

Learners' Autonomy in The Midst Of Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the students' perception on the learning autonomy in the midst of Covid-19 Pandemic. The outbreak of this pandemic has switched the learning activities from face-to-face mode into online one. The students in English Departments of PGRI Univeristy of Banyuwangi have learnt from home since March 2020. This condition yields some challenges among them. Thus, the students' voice dealing with learning autonomy is one of the essential sources to evaluate and redesign Self-Directed Learning during the pandemic. The questionnaire included 30 items was developed. It covered three aspects of learning autonomy, namely, planning of learning, monitoring and organizing of learning, and evaluation of learning. 78 students of English Department participated in this cross sectional survey. The results reveal that 66% of students have inadequate learning autonomy during online learning mode. The dependency on the lecturers' role is still found as they are not used to have online learning before. Hence, it is suggested to administer further research with in-depth interview dealing with a need analysis on certain learning materials or classroom action research on the use of strategy for Self-Directed Learning during the pandemic.

Keywords: Learning autonomy, Covid-19, Self-directed learning, learners' perception

1. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus Disease has been attacking people around the world since 2019. This virus has been widely spreading out in Indonesia since March, 2020 and it has been really alarming. It was reported that 4.261.759 Indonesian have been confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 144.055 of which died (<https://covid19.go.id/p/berita/angka-kesembuhan-covid-19-meningkat-mencapai-4113049-orang>)(<https://Covid19.Go.Id/p/Berita/Infografis-Covid-19-18-Juli-2020>, 2020). The outbreak COVID-19 pandemic has affected all sectors, including Education. The rapid spread of this virus forced Indonesia Government to lock down all schools from face-to-face learning activities and to switch it into online learning ones. All level of education institution, from kindergarten to university have been requiring

the students to learn from home since March 2020. The technology implementation in education is not an issue anymore but it is like a dream coming true. However, this policy is really hard for those who are not used to utilizing it. Based on the article written by (Lie, 2020), online leaning left some problems. Teachers are not capable enough in using technology; parents and learners are not ready with the online activities; and the internet access was not well accessed by all people due to the poor preparation.

Some studies dealing with the students' perception on online learning were conducted. One of them was concerning on the students' interaction and learning atmosphere. It was found that learning atmosphere in online learning system did not support them to learn and did not maximally facilitate learning interaction (Adijaya & Santosa, 2018). Further, in the study done by (Deli & Allo, 2020), the EFL students has positive perception on online learning; Yet, they still face some challenges dealing with the internet access, financial issue, and online learning class management. Another study involving PIAUD students also shows that they were difficult to understand online learning materials presented by lecturers. Despite well prepared materials of online learning, teachers argue that they are still difficult in monitoring and leading the students' learning attitude(Chang & Fang, 2020). Face-to-face lectures is still chosen by all students due to its effectiveness (Anhusadar, 2020).

Considering the various students' perception and drawbacks of online learning in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher is interested in investigating the students' learning autonomy since the teaching and learning process was in the form of online mode. The researcher thought that learning autonomy is important to notice as the students have a lot of time to study at home instead of in the classroom. The term autonomy was defined as "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (Holec, 1981). Further, he argued that being autonomous means students are able to manage their learning involving learning goals, the materials selection, learning strategies, progress, and evaluation. Learning autonomy is also defined as the students' initiatives to learn or accomplish task independently without any instruction (Gharti, 2019). In the context of this research, learning autonomy is defined as the students' responsibility in managing their learning during Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, information dealing with students' learning autonomy during online learning in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic is important so that the teacher can evaluate the instruction as well as design effective instruction that stimulate students' learning autonomy.

The studies on learning autonomy have been done before and during Covid-19 pandemic. In Indonesia context, the students were very depended on the teachers (Lengkanawati, 2017), (Cirocki et al., 2019). Even though the instruction was done before Covid-19 pandemic, most of students demotivated to learn and the instruction conducted was spoon feeding. However, the result of the study on learning autonomy during Covid-19 pandemic varied. In the context of a school of aerospace technology in Indonesia the students' learning autonomy was in a moderate level (Ariebowo, 2021). Further, the study on the implementation of Self Directed Learning (SDL) in the midst of Covid-19 Pandemic revealed that SDL activities designed by the teachers need to improve (Wahyudi et al., 2021). They urged that Self-directed learning takes a significant role in teaching since it will stimulate students' motivation and monitor the learning progress. In addition, the autonomous learning ability of university students also needs to foster (Ardana Reswari & Kalimanzila, 2021). Although, SDL relies on the students' responsibility, the role of teachers is important as they will motivate students. Thus, students' learning autonomy must be re-promoted in such a way that it can keep them learning independently based on their learning styles.

As mentioned before, Covid-19 pandemic has affected all education level around the world. It also influences the teaching and learning activities in English department, PGRI University of Banyuwangi. During Covid-19 pandemic, the teaching and learning activities in English department were conducted online, both in synchronous and in asynchronous mode. All lecturers were insisted to design instruction using online platforms and the students have to accustom on them. The lecturers use various online platforms, namely, Zoom and Google meet apps for synchronous mode, Google classroom and WA group apps for asynchronous one. The implementation of SDL faced some challenges. For example, when the teaching and learning activities are held in synchronous mode, most students complaints on the limited balance and poor network they have. As a result, Zoom or Google meeting the lecturers administer are not attended by all class member. Further, since the students have synchronous learning mode at home, the different learning environment often occurs. Consequently, the effective and conducive learning situation is difficult to achieve. In English department of PGRI university of Banyuwangi, some lecturers conduct learning in asynchronous mode. They used Google classroom and WA group apps. These platforms were affordable since they do not need a lot of balance and

can be accessed by students anytime they want. Nevertheless, the lecturers and students cannot directly interact in the topic discussed. Hence, the instruction is difficult to monitor.

The aforementioned conditions made the researcher is eager to conduct a survey among English department students concerning on their learning autonomy. The results are expected to give reflection on the implementation of online learning so that the lecturers can provide effective Self Directed Learning to the students and stimulate them to be more autonomous.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Cross-sectional survey design was used in this research in order to examine the students' learning autonomy in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic. This design was chosen as it can both measure current attitude or practices and provide information effectively at one point in time (Cresswell, 2012). To collect the data from English Department students, questionnaire which was distributed via Google form was used. The questionnaire was developed based on Likert Scale since it measures attitude, opinion, and perception (Sugiyono, 2017). There were 30 items of questionnaire covering three aspects of learning autonomy examined, namely, planning of learning, monitoring and organizing of learning, and evaluation ability (Karababa et al., 2010). They further argued that these three aspects take a significant role in students' language learning success. All students of English Department were involved in this research. There were 78 students from offering 2018, 2019, and 2020 responding to the survey distributed via Google forms. These students were involved in this survey since they did online learning during Covid-19 pandemic. Then, the data gained was analyzed quantitatively for drawing a conclusion.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section discussed the research results dealing with the perception on the learning autonomy in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic among English Department students. It consists of three aspects of learning autonomy, namely, planning, monitoring and organizing, and evaluation ability. The result and discussion are presented according to the question "How is the learners' perception of learner autonomy in terms of planning, monitoring and organizing, and evaluation ability?" The following is the description of the findings.

3.1. Planning of Learning

The questionnaire asking the students' ability in planning of learning consisted of 8 questions. The students were provided with 4 choices, measuring the level of frequency, namely, "always, often, sometimes, and never". The results were presented in the following table.

Table 1. Planning of Learning Ability

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Total frequency gained
I set my learning goals to achieve.	15(19.2%)	36(46.2%)	26(33.3%)	1(1.3%)	70%
I make learning schedule and head straight for learning.	7(9%)	26(33.3%)	41(52.6%)	4(5.1%)	61.5%
I plan the activities in learning English.	9(11.5%)	32(30.8%)	35(52.6%)	2(5.1%)	65.4%
I can choose exercises that I learn and do.	9(11.5%)	24(30.8%)	41(52.6%)	4(5.1%)	62.2%
I am ready to improve the score of exercises I do.	21(26.9%)	33(42.3%)	22(28.2%)	2(2.6%)	73.4%
I can choose my learning style.	13(16.7%)	43(55.1%)	22(28%)	0.2%	72.1%
I try hard when I know that I can achieve the target.	21(26.9%)	38(48.7%)	18(23.1%)	1(1.3%)	75.3%
I plan my weekly work in advance.	8(10.3%)	17(21.8%)	46(59%)	7(8.9%)	58.3%

Table 1 indicates that the students' ability in planning is fairly good. The students' response on the questionnaire items varied. The high frequency was to the expression of "I try hard when I know that I can achieve the target", "I am ready to improve the score of exercises I do", "I can choose my learning style", and "I set my learning goals to achieve." Further, dealing with the students' plan in learning schedule, activities, and exercises, there are around 60% of students who responded often. However, only 58.3% of students plan their weekly work. Based on the results, the students are relatively aware on the learning goals and have learning motivation to achieve it. Yet, they are not well prepared on what effort they have to perform for achieving the goals. Thus, the lecturers take an important role as the ones who can manage and motivate students in doing self-directed learning activities (Ardana Reswari & Kalimanzila, 2021). In short, the learners' perception of learner autonomy in terms of planning is fair.

3.2. Monitoring and Organizing of Learning

In terms of monitoring and Organizing of learning, 12 questionnaire items were developed to measure the students' perception. The description of the results was presented below.

Table 2. Monitoring and Organizing of Learning Ability

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Total frequency gained
I can manage the time for doing the task and participating in online discussion.	11(14.1%)	32(41%)	33(42.3%)	2(2.6%)	66.6%
I make a summary for learning.	12(15.4%)	34(43.6%)	29(37.2%)	3(3.8%)	67.6%
I am ready to do all tasks given.	23(29.5%)	32(41%)	23(29.5%)	0	75%
I review previous lesson before learning new materials.	4(5.1%)	17(21.8%)	51(65.4%)	6(7.7%)	56.08%
I can understand the topic independent from the teacher.	5(6.4%)	17(21.8%)	55(70.5%)	1(1.3%)	58.3%
I am aware of my weakness while learning.	17(21.8%)	45(57.7%)	16(20.5%)	0	75.3%
I can do all the tasks given by the teacher.	40(51.3%)	29(37.2%)	7(9%)	2(2.5%)	84.2%
I only use learning resources from the teacher.	2(2.6%)	16(20.5%)	46(59%)	14(17.9%)	73%
I am looking for various resources to do tasks given.	33(42.3%)	36(46.2%)	9(11.5%)	0	82.6%
I do some practice on language skills (reading, listening, speaking, dan writing) independently.	9(11.5%)	39(50%)	30(38.5%)	0	68.2%
Peer Feedback and teacher feedback help me a lot while learning. ***	34(43.6%)	42(53.8%)	1(1.3%)	1(1.3%)	84.9%
To monitor my learning progress, I do some exercises that I get from the internet.	7(9%)	24(30.8%)	40(51.2%)	7(9%)	59.9%

Based on table 2 above, the positive perception gained for learning autonomy are the high frequency on the implementation of “I can do all the tasks given by the teacher”, “I am looking for various resources to do tasks given”, “I am ready to do all tasks given” and “I am aware of my weakness while learning”. Further, the statement of “I only use learning resources from the teacher” is responded negatively. These show that the students are responsible for their learning progress. They are not depended on the lecturer in finding learning resources. Also, the statement of “Peer Feedback and teacher feedback help me a lot while learning” was also responded positively at high frequency.

Nevertheless, some statements were not responded positively by students. Around 50% of students do not perform autonomous learning activities as they did in the planning of learning section result. The insufficient learning behaviors can be inferred from the statements: “I can manage the time for doing the task and participating in online discussion”, “I make a summary for learning”, “I review previous lesson before learning new materials”, “I can understand the topic independent from the teacher”, “I do some practice on language skills (reading, listening, speaking, dan writing) independently”, “To monitor

my learning progress, I do some exercises that I get from the internet”. Hence, the students behave in a way of learning autonomy for some activities, yet most activities in this section indicate that they are still dependent on the lecturers. In brief, the learners’ perception of learner autonomy in terms of monitoring and organizing is fair.

3.3. Evaluation Ability of Learning

Evaluation ability of learning is measured by 10 questionnaire items. The results and interpretation are as follows.

Table 3. Evaluation Ability of Learning

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Total frequency gained
I don't care for learning achievement that I have achieved.	5(6.4%)	12(15.4%)	44(56.4%)	17(21.8%)	73.4%
I monitor my learning strategy to identify the learning success.	5(6.5%)	21(26.9%)	43(55.1%)	9(11.5%)	57.1%
I check my learning progress at regular interval.	8(10.3%)	18(23.1%)	43(55.1%)	9(11.5%)	58%
I am happy when the teacher gives me learning score as I can know my learning results.	24(30.8%)	30(38.5%)	21(26.9%)	3(3.8%)	50.9%
I am happy when my friend gives me feedback during learning activity.	19(24.4%)	39(50%)	17(21.8%)	3(3.8%)	51.2%
If I fail, I accept it and try to correct it.	37(47.4%)	32(41%)	8(10.3%)	1(1.3%)	83.6%
I keep former task and assignment in a file.	25(32.1%)	35(44.9%)	17(21.8%)	1(1.2%)	76.9%
It makes me happy when someone observes me and tells me my mistake in learning English.	32(41%)	37(47.4%)	8(10.3%)	1(1.3%)	42.9%
If I don't understand the learning materials, I contact my friend for discussion.	38(48.7%)	28(35.9%)	11(14.1%)	1(1.3%)	41.9%
I am taking note to remember my English proficiency development.	18(23.1%)	24(30.8%)	23(29.5%)	13(16.6%)	65.1%

From the aspect of evaluation, the students gave the answer of “often and always” with a high frequency on the statements of “I am happy when the teacher gives me learning score as I can know my learning results”, “I am happy when my friend gives me feedback during learning activity”, “It makes me happy when someone observes me and tells me my mistake in learning English”, and “If I don't understand the learning materials, I contact my friend for discussion”. Hence, these indicate the negative perception obtained for learning autonomy. Most students do not have autonomy skill in doing self-assessment. Yet, they are still aware on the learning achievement as there were 74% of students

responded negatively on the statement “I don’t care for learning achievement that I have achieved”.

The statements of “I monitor my learning strategy to identify the learning success” and “I check my learning progress at regular interval” gained negative perception because of a high frequency of “sometimes” response. The only positive perception on evaluation of learning is presented on the students’ response of the statements “If I fail, I accept it and try to correct it”, “I keep former task and assignment in a file”, and “I am taking note to remember my English proficiency development”. Thus, the students have negative perception on the learning autonomy in terms of evaluation ability.

The aforementioned results mean that the students have inadequate learning autonomy during Covid-19 pandemic. The planning ability of learning is only represented on the ability of setting learning achievement but they have no idea on the activities they should perform independently. The fairly start lead to a lack of monitoring and organizing of learning. The learning autonomy behavior is indicated by some activities, yet those must be stimulated by the lecturers. As a result, the students do not have sufficient ability in evaluation. There was a high dependency on the peer and lecturers’ role and self-assessment as one of learning autonomy requirements is still unnoticeable.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results, analysis, and in response to the question ““How is the learners’ perception of learner autonomy in terms of planning, monitoring and organizing, and evaluation ability?” it can be inferred that the student have negative perception on the learning autonomy during Covid-19 pandemic. The findings reveal that the students lack of learning autonomy when they have to learn in online mode. They have insufficient ability in planning, monitoring and organizing, and evaluation. This happened since they have a high dependency on the lecturers’ role as they are used to have in offline learning before Covid-19 pandemic strike. In short, the lecturers are suggested to design self-directed learning in such a way that promotes the students’ learning autonomy. Besides, the research result is expected to be used by students for learning reflection in order to improve their learning autonomy.

However, this research finding cannot be used for general context since it only portrays small number of students in English Department of PGRI University of Banyuwangi. Further, study with a lot of number of participants is recommended to

conduct. The use of interview is also suggested to strengthen the research results. In response to the research findings, the study with experimental or classroom action research design investigating certain teaching strategy is also suggested for promoting students' learning autonomy.

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