



Supports to Self-Regulated Learning in the Online Grammar Course

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Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic has rendered teaching and learning activities globally to be carried out in an online distance format, a phenomenon that in Indonesia is commonly referred to as study from home (SFH). Such teaching and learning formats are used in all subject or discipline areas, including English language teaching contexts. A number of studies have been conducted concerning SFH in English language teaching; one of which was by Atmojo and Nugroho (2020), who found that Indonesian secondary school English language teachers carry out online learning both synchronously and asynchronously depending on the school policy. In practice, the teachers used various online applications such as learning management systems and other relevant educational applications. However, the teachers also noted some common problems occurring during online teaching and learning activities, such as lack of preparation and planning and personal problems due to the abrupt change of learning paradigm related to the students, teachers, and parents. As a form of distance learning, SFH requires a higher level of learner autonomy (Collins, 2008; Firat, 2016) due to its activities in which learners are required to take more responsibility towards the effective execution of the learning activities. Distance learning has been closely related to the forms of self-regulated learning in which learners independently take care of their learning with teachers playing the role of supporter and facilitator (Peeters et al., 2014).

Literature Review

Learners' Autonomy and Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning has its theoretical roots in autonomy in education. In language learning, the concept of autonomy has been actively discussed by linguists for decades. Autonomy in language education first originated with the idea that adult learners are perceived to have the capacity for independent learning and thus are more responsible and more proactive in their learning (Lou et al., 2018). Further, autonomy is believed to be an 'acquired' ability, which means that learners pick up the skills and knowledge about it as their learning progresses. Such understanding implies that language institutions and teachers are capable and are expected to provide support to create the necessary condition for autonomous learning and encourage



learners to be independent in their language learning journey (Inayati & Karifianto, 2022). In language education, autonomy has come in various names, such as tandem learning, independent language learning, out-of-class language learning, and self-regulated learning (Benson, 2013).

Self-regulated learning has been gaining vast popularity during the Web 2.0 era, and even more progress has been made during the Covid-19 pandemic due to its relevance with online distance or remote learning globally carried out in response to the outbreak (Carter et al., 2020). Moreover, learners who have good self-regulation are believed to show better academic outcomes as opposed to those lacking in self-regulation (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010). Further, they also argue that six specific abilities characterize self-directed learners in online distance education; they are to create a structured learning environment, to set specific learning goals, to manage time effectively, to seek help when needed, to choose appropriate strategies to do certain tasks, and to do self-evaluation of their learning progress.

One of the authorities in Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) is Zimmermann (1990), whose model of SRL has been widely used by teachers and educators in the last three decades, such as those reviewed by Wong et al (2019). Based on the social-cognitive notion, Zimmermann's SRL model emphasizes students' motivational factors and learning strategies in environments that support autonomous learning. The improved model of SLR stipulates that it is cyclical and triadic (Zimmermann & Campillo, 2003). Cyclical means that cycles follow particular patterns of phases; *forethought*, *performance*, and *self-reflection*. For instance, in online learning contexts, *forethought* comes as the initial phase in the forms of goal setting and planning. At the same time, *performance* involves the execution of the plans covering self-control and self-observation, while *self-reflection* is done by self-judgment and self-reaction towards the learning activities that have just been conducted. Next, the triadic nature of SRL means that it has dynamic and reciprocal relationships involving students' self-regulatory processes and the environmental and behavioral events in learners' surroundings during the learning process. This model is applicable to be implemented in all learning subjects and is employed as the basis of the current study to analyze the SRL supports in a Grammar course developed during the pandemic.

Grammar Instruction during the Pandemic

Many language learners consider grammar as one of the challenging subjects (Wang, 2019). Due to the complex nature of language structure represented in the Grammar subject, it usually confuses students in terms of their application in actual language use. In addition, some of the concepts in English Grammar are foreign to Indonesian students due to the influence of their first language (Indonesian). For example, the concept of 'To Be' and 'Tenses,' which are basic introductory concepts discussed in a grammar course, are not available in the Indonesian language. Thus, students have no direct analogy when it comes to understanding both concepts. This issue, which is challenging even when taught in face-to-face sessions, has become more tenuous when the course is done in online distance mode. This challenge was especially noted in a study by Underwood (2017), who investigated how several attitudinal, social, and contextual factors could obstruct as well as facilitate the integration of grammar learning with communicative work in Japanese education contexts. In this case, she argued that teachers' creativity is the key to designing effective grammar instruction.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, grammar learning must also be taken online, which brings the challenging subject to another level of challenge. Again, teachers are challenged to use their innovative ideas to deliver grammar learning to effectively facilitate students' understanding. A study by Ghobrini (2020) suggests one way to do such instruction in the online setting. Using the popular social media platforms Facebook and YouTube, she created an open community of practice for English teachers and schools in Algeria and developed engaging language learning content for instructional grammar purposes. The findings suggest that such a model could facilitate the teaching and learning process, although many challenges—mostly technical— were also noted.

Considering the scarcity of studies on Grammar learning during the pandemic, this research aims to describe the instruction method of online and distance grammar courses administered during the SFH time. To be more specific, the research questions of the current study are formulated as follows.

1. How are students' self-regulated learning supported in an online grammar course?
2. What are students' perceptions of self-regulated learning support in the online grammar course?

Method

This study is descriptive in nature, employing document analysis and surveys to answer the research questions. The study was set in a renowned private university in a regional city of Malang, East Java, Indonesia, involving first-year students taking the compulsory English language subject. The course was aimed to prepare students to excel in standardized English tests and was organized as skill and component-based modules; listening, reading, speaking, and grammar. As the title suggests, this report focuses on the English Grammar module presented in the course. The module was developed by a team of instructors using the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS). The Canvas-based materials and activities were designed and delivered in response to the pandemic situation by a team of English language instructors. Due to pandemic restrictions, the course was conducted entirely online, combining the synchronous and asynchronous modes.

The current study analyzed the course materials and their presentation in the Canvas LMS to investigate the supports of self-regulated learning offered in the course. Then, with regard to tapping student perceptions, a survey was used to investigate their point of view about the course. The instruments used in analyzing the teaching documents and the survey questionnaire were developed based on Zimmerman and Campillo's (2003) model of self-regulated learning principles, cyclical and triadic. Once the data from the course materials and media and the open survey were obtained, they were analyzed using thematic analysis. Here, the rich verbal data was read and re-read, reduced into relevant content, coded, and classified based on the specified themes closely related to the research aims of the study. To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis results, both researchers analyzed the data separately. The results were then discussed to iron out the differences and come to a uniform agreement regarding the answers to the first research question. Next, the survey results were analyzed descriptively using weighted means to map the students' general tendency regarding their perceptions of the English Grammar course and its supports in facilitating students' autonomy in learning. The results of the data analysis are presented based on the research questions in the Findings section.

Results

Supports to Self-Regulated Learning in the Online Grammar Course

The first aim of the current study is to identify the supports to students' self-regulated learning in the online grammar course designed and delivered during the Covid-19 pandemic. The supports were identified and analyzed based on Zimmermann and Campillo's self-regulated learning model, and the presentation of the results of data analysis is organized based on its framework. First, in terms of the cycle of self-regulated learning, analysis of the teaching and learning document in the Canvas learning management system showed that the online module has offered a medium level of support, with an overall 70% score attained for the supports to students' self-regulated learning offered in the online Grammar module (Table 1).

TABLE 1
Supports to Self-Regulated Learning Cycle in the Online Grammar Module

| Aspects | Items | Score (%) |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| Forethought | 1. Goal-setting | 100% |
| | 2. Planning | 85% |
| | 3. Motivation raising | 61% |
| Performance | 4. Organization of learning | 100% |
| | 5. Observation of learning | 100% |
| Reflection | 6. Self-evaluation | 46% |
| | 7. Self-reaction | 0% |
| Overall Score | | 70% |

As Table 1 suggests, the aspect of forethought is represented by three items, and the highest support was identified as goal setting with specific planning and motivational notes coming second and third in terms of support. Here, the goals were found on the first page of all units/meetings, some with a clear plan of how to achieve them, and a few not. Then, the motivational supports were noted in two forms; first as a direct verbal motivational note, and second as indirect non-verbal forms which could be considered motivating, such as in the form of visuals (e.g., amusing gif videos) or short, simple, relevant and sometimes comical questions that students were asked to discuss as a form of apperception before going to the main materials. Answering such questions in a no-pressure discussion format could help students activate their previous knowledge about the topic. Since most students could answer correctly, it helps to improve their self-efficacy and, eventually, their motivation. In addition, the pages, almost all of which were kept short and visually interesting, were also noted as a motivating factor. Figure 1 illustrates one of the pages taken from the online grammar material.

[B] What are the goals?

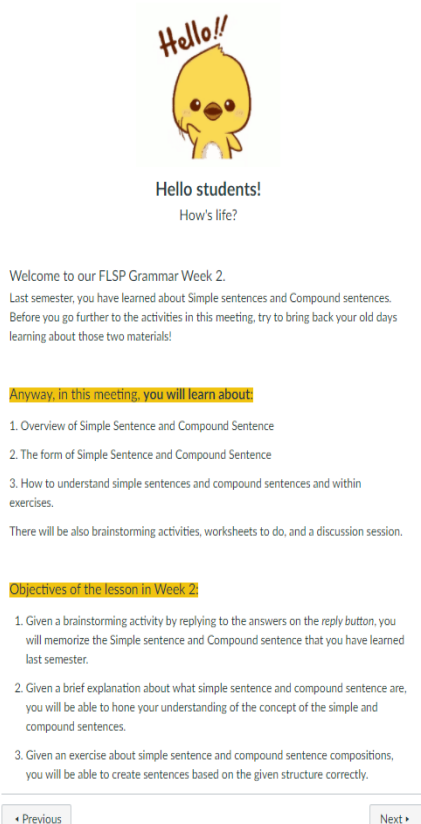


Figure 1a. Goal and planning.

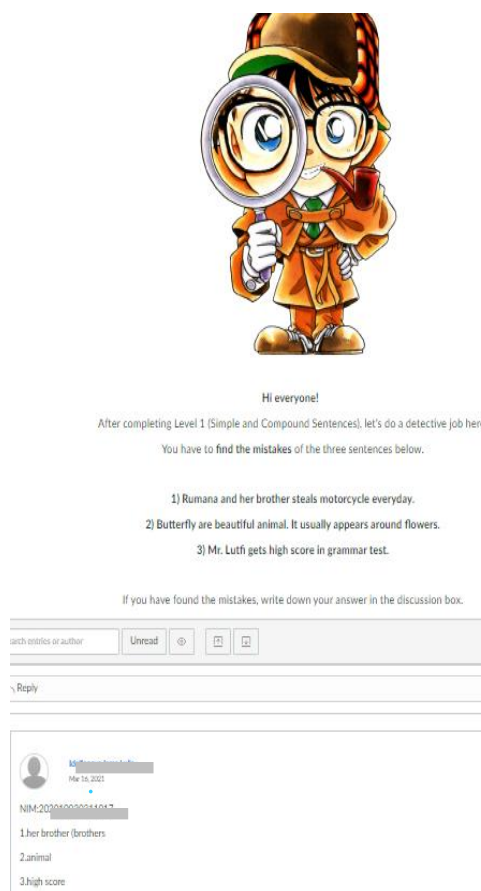


Figure 1b. Apperception and motivational forms.

The second aspect was performance, which was represented by two items—organization of learning and observation of learning—both of which were found to be highly supported, as shown by their total scores (100%). Supports, in terms of the learning organization, were offered through clear and simple instructions on each page, supported by large fonts and highlights of important points, as well as through the frequent use of graphs and slides with interesting visuals—some of which were taken from popular media such as movies. As for the supports for students’ learning observation, it was shown through the multiple opportunities to conduct two-way communication in each meeting via discussion panel, as well as through a formative quiz which allowed students multiple attempts and feedback to maximize their learning.

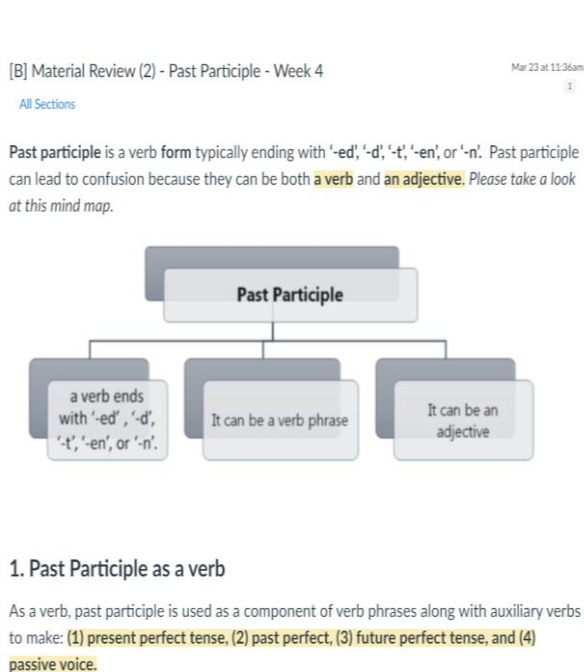


Figure 2a. Supports to learning organization.

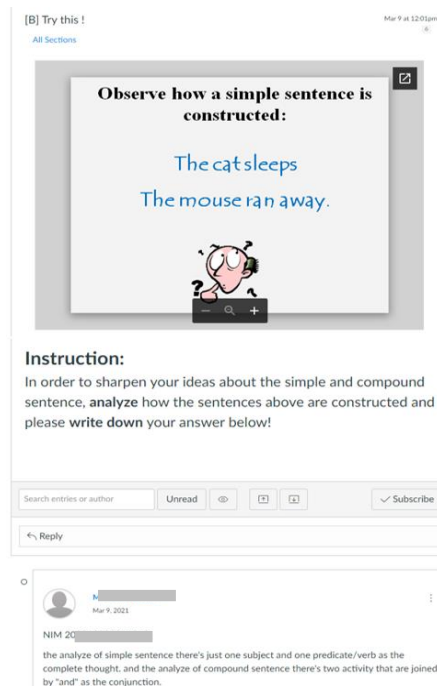


Figure 2b. Supports to learning observation.

The final aspect is reflection, which was represented by two items; self-evaluation and self-reaction. As presented in Table 1, both aspects received the lowest scores of supports (46% and 0%, respectively). Self-evaluation is mainly merged with observation, and both are facilitated through discussion and formative quizzes. The formative quiz allowed students multiple attempts, and as feedback, students are commonly allowed to view the correct numbers. Some units did have a final page where students are invited to reflect on their learning in that meeting through a discussion panel, but those reflections were directed solely for learning content and not to the learning experience. Thus, self-reaction, where students are directed to learn from the recent learning experience to influence the future learning activities, was not yet well supported.

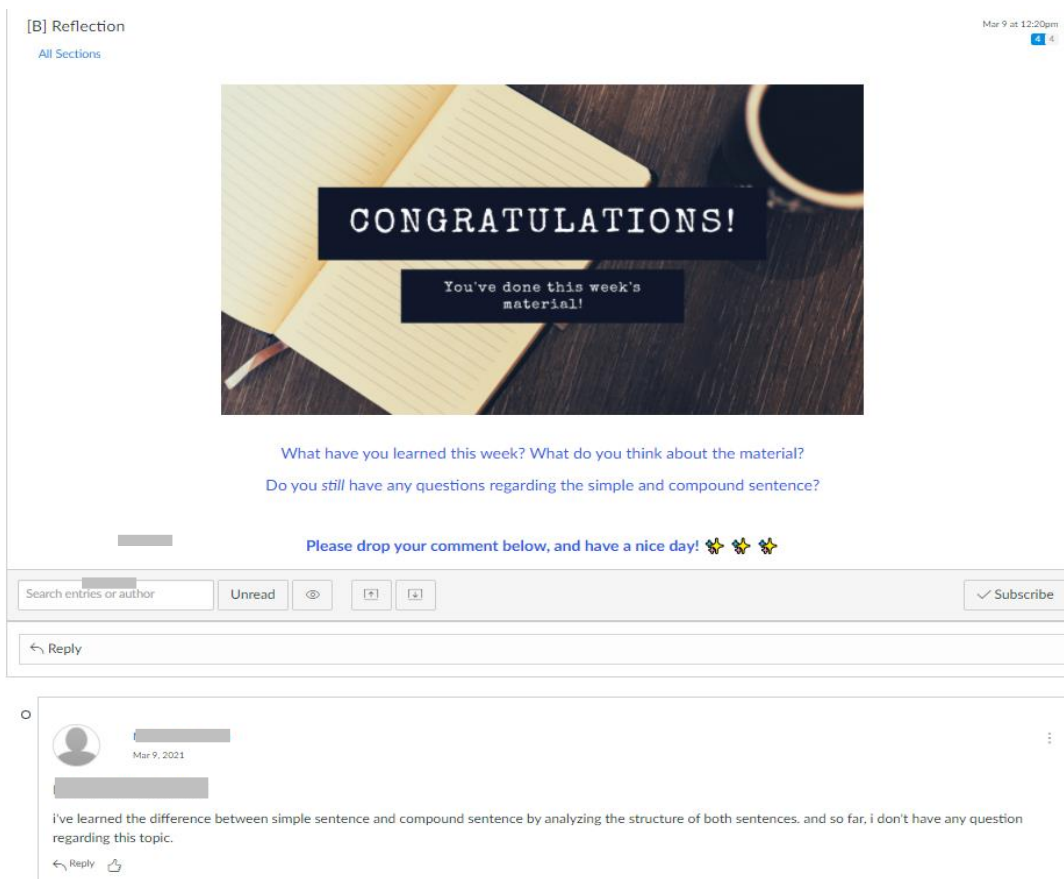


Figure 3. Reflection page.

Next, the data analysis also covered the triadic nature of self-regulated learning and identified the supports given to this aspect. As summarized in Table 2, the overall supports for the triadic nature of students' self-regulated learning were noted in medium to high levels (overall score 79%). The highest support was in terms of environmental supports (score 100%), which, in this Grammar module, was translated into the channels of the feedback given by the instructors and peers in the discussion forums and formative quiz feedback. However, although the slots are there, their general use by the instructors and peers could still be optimized, for example, by giving reasoning as to why a particular wrong answer in a quiz was considered wrong. Then, students' behavioral events received medium-high support (score 77%). It means that some forms of support—e.g., activating students' previous successful learning experience—existed in many units, but it did not occur in a few units. Besides, as the reflection was found to be directed only on the contents of the materials, the added focus needs to be given to reflect the students' learning experience. Finally, the students' perception of their self-efficacy was 61%, showing that some forms of support in this aspect existed in a bit over half of the units, but many units were left without them. This aspect, which aims to make students feel that they could do it, is essential in self-regulated learning. The fact that the data analysis shows 39% of the units did not contain these supports means that this area needs more attention.

TABLE 2
Supports to Self-Regulated Learning's Triadic Nature in Online Grammar Module

| Aspects | Score |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Environmental supports | 100% |
| 2. Students' behavioral events | 77% |
| 3. Students' self-efficacy | 61% |
| Overall Score | 79% |

Students' Perception of Self-Regulated Learning Supports in the Online Grammar Course

The data about the students' perceptions were obtained from a cross-sectional survey distributed at the end of the semester. At the end of the data collection, 118 students completed the survey. Generally, students showed a positive perception of the online Grammar course, with almost 90% of them expressing a generally positive experience. In addition, when asked if the online Grammar module has helped them be more independent in their language learning, 86% of them agreed.

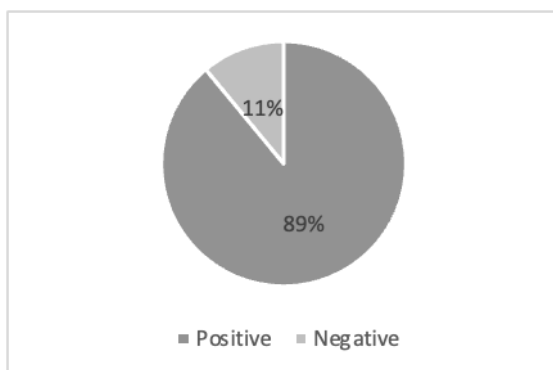


Figure 4a. Students' general perception.

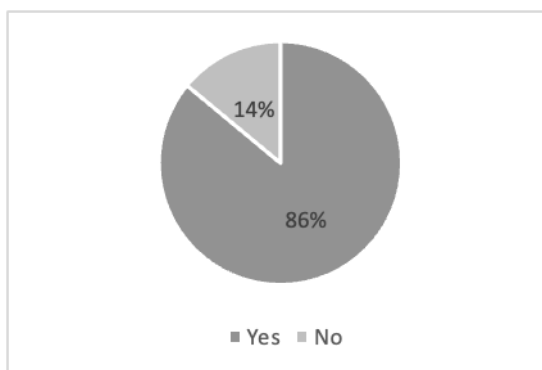


Figure 4b. Independence Rate.

The questionnaire also asked about whether students felt the supports offered to them to be more self-regulated in their learning via Canvas LMS. Again, the respondents generally expressed agreement and understanding of the provided supports, which are shown by the grand mean of 3.1, from the scale of 1 (highly disagree) to 4 (highly agree). Table 3 illustrates the detail of the respondents' agreement rate towards the aspects of self-regulated learning supports given in the online Grammar module.

TABLE 3

Respondents' Agreement towards the Aspects of Self-regulated Learning in the Module

| Statements | Mean |
|--|------------|
| Forethought | |
| 1. I can find motivational notes aimed to boost my enthusiasm for learning at the start of each session. | 3.1 |
| 2. I can find the statement of the learning goal in Canvas in each session/ week. | 3.3 |
| 3. I can find the learning plan in each session/ week. | 3.3 |
| Performance | |
| 4. I can follow the series of activities in Canvas well. | 3.1 |
| 5. I can manage my learning activities in Canvas well. | 3.0 |
| 6. I know what to do when I face problems in learning English Grammar via Canvas. | 3.0 |
| 7. The teachers' feedbacks can be found and understood well. | 3.2 |
| 8. My peers'/classmates' feedback can be found and understood well. | 3.0 |
| 9. I can tell how well I generally perform my own learning in Canvas. | 3.1 |
| Reflection | |
| 10. I can evaluate my overall learning in Canvas. | 3.1 |
| 11. I can adjust my next learning goals based on my previous learning experience in Canvas. | 3.0 |
| 12. I feel that my success in learning help me to be more motivated in further learning activities. | 3.2 |
| Grand weighted mean | 3.1 |

As suggested in Table 3, all items range from 3.0-3.3, meaning that they agreed that the online Grammar module helped them to better regulate their independent English Grammar learning almost equally in terms of forethought, performance, and reflection aspects. Furthermore, the items were arranged according to the cycles and triadic nature of self-regulated learning, and the fact that all of them

scored 3.0 and above supports the respondents' positive perception. In other words, they could generally feel and benefit from the supports of self-regulated learning offered in the online Grammar module. However, some room for improvement was also noted, which was probed in the final question.

Finally, the respondents were invited to offer some suggestions for improving the Grammar materials in the future. Many expressed that the materials were good enough, but some suggestions mostly lie in the types of activities, the modes or platforms used, and the interaction between students and instructors. Below are some excerpts taken from the survey's open responses for suggestions offered by students.

Actually, it's quite good, (but) if asked for suggestions, maybe in the future, please have more quizzes or games so that the materials are not boring and fun for students. - R7

Maybe you can give audio sound or video for explaining the material, because when we read the material, sometimes we feel bored, but if the materials have audio sound or video, it makes them more interesting. - R64

Canvas is good enough for independent learning but I felt so much less interaction between the lecturer and the students. -R91

Discussion

The current study revealed that the online Grammar module, which was designed, developed, and delivered during the Covid-19 pandemic, has shown relatively good support towards students' self-regulated learning (as shown by an overall score of 70%). Indeed, self-regulated learning has been acknowledged by many educators and researchers to be one of the features of distance—in this case online—learning (Bannert & Reimann, 2012; Chen et al., 2014; Delen et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2019), and this notion seems to be well-acknowledged by the teacher and material developer of the grammar module under study.

Regarding aspects with the most support, the current study found that the performance aspect, which covers the execution of the learning activities, received the highest support. It is interesting to note since such a tendency was also found in studies about learners' strategy in autonomous language learning settings (Inayati et al., 2021; Khotimah et al., 2019; Scheb-Bruener, 2019). In other words, these studies reveal that learners tend to jump straight into the execution (performance) phase and pay less attention to the forethought and reflection aspects. Inayati et al. (2021) further argue that it may have been influenced by the 'spoon-feeding' nature of the students' school years, where everything was meticulously prepared for them to just 'do' the prescribed learning activities. Interestingly, the current study's findings lend support to that conclusion in the way that the teacher-designed module reflects the learners' tendency in their independent learning patterns. In other words, it could be argued that the way the teachers design their materials and activities may have asserted some influence on learners' way of learning.

In addition to what was found to be already good, the other issue worth noting is the other 30% that still needs improvement, which generally falls into the aspects of forethought and reflection. The weaker parts of forethought lie in the planning and motivation; while for reflection, both self-evaluation and self-reaction still have relatively larger rooms for improvement. For example, the learning evaluation, which is still directed towards learning contents, could be added to evaluate the learning experience. That way, students can be further encouraged to follow up their self-evaluation to increase the effectiveness of their future learning. As Reinders (2020) has suggested, reflection and evaluation are a crucial part of independent learning, one of which form is self-regulated learning. It allows them to learn from their mistakes and success to improve their future learning performance.

Moreover, maximizing the discussion channel was also recommended due to its potential, which the current study found was still not well employed. In other words, maximizing its potential, such as encouraging two-way communication involving students and peers to discuss the material actively and

provide human feedback, could also be done. As Wong et al. (2019) suggest, ‘human touch’ in an online course is highly anticipated amid generally automated feedback. The discussion channel could serve as a very good venue for it. After all, teachers are expected to encourage their students to be more autonomous, and they play a key role in it (Xu, 2015). Xiao and Yang (2019) have also proved through their study that learners can emerge more self-regulated in their learning and, eventually, more autonomous with the right guidance from teachers.

Conclusion

This study has found that supports to learners’ self-regulated learning in an online grammar course designed and delivered during the pandemic were of a medium-high level. The highest support was found in the performance aspects, the second highest was in the forethought aspects, and the lowest one was in the reflection aspects. As for the perception, this study found that the respondents generally viewed the module positively, with most of them stating that they could ‘feel’ the supports offered to their self-regulated learning.

The current study may be limited in terms of the module investigated, but the findings shed some light on how English instructors in Asia cope with the demands of online teaching and learning during the pandemic. Future research could be directed towards closer investigation on how the supports to self-regulated learning influence students’ achievement in learning English grammar.

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