

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Dimas Aditya A. Hanafie¹, Chairil Anwar Korompot^{2*}, Muh. Tahir³

^{1,2,3}English Department, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

E-mail: dimas98aditya98@gmail.com, cakorompot@unm.ac.id, muh.tahir@unm.ac.id

*corresponding author

Abstract

This research was a qualitative study using a case study approach. It aimed to find out: (1) the strategies used by the English department students in online learning; and (2) the students' reasons for choosing the learning strategies in online learning. The instruments used were a questionnaire and an interview. A purposive sampling method was employed to select the participants, and 52 participants were chosen for this study. The results show that most students employ the same strategies for the environment-structuring aspect, as they always make sure that the conditions in which they are having an online lecture are conducive and comfortable enough to support their learning. From the result of the interview, the reasons the students use the strategies for each aspect are that (1) setting goals motivates students to learn and can be guidance in achieving good academic results; (2) a conducive learning environment supports online learning; (3) well-prepared students readiness in learning; (4) managing time is needed due to a lack of time in online classes; (5) seeking help to get a deeper understanding of the materials or instructions; and (6) evaluation helps to find out students lacks and needs in online learning.

Keywords — Online, learning strategies, English Department Students.

INTRODUCTION

E-learning has replaced traditional classroom instruction in the vast majority of colleges and universities across the globe as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is particularly true for English language instruction, which was traditionally taught in classrooms (Mahyoob, 2020). The majority of educational institutions have shifted to this strategy in this time of crisis, which has allowed online learning to emerge rapidly. Students participating in online education are presented with a number of different options from which to select. During the time that the Corona Virus was spreading, many different possibilities became available, including online education, working from home, and electronic collaborations (Favale et al., 2020).

Carrying out online learning gives some challenges to both lecturers or teachers and students. The most significant obstacles that EFL students face in their online studies are technical issues. It addresses issues with maintaining a connection to the internet, gaining access to classes, and obtaining the necessary resources for lessons. Because of difficulties with linguistic communication, students were unable to connect productively with their teachers during virtual classes (Mahyoob, 2020). In line with this, a similar problem was pointed out by Nartiningrum & Nugroho (2020), and it was associated with an unstable network, which led to less contact between teachers and students, which in turn generated less comprehension and decreased commitment to learning (Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020).

To deal with difficulties, learners can be actively involved in controlling their learning by using strategy. They complete the task and process the input by employing a variety of language learning strategies, especially in an online environment. Because it determines the successful degree of learning, learning strategy is a good way for students to overcome their obstacles and finish their assignments. Good learners, according to O'Malley, are aware of the learning process and themselves as learners, and they aim to regulate their learning by employing appropriate learning strategies (Liu, 2010).

Self-regulation becomes a key aspect of success in online learning since the atmosphere of online learning is defined by freedom and autonomy (Barnard et al., 2009). Learning independence is also associated with the capacity to manage and organize lesson plans, time, and even learning objectives (Zheng et al., 2020; Zimmerman, 2008). So, students control themselves and learn based on initiative. This process is called self-regulation, which refers to the process of controlling one's own mental, behavioral, and emotional states to perform an action or achieve an outcome (McClelland & Cameron, 2012; Schunk, 2012).

There are distinct differences between self-regulation in traditional and online learning environments (Broadbent et al., 2020). There are a number of self-regulation strategies used in conventional learning, such as time management, effort management, peer learning, elaboration, practice, asking for help, and critical thinking that were discovered in meta-analysis research (Richardson, et al., 2012). But in online learning, skills such as metacognition, time management, effort management, and critical thinking were proven to have a substantial impact on academic performance (Broadbent & Poon, 2015). Zheng et al. (2016) mentioned that there are certain variables that can be perceived through online self-regulated English learning, including students' goal setting, environment structuring, task methods and time

management, help-seeking, and self-evaluation.

The impact of online learning in an EFL context and how it has changed Covid-19 is a crucial investigation to determine the problems, barriers, and recommendations. Unfortunately, there is still a lack of empirical information regarding the strategy used by English department students in dealing with online learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic (Sakkir, 2021). Hence, this paper will elaborate on (1) the strategies used by the English department students in online learning and (2) the students' reasons for choosing the learning strategies.

The learning process in an online environment is different from traditional classroom settings or face-to-face meetings. In online classrooms, students are required to be independent. It encourages students to be more involved in establishing their learning paths, and able to instill a sense of independence in them. According to Brookfield (2000), independent learning is defined as learning that occurs when students determine their learning objectives, select their learning materials, make academic decisions, and carry out activities to accomplish those objectives (Brookfield, 2000). It means that students decide their strategies during learning. Students learn by taking the initiative, which allows them to maintain control over their learning. This process is known as self-regulation. The capacity of pupils to manage themselves, particularly throughout the learning process, is a critical process to consider.

Strategies of Self-regulation in Online Learning

SRL was conceived of by Barnard et al. (2009) as a multifaceted construct with the following six components: environment structuring, goal setting, time management, help-seeking, task strategies, and self-evaluation. In line with this, Zheng et al. (2016) mentioned that there are certain variables that can be perceived through online self-regulated English learning, including students' goal setting, environment structuring, task methods and time management, help-seeking, and self-evaluation.

Goal Setting

When a student finds the exercise valuable, it becomes strategic. Therefore, they take a strategic approach to learning by deciding on the best learning methods to use to raise their learning standards. Planning and goal setting are related procedures that can help students in self-regulation before they begin a learning activity. These methods can assist students in formulating clear objectives and a plan for achieving them. Learning and self-regulation can be

improved by teaching students how to approach academic activities with a strategy in mind. Planning has three stages; setting a goal for a learning task, using appropriate strategies for achieving the goal, and determining how much time and resources will be needed to achieve the goal.

Task Strategies

Students must manage and control their efforts in the classroom when completing academic assignments. Students' ability to work independently can be seen in aspects such as carrying out tasks without being instructed what to do, finishing projects without assistance, and being satisfied with the results. When evaluating a student's ability to be actively engaged in learning, it is important to consider whether or not they ask questions, answer questions from the lecturer, ask for clarification when they don't understand something, and have the confidence to answer friends' questions based on concepts they know.

Time Management

According to Capra (2014), students' performance in online courses was based on their time management skills and their capacity to stay in touch with their teachers. In the time management process, students estimate how long it will take to finish learning tasks, plan study time in the form of schedule, and figure out the order of importance of learning. They also organize subject matter and use different learning strategies to take the right steps to learn.

Help Seeking

Help seeking is an important cognitive skill that contributes to the acquisition of information and learning (Bandura, 1997). Learning to seek help from adults or peers when faced with a problem or needing fresh information is an essential life skill for any student. It incorporates both cognitive and interpersonal growth. As a learning approach and a kind of social engagement, it is an evident characteristic of self-regulated learners. In order to encourage students to request assistance, teachers should foster a collaborative learning environment in the classroom. Learners will be more likely to seek out one other's support and assistance if the classroom climate is welcoming, caring, and pleasant. In contrast, students are less inclined to seek assistance if they are made to feel inadequate or incapable. For this reason, it is critical that students have a feeling of belonging in order to encourage them to seek aid

from others.

Self-Evaluation

When students can assess their own learning progress, they are more likely to become autonomous learners. Self-evaluation is a process that includes self-assessments of current performance as well as self-reactions to these judgments.

METHODS

The design of this research is a qualitative case study. In this research, the researcher focused on describing and explaining strategies that were used by English Students in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, the participants are students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Makassar. A purposive sampling method was employed to select the participants. In choosing the participants, the researcher used purposive sampling with criteria; (1) the students are majoring in English Education study program; (2) the students joined online classroom during pandemic of COVID-19 in 2020. There were 52 participants in this study.

The questionnaire used was the Online Self-Regulated Learning Questionnaire (OSLQ) by Barnard et al., (2009) which consist of 24 statements with 6 subscales: goal setting (item 1 to 5), environment structuring (item 6 to 9), task strategies (item 10 to 13), time management (item 14 to 16), help-seeking (item 17 to 20), and self-evaluation (item 21 to 24). They were measured by using a Likert scale which consists of 5 options. The questionnaire was given via Google Forms to students in the English Department.

The validity of each item in the questionnaire was measured by using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 application and the formula used was Pearson product moment. Based on the result of SPSS, all items in the questionnaire were valid. After measuring the reliability of data, the result shows that the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.874, which was in the category of reliable.

In addition, this research used interviews to support the questionnaire results, especially in answering the second research question. After distributing questionnaires, the researcher interviewed several students by giving them some questions related to learning strategies. The researcher chose a student with the highest score from each subscale to interview as the representation of each subscale.

In this study, the researcher used the technique of data analysis based on Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) which involved three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

In the step of data reduction, Firstly, the researcher collected data through a questionnaire and interview. The researcher then transcribed the data. In transcribing the data of the interview, the researcher put codes for each question and answer so they can be easily found. The irrelevant data that were not related to the research questions were discarded. The irrelevant data was the data with no relation to the theme of the study but related to the research. Next, after collecting and reducing the data, the researcher displayed those data descriptively. In the process of reducing and displaying the data, the researcher will rely on the formulation of the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper elaborates on the results of data analysis which cover two purposes of the research: (1) strategies used by the English department students in online learning during a pandemic and (2) reasons for choosing the strategy.

The following table shows the frequency of English department students who participated in this research based on their gender.

Table 1. Frequency of Respondents Based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	14	26.9
Female	38	73.1

The respondents of this research were dominated by female students. Based on the data of the questionnaire, the respondents consist of 14 (26.9%) male students and 38 (73.1%) female students. The respondents were also categorized based on the semester. The frequency and percentage are described as follows;

Table 2. Frequency of Respondents Based on Semester

Semester	Frequency	Percentage
2	2	3.8
4	28	53.8
6	12	23.1
8	9	17.3

Regarding the semester, respondents were mostly in the 4th semester in English Department. The following data shows that there were 28 students at 4th semester, 12 students at 6th semester, 9 students at 8th semester, and only 2 students at 2nd semester.

1. Strategies used by the English department Students in Online Learning during Pandemic

Learning strategies take roles in manipulating inputs and self-motivation in the process of learning and transforming them into factors that support well-achieved output or learning results (Zheng et al., 2016). In online learning especially, when experiencing pandemic, English department students at Universitas Negeri Makassar did some strategies to maintain their learning achievement. The strategies were described as follow:

Goal-setting

The process of goal setting is when learners decide on particular objectives for a task and make plans to work toward achieving those objectives. The strategies that students did in online learning during pandemic related to goal setting was setting standards for assignments. Although most of them did not always set short term and long-term goals, they always keep the quality of their assignments and task. The students use goal as control in determining their limits in learning, so they can pursue their goal by applying certain activities to be more active and discipline.

Setting learning goal has a considerable impact on self-regulated learning and motivational factors. It can be used for self-guidance and self-regulation, and it will also lead to motivation, self-review, constant improvement, and effort. The students will work hard and pay attention to the goals, which will influence their performances (Chang, et al. 2018).

Environment Structuring

Environment structuring is an activity in which students pay attention to their physical and social surroundings and then arrange and change their surroundings to obtain the intended results (Barnard-Brak et.al, 2010). The data shows that students adjust their environment in order to avoid distractions during online learning.

Most students choose the location where they can access their class with minimal distraction. They also make sure that internet connection stable so they can join online class effectively. It in line with results stated by Nartiningrum & Nugroho (2020) that the majority of

the difficulties that students encountered during online classes were connected to network access. Students in remote places, in particular, reported difficulty in obtaining adequate and reliable signals. (Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020)

Task Strategies

Learners need to be able to plan and strategize in order to accomplish the goals they have set for themselves. This is what is meant by the term task strategies. As students experience online learning, they made preparation before and after online lectures. Some activities they did were taking more thorough notes, reading aloud instructional materials posted online to fight against distractions, and preparing questions before joining in discussion forum. During the online class, students use Google to look for answers and additional references. This helps them also to be actively engaged with the materials and activities conducted in the virtual classroom.

Time Management

Time management is an activity in which students manage their time for studying in order to attain their goals. English department students at State University of Makassar sometimes allocate extra studying time to catch up the materials. They thought that merely relying on the lecture given during online class is not effective.

Even though they don't have to attend daily classes, they still try to distribute their studying time evenly across days. However, several students admitted that they were struggling in managing their time since they have lots activities in their home. So, they only be active during the schedule of virtual meeting, and arrange intense schedule some days before test.

Help-seeking

Help seeking activities include activities in which students can search and learn information from learning resources. Learning resources include not just learning devices, but also others such as classmates or teachers. English department students dominantly seek for help to more knowledgeable ones such as friends, or from external sources such as internet. However, they hardly ever consult with their lecturers.

It appears that one effective educational strategy for students in English department is to ask for assistance from their peers, rather than relying on lecturers' assistance. It is in line with

Qayyum (2018) findings that students prefer to seek help from classmates rather than instructors. This was presumably due to the high number of classes that students in each program took together and it causes their relationship is closer since they spent a lot of time with one another outside of the classroom. (Qayyum, 2018).

Self-evaluation

The frequency of self-evaluation for English department students was on scale 3, in which they “sometimes” evaluate themselves during online learning. Meanwhile self-evaluation skill impacts their success and satisfaction in an online learning environment (Inan, et al., 2017). To evaluate their learning, they sometimes took note and monitored their improvements.

Other strategies that students did related to self-evaluation aspect is to review materials after joining online classroom. They try to gain more information from other sources outside lecturer explanation.

2. Students’ Reasons of Choosing Strategies in Online Learning at English Department during Pandemic

Goal-setting can be guidance in achieving good academic results and motivate students to learn. Students think that goal setting is important because setting goal in online learning can give them motivation and boost their interest. When students have a greater amount of motivation, they are more likely to be encouraged to achieve their goals because their motivation will have specific objectives. This will result in increased levels of learning achievement. Motivation is indeed an important factor in the success of learning that students carry out (Bakar, 2014).

Students also considers that without setting goal, there would be a decrease in their learning performance. Since motivation appears when there are goals that need to be achieved, students feel that they will give more effort to find solutions for their problems in order to fulfill their aims. Another reason for setting goal is that goal-setting becomes the guide for students’ learning activities. It can be used to control their learning and encourage them to be more discipline during online learning.

Conducive learning environment supports online learning

Most students engaged in environmental structuring activities because they were aware that a relaxing environment was important to their online learning. The certain environment should be created to meet appropriate condition that supports their learning. They should be in a good condition, physically and emotionally.

Students had the most trouble overcoming challenges associated with their learning environments, including those that occurred at home (such noise) and those that restricted their access to adequate learning space and facilities (Barrot et al., 2021). Hence, they optimized their environment by choosing place and time to study in comfortable ways.

Conducive learning environment also make students focus on studying. They can gain more understanding during lecture when they focus and with less distraction.

Task strategies in online learning can be seen in how students prepare themselves to join online class. Some students are aware that preparation before learning is helpful for them although the rate for task-strategies is in “sometimes” category, which does not show that students were actively implement task strategies during online learning. They consider that preparation help them minimize problems and make them ready to gain knowledge

Managing time is needed due to lack of time in online class

Students need to manage their time since they feel that online class duration is limited. So, they manage their study time outside online class to maximize their learning. Other student stated that they can list activities they can do and be consistent in doing them. It is true that managing time can maximize students’ learning. It is also stated by Uzir et al (2020) that various time management and learning tactics promote effective learning strategies, and improve self-regulation and academic performance (Uzir, et al., 2020).

Hamzah et al. (2014); Aeni et al., (2023) also agreed that students who are able to better manage their time will see an improvement in their overall academic achievement (Hamzah et al., 2014). Students, as part of the process of time management, determine the order of priority in learning, arrange study time in the form of a timetable, and estimate the amount of time it will take to complete various learning tasks. In addition to this, they organize the material and make use of a variety of instructional methods in order to acquire knowledge in the most efficient actions.

Seeking help in order to get deeper understanding about the materials or instructions from lecturer. In order to have a meaningful learning process that improves knowledge development and displays an active involvement in the learning process, it is essential to seek for help or assistance (Mahasneh, et al 2012). Students seek help in order to get deeper understanding about the materials that they learned in online class.

Most students mentioned the reason why they prefer consulting with friends than lecturers because their friends are more reachable. It is easier for them to contact their friends. While for lecturers, students assume that most lecturers are less available and they do not want to get in trouble by seeking help from them.

Though seeking help from friends or peers is preferable, few students still admit that consulting with lecturers when facing difficulty in online learning is more effective. They think the lecturer is clearer in giving directions. Although sometimes the lecturer is slow to reply to the chat, the answers given can solve the problem since lecturers have more valid information, they know and understand better.

Evaluation helps to find out students' lacks and needs in online learning

Students become self-regulated learners when they are able to evaluate their own learning. Though most students do not always evaluate their learning, some of them realize that evaluation can help them find their lacks and needs in online learning. It is in line with Al-Mwzaiji and Alzubi (2022) who emphasized that learners who intentionally self-evaluate themselves are more likely to recognize their mistakes and the reasons for committing them. They can also observe their EFL learning competence and check their progress (Al-Mwzaiji & Alzubi, 2022)

Finding their lacks and needs will eventually lead them to improvement in learning. They can be better prepared in learning when they know what weaknesses they should minimize and what strengths they have during online lectures

CONCLUSIONS

This article has brought to light two primary aspects that are connected to the strategies that students in the English department at the State University of Makassar employ. According to the findings of this study, students used a variety of strategies to cope with online learning while the Covid-19 Pandemic was in effect. Goal planning, environment structuring, task strategies, time management, seeking help, and self-evaluation are some of the strategies that

fall under this category. The results of the analysis of the data show that the majority of students use the same strategies for the environment structuring aspect. For example, they always make sure that the environment in which they are having online lectures is conducive to their learning and comfortable enough to support it.

In the future, some instructional design guidelines may assist students in avoiding problems and engaging in deep learning in online class. To encourage students' participation in online learning, lecturers might provide guidance and instructions on how to properly integrate online materials to assist classroom activities. Lecturers might train students on time management and assignment completion, as well as assist them in taking charge of their learning and independently becoming self-regulated learners.

This work can serve as a reference for scholars in the future who are interested in adapting and developing strategies for online learning. The next researcher may attempt to carry out this research in a variety of skill-related areas, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They are also able to design the material based on metacognitive strategies and conduct the experiment and research within the different classroom settings.

REFERENCES

- Aeni, N., Saud, S., Yunus, M., & Strid, J. E. (2023). Interest of the Students in the Lecturer's Teaching Performance in the Hybrid Classroom. *Eralingua: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Asing dan Sastra V*, 7(1), 149-161.
- Al-Mwzaiji, K. N. A., Alzubi, A. A. F. (2022). Online self-evaluation: the EFL writing skills in focus. *Asian. J. Second. Foreign. Lang. Educ.* 7, 7 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-022-00135-8>
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W H Freeman/Times Books/ Henry Holt & Co.
- Barnard, L., Lan, W. Y., To, Y. M., Paton, V. O., & Lai, S. L. (2009). Measuring self-regulation in online and blended learning environments. *Internet and Higher Education*, 12(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2008.10.005>
- Broadbent, J., & Poon, W. (2015). Self-regulated learning strategies & academic achievement in online higher education learning environments: A systematic review. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 27, 1–13. doi: 10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.04.007
- Broadbent, J., Panadero, E., Lodge, J. M., & Barba, P. de. (2020). Technologies to Enhance Self-Regulated Learning in Online and Computer-Mediated Learning Environments. In S. V. Bishop M.J., Boling E., Elen J. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Educational Communications and Technology* (1st ed., pp. 37–52). Springer. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36119-8_3
- Brookfield, S. D. (2000). Education and self-directed learning. In: Matheson, C.; Matheson, D., eds. *Educational issues in the learning age*. New York, NY: Continuum.

- Capra, T. (2014). A Consideration of Online Learning. *Thought & Action*, 2014(1), from <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/152612/>
- Favale, T., Soro, F., Trevisan, M., Drago, I., & Mellia, M. (2020). Campus traffic and e-Learning during COVID-19 pandemic. *Computer Networks*, 176. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comnet.2020.107290>
- Hamzah, A., Lucky, E & Joarder, M. (2014). Time Management, External Motivation, and Students' Academic Performance: Evidence from a Malaysian Public University. *Asian Social Science*. 10. 10.5539/ass.v10n13p55.
- Liu, J. (2010). Language Learning Strategies and Its Training Model. www.ccsenet.org/ies
- Mahyoob, M. (2020). Challenges of e-Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic Experienced by EFL Learners. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(4), 351–362. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no4.23>
- McClelland, M. M., & Cameron, C. E. (2012). Self - regulation in early childhood: Improving conceptual clarity and developing ecologically valid measures. *Child Development Perspectives*, 6(2), 136 – 142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2011.00191.x>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis, A. Methods Sourcebook*.
- Musri S, A., Muliati, A., & Sakkir, G. (2022). THE UTILIZATION OF PRESENTATION ACTIVITIES IN ONLINE SPEAKING CLASS. *Journal of Technology in Language Pedagogy (JTechLP)*, 1(2).
- Nartiningrum, N., & Nugroho, A. (2020). Online Learning amidst Global Pandemic: EFL Students' Challenges, Suggestions, and Needed Materials. *ENGLISH FRANCA : Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, 4(2), 115. <https://doi.org/10.29240/ef.v4i2.1494>
- Sakkir, G., Dollah, S., & Ahmad, J. (2021). E-learning in covid-19 situation: Students' perception. *EduLine: Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 1(1), 9-15.
- Schunk, D. H. (2012). *Learning Theories: An Educational Perspectives*, 6th. Edition. New York: Pearson Education Inc.
- Uzir, A., Nora'Ayu & Gasevic, Dragan & Jovanovic, Jelena & Matcha, Wannisa & Lim, Lisa & Fudge, Anthea. (2020). Analytics of time management and learning strategies for effective online learning in blended environments. 392-401. 10.1145/3375462.3375493.
- Zheng, L., Li, X., & Chen, F. (2016). Effects of a mobile self-regulated learning approach on students' learning achievements and self-regulated learning skills. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 55(6), 616–624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2016.1259080>
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2008). Investigating Self-Regulation and Motivation: Historical Background, Methodological Developments, and Future Prospects. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(1), 166–183. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831207312909>