

# Self-Regulation in Online Interactions: A Comprehensive Study of Indonesian Tertiary EFL Students and Course Content Amid the Post-Pandemic Era

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## ABSTRACT

The transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges in Indonesia, particularly due to limited facilities and the struggle of students to adapt to independent learning modalities. This study investigates the online learning experiences of students in the English Education Study Program at the University of South Sumatra, with three specific objectives: 1) to assess how students managed their online interactions with learning materials, 2) to identify the challenges faced in these interactions, and 3) to propose solutions to overcome these challenges. Data were collected from a sample of 12 students, four from each of the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters, with GPAs between 3.51 and 4.00. A questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and disseminated through a WhatsApp group. Findings indicate that despite being well-prepared and organized, students actively sought to resolve issues they encountered, through methods such as conducting experiments and completing both guided and independent tasks. This study offers insights that may help educators develop strategies to promote self-regulated learning among students.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the fabric of human interaction underwent a profound transformation, with a universal pivot to digital engagements to adhere to bans on physical gatherings. Concurrently, governments worldwide enacted social distancing protocols aimed at curtailing the spread of the virus. This preventive measure involves maintaining a safe physical distance and avoiding crowded environments, proven strategies to thwart virus transmission (Christin et al., 2021). The impact of these measures was felt globally, reflecting a universal struggle against the pandemic. The emergence of the Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19, sent shockwaves through the international community. The World Health Organization describes COVID-19 as a deadly infectious disease triggered by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which targets the immune system and significantly heightens mortality risks (Khan & Naushad, 2020).

In the realm of education, which traditionally embraced face-to-face interactions, a significant transformation has been necessitated by the pandemic, prompting a shift to online learning platforms that harness the power of internet technology. Historically, a plethora of learning models existed that significantly deepened students' educational experiences. Among these, the constructivism theory stands out, proposing that students actively construct knowledge through their interactions within the classroom. This theory sheds light on the ways students might inadvertently develop misconceptions and underscores the vital role of educators in facilitating a more accurate knowledge acquisition tailored to specific subjects. Traditionally, learning was imbued with a sense of personal responsibility, enriched by motivational activities such as discussions, experiments, and other innovative educational models that made learning a joyous and engaging experience for students (Nuryani, 2015). With the onset of the pandemic, however, there has been a compelling pivot to online learning methodologies.

Online learning was the possible learning option in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic situation. Educators and students are not familiar with this online learning process. Online learning is often synonymous with other terms such as e-learning, internet learning, web-based learning, tele-learning, distributed learning, and so on (Pujiasih, 2020). Educators must convey material well, and students must understand what educators convey during the online learning process. According to Sun and Chen (Irmada & Yatri, 2021) there are requirements needed for online learning to run properly, namely: (1) a good class concept or form of online learning; (2) well-established interaction or communication between educators and students; and (3) technological developments.

There are numerous universities in Indonesia, including those in South Sumatra. It is crucial to articulate a narrative that clarifies the terms "reputation" and "representation" in a research context. Sriwijaya University, a notable state university in Indonesia, saw its English Education Study program significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition to online learning has offered considerable advantages to educators. They can now upload materials, assignments, and instructions more easily and flexibly at any time and from any location, using e-learning platforms. Furthermore, asynchronous learning enables educators to distribute learning materials and provide guidance on their application, thereby fostering greater independence among students in managing their studies. Consequently, self-regulation in learning has become increasingly vital. Self-regulation, or self-managed learning, involves a learner's ability to set educational goals and subsequently monitor, adjust, and control their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral strategies to align with these goals and the environmental context (Greene, 2017).

According to Cho & Cho (2017a), three types of interactions—student with content, student with teacher, and student with student—shape students' learning experiences in online settings. This study primarily explores the interaction between students and content. In this type of interaction, students exercise self-regulation by taking responsibility for comprehending their learning material and directing their learning process (Cho & Cho, 2017b). Online learning offers benefits such as flexibility and the opportunity to utilize various technological resources. However, the relatively new implementation of online learning in Indonesia presents challenges. Students face difficulties due to their lack of independence, unsuitable home learning environments, and low internal motivation. Successful online learning demands concentration, time, and a robust commitment (Yang et al., 2018). A preliminary survey by Helsa & Lidiawati (2021) found that more than 50% of 215 students in Indonesia experienced internet connectivity issues. Historically reliant on traditional face-to-face instruction, the shift to online learning in Indonesia has been challenging and requires significant effort to ensure optimal learning during the pandemic.

Other obstacles that arise are lecture facilities and infrastructure, such as problematic computers, learning methods that are considered boring, and the condition of the home environment that is not conducive. Various obstacles experienced by students have an impact on their learning performance. Students feel a lack of interaction with lecturers during learning so the material cannot be understood properly. Students also feel bored and are often not focused during the learning process, especially when the learning method is less interactive (Kahfi, 2020). This makes them more interested in other

activities such as playing with gadgets or doing assignments for other courses. The emergence of the situations above indicates a problem of student involvement in online learning. Online learning situations do not allow lecturers and students to meet physically, and make students less opportunity to interact, collaborate, give and receive feedback, and social support. Coupled with inadequate facilities and infrastructure (Helsa & Lidiawati, 2021).

Bolliger and Hallupa, as cited in Yilmaz & Banyard (2020), noted that involving students in online learning environments became more challenging due to the physical separation from educators and peers. It can be concluded that limited facilities and infrastructure, as well as reduced opportunities for physical interaction, complicate the learning process, particularly in terms of student engagement. Moreover, this engagement impacts the achievement of learning objectives and may lead to decreased academic performance. Therefore, effective strategies and robust self-regulation are essential for students to continue their studies at home despite the constraints imposed by online learning. This underscores the significant influence of self-regulated learning on student participation in the online learning process during the pandemic. This study aims to investigate how students regulate their online learning, specifically their interactions with material or content.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a narrative study design based on qualitative research methods. Narrative research, a mode of inquiry, is utilized by scholars from various disciplines, including anthropology, communication studies, cultural studies, economics, education, history, linguistics, medicine, nursing, psychology, social work, and sociology. In essence, researchers describe individuals' lives, collect and recount stories about people's lives, and write narratives of individual experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The sample for this study comprised 12 students from the English Education Study program at the University of South Sumatra, represented by 4 students from each of the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters, each with a cumulative GPA ranging from 3.51 to 4.00. Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire that focused on the interaction between students and content. The questionnaire was formatted, converted into a Google Form, and distributed to the sample via a WhatsApp group.

The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves searching across a dataset to identify, analyze, and report patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method not only describes data but also includes interpretation through the processes of selecting codes and constructing themes. Thematic analysis is notable for its flexibility, applicable within a broad range of theoretical and epistemological frameworks, and can be used for various study questions, designs, and sample sizes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun & Clarke (2006), there are six steps to follow in order to analyze the data using thematic analysis: (1) Familiarizing yourself with the data, (2) Generating initial codes, (3) Searching for themes, (4) Reviewing themes, (5) Defining and naming themes, and (6) Producing the report/manuscript.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings were organized according to the sequence in which the data were collected. One instrument was used for data collection, and three research questions were asked. Each question was addressed using the results from the questionnaire. All three problems were explored using this single instrument. The researcher distributed a questionnaire, developed by Cho & Cho (2017b), to twelve students. This questionnaire aimed to gather insights into the students' learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and their responses to the stated research questions. The results indicated that the students were well-prepared and effectively regulated their online learning. Furthermore, they demonstrated significant curiosity about the challenges they encountered. Student behaviors that reflect these findings include conducting experiments, completing guided or independent tasks, and solving problems.

### 3.1 Having a good preparation

Pressure as a student to study successfully during the covid-19 pandemic such as assignments, difficult study materials and also interactions with the material being taught. Effective self-regulation is also the cornerstone of healthy psychological functioning. Success Individuals in self-regulation or preparing for learning can be beneficial for psychological stability as well as greater self-control enable them to manage their perceptions of themselves (Hoyle et al., 2010). Before taking the online class, it was necessary to prepare several things. Aiming for online lectures to run smoothly even in the midst of COVID-19.

*I check the learning materials and assignment through E-Learning UNSRI. (Students A1)*

*I always check RPS to know what topic that I am going to learn. When I have known the topic, I do a search on internet about the topic. So that I can at least know the outline of that topic. Besides that I also often check assignments especially in university website to make sure I do not submit my assignments late. (Students B3)*

*For me, I checked for the learning materials/contents because the materials would be the topic of presentation. (Students C1)*

### 3.2 High enthusiasm for online learning

Sit in a comfortable place, have a pen and notebook ready, record lessons, and try to minimize other distractions. Take the time to look at the schedule and create a study schedule to ensure students are ready to attend all lectures online. Did some relevant reading beforehand and ask questions if there's something you're not sure about. The importance of direct involvement in learning was stated by John Dewey (1989) with his "learning by doing". Learning should be experienced through direct action. Learning must be done by students actively, both individually and in groups, by solving problems. This statement absolutely demanded the direct involvement of every student in learning and learning activities.

*I try to keep my attention during the class, I am a type of person who need a full concentration during the lecturer's explanation so that I won't miss any point. Before the class, I usually review the material that will be presented by the lecturers, or during the class, I will find out some relatable sources in the internet to help me understand the material. (Student A1)*

*I am trying to maximize my studying time by listening to the lecture or reading the material thoroughly in asynchronous learning. I also try to enhance my understanding by listening or reading from other sources. (Student A4)*

*I listen to my lecturer or the presenter properly and try to reduce distractions. I maximize my time in online meetings to understand the content. Sometimes, I also read the learning materials before and after class. (Student B2)*

*I always listen to my friends' presentations and the lecturer's explanations about the subject matter, even I often record the lecturer's explanations so I can listen to them again when the class is over. (Student B3)*

*I think for me. Listening to the lecturer's explanation during the online meeting is the key to understanding the course material because when you listen to them*

*carefully you will realize the amount of useful information they uttered. (Student C1)*

*Focus on the lecture, and if there's something missed, I will search for it on the internet or ask my friend to re-tell me. (Student C4)*

### **3.3 Always did their best and pray**

Learning is essential for students, not only as a duty but as an opportunity to discover various forms of previously unknown knowledge. It is the role of the student to engage actively with the material presented by educators. According to Davies (as cited in Dimiyati, 2010, p. 53), students benefit significantly from immediate reinforcement of each learning step. This need for feedback, which bolsters every action, stems from an awareness of its benefits. Effective reinforcement can manifest in various behaviors, including diligent study habits and a commitment to consistently giving one's best effort.

*By studying hard and doing it with all my might and of course, praying to God (Student A2)*

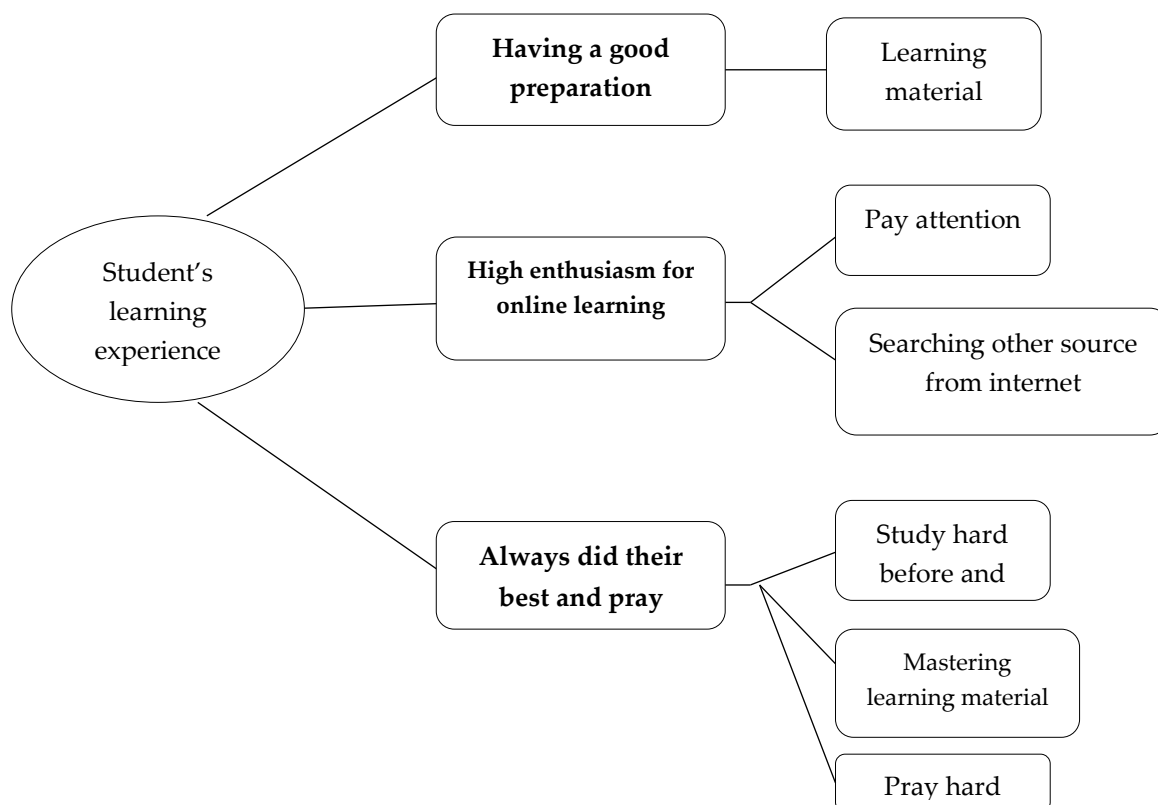
*Do all that I need, read the material repeatedly, and ask my friend or the lecturer. (Student A3)*

*I maximize my time in online meetings to understand the content. Sometimes, I also read the learning materials before and after class. (Student B2)*

*Try to understand it individually and search the help in the world of the internet can done first, before we discuss it together. (Student B4)*

*Learn as best as I can and try to not be afraid to ask for help or ask questions to others. Sometimes discussing with peers could help in mastering the learning content. (Student C2)*

Based on the answer result from the informant, the researcher classified into the figure below.



**Figure 1.** Data Classification (Source: The Researcher)

Based on the aforementioned data classification, it is evident that self-regulated learning embodies an autonomous educational process, enhancing various student behaviors, including note-taking during lectures, completing assignments, and devising personal schedules. Such proactive attitudes significantly propel students toward consistent engagement in daily educational activities (Hong et al., 2021). This aligns with Hedeshi's (2017) findings, which affirm that the adoption of self-regulation strategies markedly boosts students' evaluations of their own assignments. The concept of 'task value' pertains to students' perceptions of the significance, relevance, and utility of educational materials. Students adept in self-regulated learning are more apt at making informed choices that elevate their assignment evaluations (Hedeshi, 2017).

In this context, students' perception of material relevance and utility also suggests a deep emotional engagement with the content. Moreover, the shift to online learning environments for EFL students significantly transforms the educational framework. Traditional pedagogies, predominantly teacher-centered, are increasingly giving way to a student-centric approach. This pivot not only places students at the heart of the learning process but is also poised to enhance their material absorption efficiency. In the realm of online education, students are compelled to adapt and implement robust self-regulation strategies to navigate the new learning modalities effectively. Self-regulation thus emerges as a critical skill, enabling students to flexibly plan, guide, and monitor their behaviors amidst evolving circumstances (Harahap, 2020).

Additionally, the study suggests that engaging in prayer prior to studying not only fosters confidence and sincerity in learners but also mitigates study-related hesitations. For students confronting examination anxieties in specific subjects, such practices can alleviate fears and bolster their performance readiness.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, it is evident that self-regulation significantly influences the adaptation of students in the class of 2021 to distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study reveals that students who excel in self-regulated learning tend to achieve higher GPA scores. Thus, self-regulated learning plays a crucial role in navigating the challenges of distance education during this extended pandemic period. Students who effectively manage their online learning exhibit robust preparation and a keen curiosity in addressing academic challenges. This proactive behavior is manifested in activities such as conducting experiments, completing both guided and independent tasks, and solving problems. In summary, self-regulated learning is critical for students in the English Education program at the University of South Sumatra.

This research should serve as a valuable reference for educators, encouraging them to develop strategies to enhance self-regulation among students, particularly in a distance learning context. By adopting proactive learning practices, students are more likely to achieve optimal academic outcomes. The recommendations from this study are primarily directed at the Education Authority, English lecturers, and future researchers interested in this field. The Education Office is urged to provide more comprehensive guidance to lecturers on integrating self-regulation into their teaching. This can be achieved through additional workshops and seminars focused on effective self-regulation strategies and their application in English courses. Moreover, it is advisable for the Education Office to develop a manual on implementing self-regulatory practices to assist students in achieving academic success. Additionally, universities should support lecturers in expanding their understanding of self-regulation through ongoing education and evaluations of its implementation in both online and offline environments. English lecturers, specifically, should seek to enhance their lesson plans by incorporating self-regulatory elements, potentially by attending seminars or consulting scholarly literature on the topic.

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