EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON DIGITAL ENGLISH MATERIALS AND LEARNERS AUTONOMY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract
This study aimed to examine students' perception towards digital English materials and learner autonomy in the mist of Covid 19 pandemic. The digital materials are put in e-learning and accessed during the English class of 35 students in the fourth semester of STMIK jaya Nusa. These materials are also accessible from outside the class hours from any computer connected to the internet. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and observations. The data show that the students quite enjoy learning English using digital materials and the data from interviews and observations show low level of students' autonomy.
Keywords: Evaluation skills, covid-19 pandemic, digital English materials, learning autonomy, learning activities.

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji persepsi siswa terhadap materi bahasa Inggris digital dan otonomi pelajar di tengah pandemi Covid-19. Materi digital tersebut digunakan dalam e-learning dan diakses selama kelas Bahasa Inggris dari 35 mahasiswa semester IV STMIK jaya Nusa. Materi-materi ini juga dapat diakses dari luar jam pelajaran dari komputer manapun yang terhubung ke internet. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan kuesioner, wawancara dan observasi. Data menunjukkan bahwa siswa cukup menikmati belajar bahasa Inggris menggunakan materi digital dan data dari wawancara dan observasi menunjukkan tingkat otonomi siswa yang masih rendah.
Kata Kunci: Kemampuan evaluasi, pandemi Covid-19, materi bahasa inggris digital, otonomi belajar, aktivitas belajar.

INTRODUCTION

The online learning policy is a concrete step taken by Indonesia as one of the countries affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. All levels of education learn with their teachers online. Similar to students at STMIK Jaya Nusa, students conduct online learning with their lecturers using online learning platforms or video conferencing. They also take advantage of the online learning system website provided by the campus. Through this online learning system, each lecturer can share material, give assignments, and create discussion forums with students. Students can access this online learning system, from attending online classes, submitting their answers and joining discussion forums (Suharsih & Wijayanti, 2021).

Furthermore, the rapid development of technology in the application of online learning requires educators and students to master how to use e-learning platforms (Ariebowo, 2021). However, its success is highly dependent on where online learning takes place, students' learning styles and circumstances, they may feel different expectations and reactions to certain types of learning modes.

Based on pre-liminary observations, the implementation of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic faced by students described several obstacles such as slow internet connections and incompatible technology devices. Internet connection which is very lacking in rural areas Then, there were limited interaction between lecturers and students compared to offline learning and only a few communication tools available around them. Limited digital materials and the number of assignments received by students become the other problems faced by them. Moreover, it was found that parents and students were not ready for online learning. Low learner autonomy in maximizing the online learning and depency on lecturer's role are identified as the main factors influencing the problems faced by students. These factors can be seen in the following diagram:
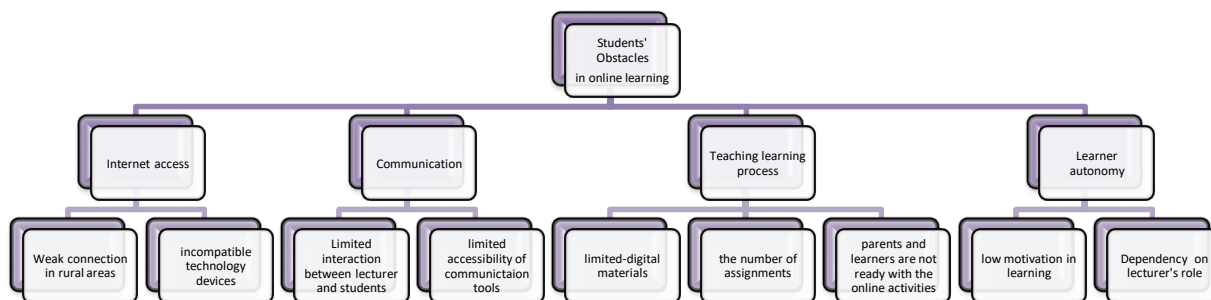
Chart 1. Common students' Obstacles in Online Learning

The close relationship between digital learning materials and independent learning abilities or what is commonly referred to as student autonomy plays an important role in achieving learning objectives. More specifically, students are given control in the selection of learning materials and learning methods to be used. However, before describing the extent to which these relationships and statements exist, the first part of this study will provide a definition of digital materials and learning autonomy. The author will also describe the studies that have been carried out. Afterwards, the next section describes the findings that are considered quite significant.

Digital materials are materials available online to teachers and students who are not full-time students. This does not include comprehensive curriculum materials available online (Katie et al., 2018). Digital materials tend to play an additional role in teacher education compared to full-fledged curriculum materials. Teachers use comprehensive curriculum materials (not digital materials) most of the time in class. Less than 20% of teachers say they use one of their digital materials for more than half of their class time. In comparison, nearly two-thirds of teachers report that they spend at least half of their class time on one comprehensive curriculum material (Anwar & Wahid, 2021). Hence, digital learning is a system that enables broader, richer and diverse learning. The equipment provided by this system allows students to study anytime, anywhere, regardless of distance, space or time. Learning theories that are studied are more diverse, not only in the form of words, but also in various forms such as text, images, sounds, and movements (Melvina et al., 2021).

Autonomy is a complex concept. The variety of learner's autonomy definition showed that the concept of learner autonomy is different for different people. This term was first raised by Hole in Noviadayanti who stated as a capability of students to understand their learning goals and strategies for knowing and evaluating their development (Noviadayanti, 2021). He further argued that being autonomous means students are able to manage their learning involving learning goals, the materials selection, learning strategies, progress, and evaluation. Autonomy is described as entails ability, a specific attitude, and special behavior. The autonomous learner proposes some ability to direct the course of students in learning, which implies being able to make decisions concerning course management, organization, and content (Muchlis, 2015) .

Several studies have been conducted related to online materials as the autonomous learning. A study towards students enrolled in courses of the On-Line MBA program at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater was done by Robert et al (Robert et al., 2000). The survey was given to 206 students in ten different MBA classes, all of whom met electronically. The findings showed that it is imperative that students receive adequate training before beginning an on-line course. A second point to take away from

this study concerns access problems. In a very real sense, access is the gateway to on-line courses, i.e., without access, there can be no on-line course experience.

The next study was done by Nisa Sabelina and Tiarina aims to examine students' perceptions of English learning materials while completing online learning. The sample of this study was randomly selected as many as 135 students at SMAN 5 Padang. While studying online, they were given 25 questions to test their perception of English learning materials. The results showed that students were neutral in providing learning materials and materials used during online learning. It shows an average score of 2.83. However, they claim that the material used in the online class is more difficult than the material used in the face-to-face class. This makes it impossible for students to determine the introduction of learning materials and delivery of materials during online learning (Nisa Sabelina & Tiarina, 2021).

The web application during distance learning was done by Sofian Hadi et al (Sofian Hadi et al., 2021). This study aimed to obtain data on students' perceptions about the implementation of web applications during distance learning in the Covid 19 pandemic which was held at MAN 22 Jakarta. There were 66 students involved in this study as research respondents. They proposed several things that must be taken into account for teachers to encourage and to enhance students to actively contribute to learning process which be held remotely via online. They are; inserting learning innovations during online learning by involving indicator aspect such as aspects of learning materials and media, aspects of interaction in the learning process, and aspects of the learning atmosphere.

In addition, a study about learner autonomy conducted by Ariebowo towards 166 students as respondents in a high school. It is found that they could adapt their learning objectives by choosing the preferred language functions and topics to discuss in the lesson, giving information and issues faced by airline companies. He also found that mist of the students choosing the online meeting platform was one reason students could decide the learning strategies that suited them well (Ariebowo, 2021).

Furthermore, Noviadayanti did a study related to information about EFL students' belief on their learner autonomy and their practices in developing learning autonomy amidst the global pandemic. All the participants were fifteen senior high school students who were from the same public school which implemented curriculum 2013 and did the whole teaching-learning process through online learning. It was found that the majority of students showed characteristics of learner autonomy despite having a negative perspective on online school. Furthermore, it was found that students showed various learning activities outside classroom activities (Noviadayanti, 2021).

In the context of this research, the digital learning materials are the materials that used in English class on e-learning. Then, learning autonomy is defined as the students' responsibility in managing their learning during Covid-19 pandemic. The situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions. It is particularly useful here as the concept in self-study contexts where there is no direct practitioner intervention. Students are free to make choices about what materials to use and are not required to justify their choices in terms of the benefits of such materials for their language learning (Sofian Hadi et al., 2021). The aforementioned conditions have figured out the importance to do a research related to students'perception towards digital English materials used in the e-learning and to investigate how autonomous learning the students was.

RESEARCH METHOD

Descriptive quantitative research design was used in this study. It is used to explore students' perceptions of digital materials during the Covid-19 outbreak. A total of 35 students from STMIK Jaya

Nusa were observed working with digital materials. To collect the data from students, questionnaire was distributed via Google form.

The first questionnaire used in this study consisted of three parts. The first part is 2 questions about web-based materials in general. Meanwhile, the second part is related to learning activities which are covered in 6 questions. In the last part, there are 5 questions related to students' ability to search for help and navigate digital materials. However, this technique also allows for limited responses (Oppenheim, 2001).

The second questionnaire comprises three aspects of student autonomy: planning, monitoring, organizing, and evaluation skills (Karababa et al., 2010). The questionnaire has been modified according to the needs of this research. It consists of 25 questions on various aspects of language learning, such as "monitoring" & organizing", "planning" & "evaluation". This study attempts to monitor cognitive, affective and psychomotor behavior and gave them the choices "yes", "no" and "no Idea" to answer the question a list of questions. Answers using the highest autonomous frequency are selected, interpreted & presented in table form.

Semi-structured interviews also be used to complete the necessary data.The interview allows the authors obtained data directly from the source. Through interviews, respondents can develop according to their knowledge so that they are considered accurate and full of control. During the interview, the writer asked the interviewee's permission to use a recording device so that important notes could be properly documented (Nunan, 2014). At the opening of the interview, the author describes the purpose of the study conducted. Thus, the direction of the interview becomes clear and respondents can focus their answers in more detail and specificity. Observation activities make it possible to find facts outside the interview concept either intentionally or by chance (Nunan, 2014).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
1. Students' perception towards digital English materials

Student answers about their perceptions on digital English materials will be reflected in the response questionnaire. The first part of the survey on general opinion about digital materials consisted of two questions.The results can be seen in the following chart:
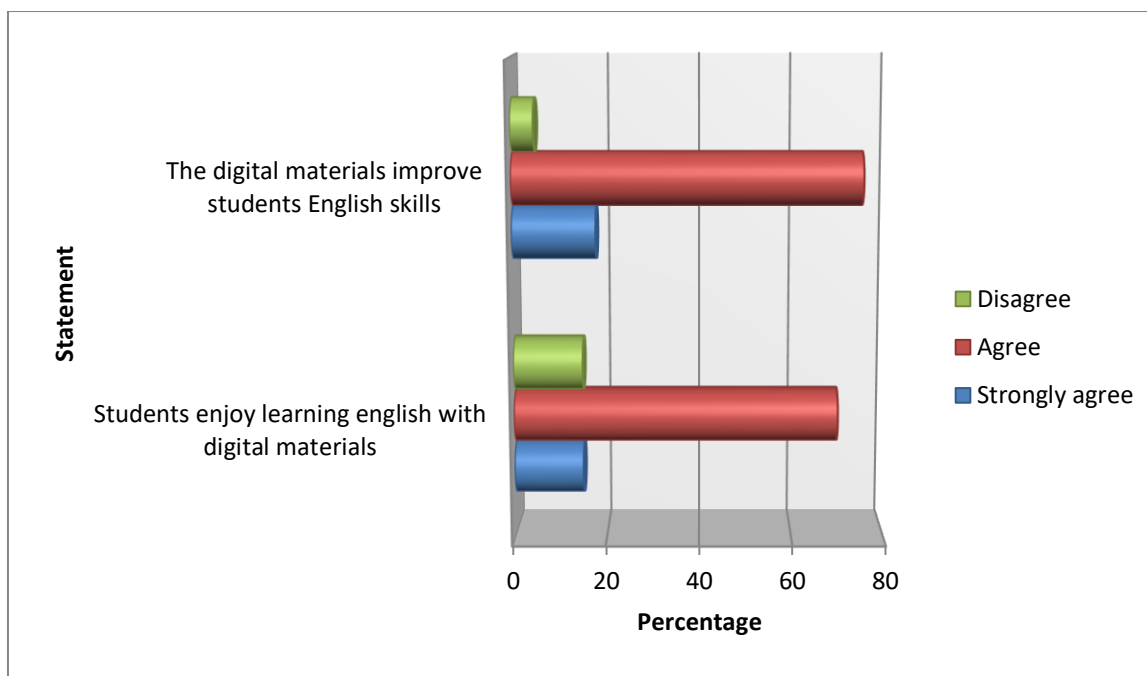
Chart 2. General Opinion about Digital English Materials

The first part of the questionnaire show that 15% of students fully agree that they enjoy learning English with digital materials, 75% agree and 5% disagree. 30% of students fully agree and 70% agree that the digital materials improve their English skills.

The responses of learning activities can be seen in the chart below:
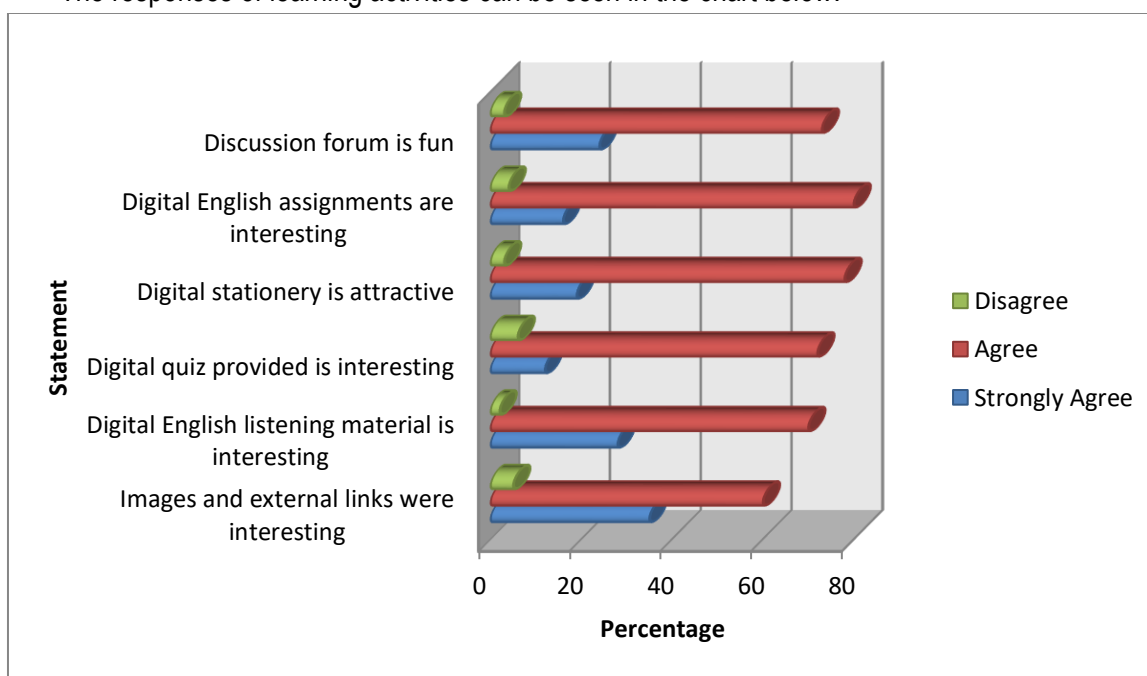

Chart 3. Learning Activities

The second part of the survey consists of six questions and is related to learning activities. From the survey, 35% of students voted "strongly agree" and 60% responded to the statement that images and external links were interesting. In terms of listening, 28% fully agree that digital listening is interesting, 70% agree, and 2% disagree. 12% of students fully agree that the digital quiz provided is interesting,

72% agree and 6% disagree. For stationery, 19% of respondents fully agree and 78% agree that digital stationery is attractive. In terms of assignments, 16% of students fully agree that digital English assignments are interesting, 80% agree, and 4% do not. 24% of students fully agree that the discussion forum is fun, 73% agree and 3% disagree.

The following chart shows the findings of students' ability to search for help and navigate digital materials:
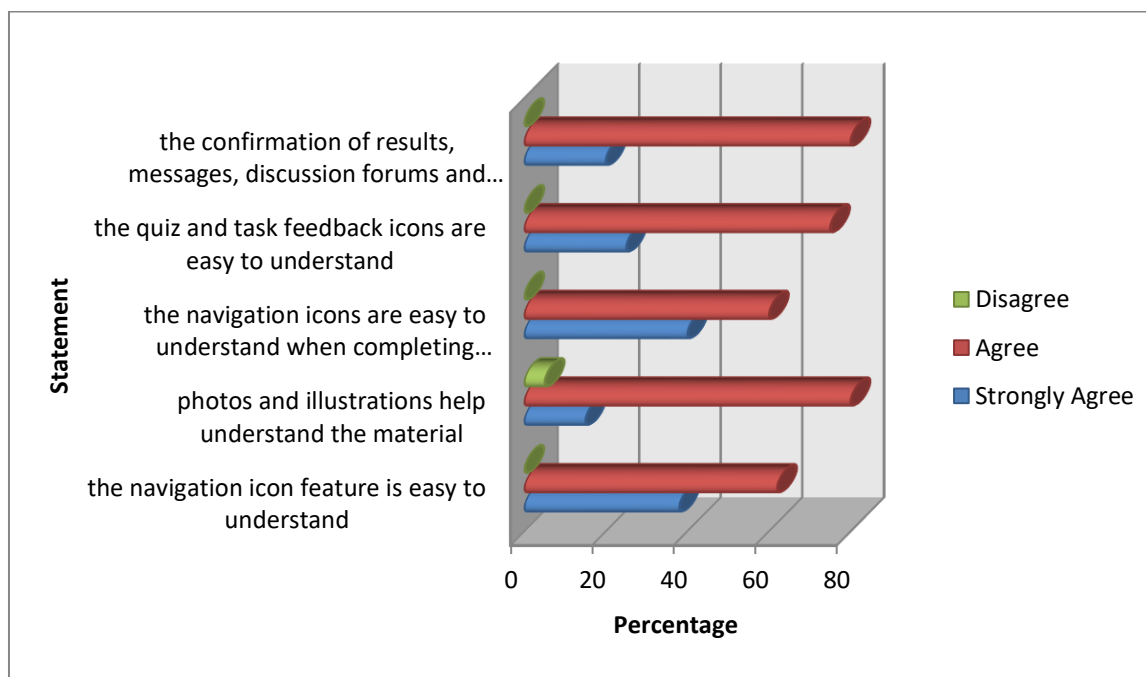

Chart 4. Students' Ability to Search for Help and Navigate Digital Materials

The third part of the survey consists of five questions and includes help and navigation for digital materials. 38% of respondents fully agree and 62% agree that the navigation icon feature is easy to understand. 15% of students agree, 80% disagree, and 5% completely disagree with the statement that photos and illustrations help understand the material. In terms of quiz navigation, 40% of students "strongly agree" and 60% agree that the navigation icons are easy to understand when completing quizzes and assignments. 25% of respondents strongly agree completely and 75% agree that the quiz and task feedback icons are easy to understand. Of the students who answered, 20% fully agreed and 80% agreed that the confirmation of results, messages, discussion forums and other activity icons were easy to understand.

The results of the interviews, showed quite varied results. Not all students have access to the internet from their homes, and they spend an average of 2 hours reading, searching, and submitting answers to the exercises at each meeting. Most of them find new vocabulary from every digital English material that is shared in online classes through e-learning. Most of the students take advantage of the internet connection to add references to their answers from various sources. They were in the form of English learning sites, English test sites, and English news sites (Karababa et al., 2010). The interview also revealed that they occasionally try to use English when they chat, play games, send emails, and join forums in English. All these activities were carried out, reflecting that students are independent learners in terms of learning English, even they say that they do not learn English directly but read more and listen more to English (Tri et al., 2021).

2. The level of student's learning autonomy

This section describes the students' perceptions of autonomy level in the Covid-19 pandemic. The results and discussion is presented in accordance with the question, "How autonomous are the students?" The results are described below.

Table 1. Planning student's learner autonomy

	Yes	%	No	%	No Idea	%
I can choose my learning styles	9	25,71	16	45,71	10	28,57
I believe that the exercises given to me for studying except the classroom help me learn better	13	37,14	15	42,86	7	20
I make further efforts when I believe I will achieve the target.	10	28,57	12	34,29	13	37,14
While learning English, I model the learning styles of my classmates	8	22,86	9	25,71	18	51,43
Usually I plan my weekly work in advance	7	20	14	40	14	40
I know where I can use English after learning it	15	42,86	18	51,43	2	5,71

Table 1 shows that students are poor at planning. Student responses to the questionnaire questions varied. Phrases like " I believe that the exercises given to me for studying except the classroom help me learn better", "I make further efforts when I believe I will achieve the target", and "I know where I can use English after learning it " are often used. On the other hand, only 25, 71% can choose their own learning styles. During the learning English period, more than half students do not model learning styles of their classmates. The weekly plan is done by 20% of the students. They are not fully prepared for what efforts should be made to achieve their goals. In short, the autonomous learner's perception of planning is fair.

Table 2. Monitoring & organizing student's learner autonomy

	Yes	%	No	%	No Idea	%
I try to make connections about old and new subjects I've learned	15	42,86	10	28,57	10	28,57
I can maintain my studies independent from teacher	10	28,57	18	51,43	7	20
I am responsible for my language learning, my improvement and my level by myself	8	22,86	14	40	13	37,14
I like making progress in my English by myself	8	22,86	9	25,71	18	51,43
I can use some useful exercises which I used to learn other foreign languages	15	42,86	28	80	2	5,71

I do some practice on writing skills (as using internet, writing a letter, taking notes)	7	20	14	40	14	40
Without help from anyone, I can understand a new topic	10	28,57	9	25,71	16	45,71
If somebody makes a mistake in the class, I'll correct them	8	22,86	12	34,29	15	42,86
I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses while learning	7	20	16	45,71	12	34,29

From the results of Table 2 above, 42,86% of students can make connections about their previous knowledge and new subjects they learned. The positive perceptions on the use of some useful exercises to learn other foreign languages reached the similar percentage. However, only a few students responsible for their language learning and their improvement. They also did not do any correction of their classmates made mistakes. Only 22,86% of students were answered frequently and positively. Doing some practice on writing skills (as using internet, writing a letter, taking notes) were not answered positively by students. Similarly, they had a low awareness of their strengths and weaknesses while learning. Therefore, students act independently in some activities, but most of the activities in this section indicate that they are still dependent on the teacher. In short, students exercise fair perceptions of student autonomy from a supervisory and organizational perspective.

Table 3. Evaluation student's learner autonomy

	Yes	%	No	%	No Idea	%
I want to be evaluated by my teacher	7	20	13		15	
I want to be evaluated by my friends	7	20	15	42,86	10	28,57
I like to talk about my progress in English to others	8	22,86	14	40	13	37,14
When learning English, it makes me happy when someone observes me and tells me my mistakes	10	28,57	9	25,71	16	45,71
Discussing the results of what I have learned in the class makes me happy.	6	17,14	16	45,71	13	37,14
I check my writing assignments at regular intervals to see my progress.	9	25,71	6	17,14	20	57,14
If I fail, I accept it and try to correct it	7	20	13	37,14	15	42,86
I'm taking notes to remember my language development better	6	17,14	15	42,86	14	40
I keep former tasks and assignments in a file.	8	22,86	16	45,71	11	31,43
I regularly examine the targets that I planned	7	22,86	18	51,43	10	28,57

In the term of evaluation, the data of the table above shows that there was a high percentage gained on the statement "when learning English, it makes me happy when someone observes me and

tells me my mistakes". However, the rest of the statements were responded negatively by the students. They had no idea when they were asked whether want to be evaluated by their teacher or their friends as well. 40% of students did not like to talk about their progress in learning English. In addition, 45,71% of students would not discuss the results of what they have learned and they almost never taking notes to remember the language development. Only 22,86% of students gave positive perception to keep their former tasks and assigments as well as examined regularly the target they planned. In short, the evaluation ability on the learning autonomy in has negative perception. Learning independence behavior is shown by several activities, but must be stimulated by the lecturer. As a result, students do not have adequate ability in evaluation (Mulyati, 2022). High dependence on the role and self-assessment of peers and lecturers as one of the requirements for independent learning is still not felt.

CONCLUSION

In general, students in this study reported that the digital English materials used in online classes were different from those used in face-to-face classes. Due to the use of the internet, teachers provide supplementary material from several learning sites on the internet as introductory or additional topical materials to help students better understand. Students agree that the learning materials for online courses are more diverse. The activities and occupations of teachers are very diverse. This finding also shows that students lack learning autonomy when they have to study in online mode. They lack planning, monitoring, organizing, and evaluation skills. This happens because it is very dependent on the role of educators, as we did in offline learning before the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers are encouraged to design self-directed learning to promote student learning autonomy. In addition, the results of this study should be used by students to reflect on their learning in order to increase their learning independence. 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.

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