumstances, tutors find it difficult to deliver valid assessments of students' actual language skills. The situation also undermines the development of fluency and spontaneity, which are key goals in speaking classes. When students rely on reading scripts or translation tools, learning becomes passive and fails to simulate real communication contexts. Such conditions contradict the notion that meaningful interaction should involve direct and spontaneous communication between tutors and students, as emphasized in established interactional frameworks [22].

## 3.5 Tutor Strategies for Solving Camera-Off Behavior

Faced with the challenge of camera-off culture, tutors at Bahasaku Inggris employed a range of strategies to sustain interaction and student engagement. The approaches varied depending on class characteristics, tutor-student rapport, and individual teaching styles. One of the most commonly used strategies was directly calling students by name to prompt responses. Miss D explained, *"Kalau kelas mulai pasif, aku biasanya sebut satu-satu nama mereka, 'Halo namanya siapa gitu, mana suaranya?' kayak manggil anak sendiri."* ("When the class gets passive, I usually call their names one by one, like 'Hi there, where's your voice?'—as if I'm calling my own children.")

Tutors also used ice-breaking activities or simple warm-up questions at the beginning of sessions to create a relaxed atmosphere. Miss R shared, *"Kadang aku buka dengan pertanyaan santai, misalnya 'What did you eat today?' atau 'How was your day?', biar mereka merasa lebih dekat dulu."* ("Sometimes I open with simple questions like 'What did you eat today?' or 'How was your day?' to make them feel closer first.")

Others relied on switching to Indonesian as an initial bridge of communication, especially when students seemed hesitant or anxious about speaking in English. Mr. Z noted, *"Kalau mereka masih malu, aku ajak ngobrol pakai bahasa Indonesia dulu. Biar mereka nyaman."* ("If they're still shy, I talk to them in Indonesian first to make them feel comfortable.")

Flexibility was also a key aspect in managing the camera policy. Instead of enforcing rules rigidly, tutors opted for a persuasive approach, prioritizing students' comfort [30]. Miss N explained, *"Kadang aku izinkan mereka off-cam asal aktif di chat atau bersuara saat dipanggil. Nggak harus nyalain kamera terus."* ("Sometimes I allow them to keep their camera off as long as they are active in chat or respond when called. They don't have to turn the camera on all the time.")

Another effective method was incorporating presentation and role play tasks that required visible participation[31]. Tutors assigned speaking responsibilities to ensure engagement. As Miss D said, *"Saat presentasi, aku minta mereka nyalakan kamera. Kalau selesai, boleh off lagi."* ("During presentations, I ask them to turn on their camera. Afterward, they can turn it off again.") These strategies demonstrate that despite the barriers posed by camera-off behavior, tutors made persistent efforts to foster a dynamic and interactive learning experience. This is consistent with the idea that distance education demands creative and adaptive approaches to bridge technological and interpersonal gaps [32].

# 4. DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Teacher-Student Interaction and Pedagogical Challenges in Camera-Off Culture

One of the most notable findings of this study is the disruption of TSI in camera-off settings, which remains a fundamental challenge in synchronous online learning. According to the framework of distance education, limited visibility increases the psychological and communicative separation between instructors and learners, ultimately weakening the instructional dialogue that facilitates effective teaching [22]. The inability to observe non-verbal cues such as smiles, nods, or facial expressions weakens the effectiveness of communication and diminishes the quality of the TSI [24].

Tutors in this study repeatedly expressed how blank screens and the absence of facial expressions impaired their ability to deliver interactive instruction[1]. Several tutors described moments of complete silence when they attempted to initiate class discussions, which they interpreted as a sign of disengagement and emotional detachment [5], [33], [34]. These blank responses created psychological uncertainty, prompting tutors to double-check their own systems before realizing the problem was rooted in the lack of student participation. This silence, combined with inactive screens, led to emotionally straining experiences for tutors, especially when they were left to "talk to themselves." The sense of alienation and emotional detachment reported by tutors echoes the difficulty in establishing what has been described as instructor presence when students remain invisible [4].

Furthermore, the need to call on students by name or use chat reminders frequently emerged as a coping strategy, yet this added to the cognitive and emotional workload of tutors. Such one-sided efforts reflect the breakdown of reciprocal interaction, which is critical for fostering meaningful tutor-student dynamics[22]. In the case of camera-off environments, the reciprocity is largely diminished, often resulting in superficial interaction or tutor monologues.

In addition to interactional limitations, we found an increase in dishonest academic behavior—particularly in speaking classes. With no visual cues to monitor students, stats suspected that learners were using AI-based tools or translation apps to produce scripted responses. For example, students presented advanced vocabulary such as "synchronize" but were unable to pronounce or understand the term during delivery. This raises a new pedagogical concern: cheating through AI in online language classrooms. While technology may support learning, excessive dependence on it—especially when left unchecked due to lack of visual monitoring—may lead to shallow comprehension or misrepresentation of students' true proficiency [26].

Such challenges demonstrate the erosion of pedagogical intimacy and authenticity, which are often essential in building meaningful tutor-student relationships—particularly in language learning settings. Tutors were left to make assumptions about student motivation, comprehension, and honesty, which is antithetical to the ideals of student-centered learning. These insights are consistent with existing literature highlighting that synchronous video interaction is critical for fostering emotional presence, immediate feedback, and sustained engagement [29], [31]. In the absence of such interaction, not only do tutors face emotional fatigue, but the integrity and depth of instruction itself is placed at risk.

## 4.2 Motivation, Emotional Labor, and Burnout in Online Teaching

One of the most significant yet often overlooked consequences of camera-off behavior in online learning is the emotional strain it places on tutors. Teaching in a synchronous setting without visual feedback not only hampers instructional delivery but also burdens tutors with emotional labor. The lack of facial expressions and real-time engagement prevents tutors from accurately gauging student understanding or enthusiasm, which are essential for maintaining instructional motivation.

Interestingly, some tutors reported that even repeated attempts to interact were met with silence. As Miss R shared, "I said good evening, no one answered. As Miss R noted, "*Aku tanya good evening, nggak ada yang jawab, aku tanya hello, diem semua… semuanya turn off. Dan itu bikin aku sedikit emotional."*

("I said good evening, no one answered, I said hello, silence... everyone turned off their cameras. It made me a little emotional."). Such silence leads to emotional fatigue and a sense of disconnection, particularly when sessions are repeatedly marked by passive responses. This mirrors what has been described in literature as instructional solitude, a state of emotional isolation experienced by educators in virtual settings[35].

The emotional toll was compounded when tutors had to exert extra effort to elicit minimal response. Miss R added, "*Apalagi bagi kita yang seharian sudah full… harus berhadapan dengan yah orang-orang yang seperti itu bener-bener drain energy.*" ("Especially for those of us who've had a full day… facing students like that really drains your energy.") Previous research has shown that tutor burnout increased significantly during remote instruction due to limited student engagement and emotional reciprocity [5], [35], [8].

The problem is further exacerbated when students disengage despite well-prepared interactive lessons. Miss D emphasized, "*Aku udah nyiapin aktivitas biar mereka aktif, tapi tetep aja dingin suasananya."* ("I had already prepared activities to get them active, but the atmosphere remained cold nonetheless"). This suggests that external instructional strategies are not always sufficient to overcome the emotional detachment created by camera-off settings.

From a motivational theory perspective, intrinsic drive is typically sustained by a sense of relatedness and positive feedback—factors that are weakened when tutors are unable to observe student reactions [36]. Without visual interaction, tutors are deprived of the social cues and affirmations necessary for maintaining engagement and self-efficacy. These findings also reflect the understanding that effective TSI includes emotional and relational aspects in addition to cognitive ones [22]. When students become invisible, this relational component collapses, leaving tutors emotionally exhausted and pedagogically uncertain.

In summary, camera-off culture in online English classes does not merely reflect passive learning behavior but imposes a continuous emotional burden on educators. The accumulation of silence, isolation, and lack of reciprocity contributes to motivational decline and potential burnout [8]. Therefore, institutional awareness and support systems must address the emotional well-being of online tutors—especially those working in non-formal or freelance teaching environments.

## 4.3 Student Motivation and Confidence in Camera-Off Participation

The findings suggest that camera-off behavior is deeply intertwined with students' intrinsic motivation and self-confidence. Rather than being solely a technical or privacy concern [29], the act of turning off one's camera often reflects students' psychological and emotional states—particularly in teenage learners. As confirmed by all tutors, students with high self-confidence and genuine motivation tend to participate actively regardless of camera status, while others withdraw when feeling insecure, anxious, or disinterested.

According to Ms R., "*Karena kalau misalkan ada anak-anak yang memang mereka punya confidence di atas yang lain, itu tanpa diminta mereka sudah langsung turn on [kamera] dan langsung bilang '*Hi Miss, I miss you.*'*" ("Students with more confidence often turn on their cameras on their own and enthusiastically greet the tutor.") This observation is consistent with the understanding that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are foundational psychological needs that shape internal motivation and social presence, even in virtual contexts [36].

Conversely, students with lower confidence may resort to silence and camera-off as protective behaviors. Tutor N mentioned that some students likely feared being seen in casual or unprepared appearances at night, especially in mixed-gender classes. In her words, *"Mereka ingin terlihat perfect, sedangkan kelas malam, mereka pakai piyama… itu mungkin bikin mereka malu*." ("They want to look perfect, but at night they're in pajamas… so maybe they feel embarrassed.") Such behaviors suggest that camera-off culture, particularly among teenagers, cannot be reduced to laziness or disobedience. Instead, it reflects deeper identity concerns and self-image anxieties, which are common during adolescence. Students may be navigating social comparison and self-consciousness in online settings just as they would in physical classrooms, though with fewer tools for reassurance or validation [33].

Moreover, some students may simply lack the internal drive to participate because their enrollment is not self-initiated [37]. Several tutors, including Miss N. and Miss D., observed that some learners joined the program due to parental pressure rather than personal interest. This extrinsic motivation weakens engagement and further explains passive behaviors in class.

In language classes—particularly speaking-focused ones—confidence plays an even more crucial role. Tutors highlighted that students are often afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation or grammar. This fear is amplified in video-based learning environments, where speaking up may feel more intimidating. Some tutors also observed that students over-relied on translation tools or AI to avoid constructing sentences

themselves, possibly due to low self-esteem or language anxiety. This supports findings that high anxiety levels in online speaking tasks often result in students avoiding spontaneous interaction [23], [38].

## 4.4 Learning Quality and Academic Integrity in Camera-Off Environments

Camera-off behavior in online classes raises serious concerns about academic integrity and learning depth. The use of video, audio, and chat tools enhances social presence and engagement—elements that become compromised when students turn off their cameras [34]. Tutors in this study noted that it was harder to verify active participation and comprehension, especially in speaking-focused lessons. Miss R recounted students reciting advanced words like “synchronize” without understanding or proper pronunciation, suggesting reliance on AI-generated or translated scripts.

This reflects earlier concerns that overdependence on digital tools leads to superficial engagement and misrepresented performance [26]. Without visual cues, tutors cannot detect hesitation, confusion, or dishonesty, making meaningful feedback difficult. Mr T. described it as “talking to a wall,” signalling the absence of reciprocal interaction. The result is a one-directional classroom where instructional pacing and personalization suffer [8].

TDT shows that learning gaps are not just spatial but also emotional and cognitive [10]. Camera-off behavior widens these gaps and reduces tutors' ability to adapt instruction. This condition undermines the responsive communication essential for classroom effectiveness [22], shifting tutors’ focus from deeper thinking tasks to coaxing minimal student reactions.

Moreover, the growing presence of AI tools like ChatGPT further complicates the issue. While helpful for exploring vocabulary and structure, these tools risk replacing genuine cognitive involvement. As Wang and Liu [38] caution, educators must teach digital responsibility and promote metacognitive awareness when integrating AI in language education.

## 4.5 Institutional Constraints in Non-Formal Settings

Institutional policies play a critical role in shaping student engagement, particularly in non-formal educational settings where enforcement mechanisms are limited [39], [40]. Unlike formal educational institutions, non-formal language courses like Bahasaku Inggris typically operate with greater flexibility and fewer disciplinary tools, emphasizing customer satisfaction over strict academic regulation [41]. Several tutors in this study acknowledged that the lack of academic stakes—such as final exams, graduation requirements, or certificate utility—reduced student motivation to engage seriously in class. As a result, rules such as mandatory camera usage were often ignored or treated casually, especially when not reinforced by institutional policy. This explains why some tutors reported that even when agreements were made (e.g., “if your camera is off, you are marked absent”), students returned to old habits the next day.

This institutional weakness also limits tutors' ability to enforce consequences. As noted by some tutors., the flexibility of freelance teaching contracts and the informal structure of the institution mean that tutors are often left to manage classroom discipline independently. This decentralization can lead to inconsistent standards across classes and undermines tutor authority. Learning structures are essential for maintaining student engagement and responsibility in remote learning classroom. When such structures are weak—as in non-formal institutions—learners tend to disengage, especially in the absence of tangible academic consequences [32].

Furthermore, non-formal settings often serve mixed-age groups and flexible schedules, which adds to the complexity. For instance, a class might include both middle-school students and senior high students with different levels of maturity and digital literacy. This diversity necessitates highly adaptive teaching strategies but is rarely supported by systematic training or professional development within non-formal institutions.

In short, the institutional context not only affects how students behave in class but also how much authority tutors can exercise in managing classroom engagement and enforcing rules. Strengthening policy enforcement, improving tutor support systems, and developing clearer guidelines for online conduct are essential steps to mitigate the effects of camera-off culture in such environments.

This flexibility results in minimal institutional support for tutors enforcing class rules, including mandatory camera usage, making student compliance difficult to maintain. These institutional constraints shift responsibility onto tutors, forcing them to individually manage classroom engagement with limited backing from organizational policies. Tutors expressed caution in enforcing rules strongly, fearing potential student dropout or complaints. Miss R remarked, "*Kalau ditegur keras, kadang mereka keluar kelas (*zoom*)... jadi kita mikir dua kali untuk menegur.*" ("If we reprimand them too strongly, they sometimes leave the class... so we have to think twice before doing so.") This reflects broader research highlighting reduced learner accountability in flexible educational environments [29].

## 4.6 Implications and Future Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal multiple pedagogical, emotional, and institutional challenges that tutors face in synchronous online classrooms dominated by camera-off behavior. These challenges are especially pronounced in non-formal learning environments where institutional support is minimal, and tutor authority is limited. Based on the data collected, several implications and recommendations can be drawn to enhance the quality of TSI and improve engagement in online settings.

1. Class Size Optimization

   Several tutors emphasized that class size strongly affects the effectiveness of interaction. Oversized classes, especially when cameras are off, make it harder for tutors to address individual needs, monitor comprehension, or encourage participation. Thus, limiting class sizes in synchronous sessions is recommended to maintain effective engagement.

2. Structured Orientation and Digital Etiquette Guidelines

   Many tutors believed that students—especially teenagers—lack awareness about online classroom etiquette. Introducing structured orientations at the start of the course that outline expectations, including the use of cameras, participation rules, and respectful behavior, can create a more predictable and respectful online environment. As few tutors noted, "*Kadang mereka Cuma ikut-ikutan temannya aja, kalo satu matiin kamera, yang lain ikut juga."* ("Sometimes they just follow what others do—if one turns off the camera, others will follow.")

3. Regular Emotional Check-ins and Personal Approaches

   Given the psychological gap induced by camera-off behaviors, tutors recommended incorporating emotional check-ins and informal language to build rapport, which suggests that reducing emotional distance can bridge communication gaps.

4. Institutional Policy Reinforcement and Training

   To overcome inconsistency, institutions must take a more active role in supporting tutors. This includes setting enforceable camera-on policies, offering training on managing silent classes, and providing emotional resilience workshops.

5. Ethical Use of AI in Language Classes

   Given the emergence of cheating through AI-generated speech or written answers, institutions and tutors should define ethical guidelines around technology use. While tools like Google Translate or ChatGPT can aid vocabulary discovery, their misuse for composing full responses undermines language acquisition. Ensuring authentic learning requires balancing digital literacy with academic integrity standards, as emphasized by earlier research on AI use in education [26], [42].

# 5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of camera-off behavior affect TSI in online English classroom, and the strategies that tutors employ to manage this behavior. In conclusion to the first research question, this study finds that camera-off behavior significantly affects TSI by increasing psychological distance, reducing spontaneity, and weakening both emotional and instructional connection. The diminishing TSI affirms the perspective that reciprocal communication is essential for effective pedagogy and becomes compromised in settings marked by one-way delivery [43].

Regarding to the second research question, tutors reported employing adaptive strategies such as using personal greetings, verbal prompting, flexible policies and emotional check-ins to maintain student engagement. While not all strategies proved effective across contexts, their use demonstrates the tutors' resilience and commitment to maintaining a supportive learning atmosphere. Such adaptive teaching practices mirror pedagogical models that highlight the value of emotional awareness and flexible instruction in online education [32].

Pedagogically, this study highlights the importance of empowering tutors with emotional and technical support, clarifying camera-use expectations, and incorporating student-friendly strategies to build trust and increase participation. Tutors need space to negotiate camera use while promoting active engagement through structured interaction and responsible digital practices. Institutions, in turn, must reinforce policy alignment, provide training, and build supportive ecosystems that acknowledge the emotional labor of online teaching. Future research is recommended to further explore collaborative solutions that involve both student and teacher voices in designing equitable online learning environments. However, the non-formal setting limited the enforcement of these strategies, reinforcing the need for stronger institutional support.

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