STUDENTS' AGILITY IN ONLINE EFL LEARNING AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

This study attempts to investigate the agility of male and female senior high EFL students of SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar in online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study employs the theory of learning agility introduced by Gravett and Caldwell (2016). As they stated, there are four dimensions of learning agility, namely; *mental agility, people agility, results agility and change agility.* The sampling technique used was random sampling. 150 students of X PMIA 1, 2, 3 and X PIS 1 and 2 were selected as the participants. The score of male students for all types of learning agility was 6798. While, the score of female students for all types of learning agility was 6831. From 150 participants, the percentage of male students who had high level of agility was in 27,33%, while the female students was in 26%. As for the percentage of male students who had moderate level of agility was in 22,67%, while the female students was in 24%. None of the male and female students had low level of agility. The results showed that when it came to general calculation of score, the female students were higher and more agile. However, when it was seen individually, especially in the learning activities, the male students had higher level of agility rather than the female students.

Keywords: Students; Agility; Online EFL Learning; Gender

INTRODUCTION

The invasion of Corona virus disease (Covid-19) has brought a new reality to teaching and learning activities at schools. Both teachers and students must be able to utilize any model of online learning due to the pandemic situation. This pandemic does not select any specific victims. Anyone, from different age, gender, social life, ethnic or country, can be infected. This harsh situation has pushed the government to establish rules referring to stay at home, work from home, and even learn from home.

In order to achieve the goals of online teaching and learning methods during this situation, Google Classroom is implemented worldwide through the daily life of teaching and learning activities. Google Classroom is a free web service developed by Google for schools that aims to simplify creating, distributing, and grading assignments. The main purpose of Google Classroom is to streamline the process of sharing files between teachers and students. It enables teachers to create an online classroom area in which they can manage all documents which their students need. However, online learning is not as simple as people would think. Cheng (2020) said that teachers need to pay close attention to the student's learning status and guided students to have better home study. Teachers must stimulate students' motivation and activeness by giving students clear learning goals, and designing essential autonomous learning tasks based on the core content of teaching to increase students' participation and agility in online learning.

When it comes to online learning, Wightman (2020) stated that it is commonly assumed that females are able to learn languages at a quicker pace than males. Since males rely on the auditory and visual components of their brains and females employ abstract thinking with a holistic approach, it can be concluded

that males and females differ in skill level with various language acquisition methods (Burman, Bitan & Booth, 2008). In addition, Wardaugh (2005) argued that gender is unavoidable; it is part of the way in which societies are ordered around us, with each society doing that ordering differently, including classroom situation.

Gender differences in education can occur in the acquisition learning achievement. Males and females have their own difference characteristic, motivation and agility in learning languages and linguistics. In general, learning agility relates to adaptability and willingness to confront the new situation. Specifically, learning agility attempts to predict an individual's potential performance in new tasks (*Hoff & Burke*, 2017). Gravett and Caldwell (2016) defined 4 types of learning agility; (1) mental agility which refers to individuals who are comfortable with complexity, examine problems carefully, and make connections between different things, (2) people agility which refers to individuals who know themselves well and can readily deal with diverse people and tough situations, (3) result agility which refers to those resourceful individuals who can deliver results in first-time situations by inspiring others and having significant impact, and (4) change agility which refers to individuals who like to experiment and can cope effectively with the discomfort of rapid change. Moreover, Mitchinson & Morris (2014) argued that there are 2 reasons why learning agility has become more important than ever before. The first is rapid developments in technology makes ongoing personal advancement imperative and place serious demands on learning agility. Another reason is globalization. Education is now operating in a context with wider variety of foreign languages and broader ranges of international and cultural differences. In relation to that, generally, people assume that men are dominant in more things rather than women

are. As Talbot (1993) argued that those gender stereotypes linked to gender ideology and reproduce naturalized gender differences. Based on the phenomenon above, this study aims to investigate the agility of both male and female students' in online EFL learning during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as to see which is more agile between both of the gender. By conducting so, it is hoped that the result of this study may extend the theory of learning agility and gender realms. Therefore, the current study covers the following research questions:

1. How is the agility of both male and female students' in online EFL learning during Covid-19 pandemic?

2. Which student' is more agile in online EFL learning during Covid-19 pandemic?

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a survey study which employs descriptive statistics in analyzing the data. According to Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen (2010), in survey research, investigators ask questions about peoples' beliefs, opinions, characteristics and behavior. A survey researcher may want to investigate associations between respondents' characteristics such as; age, education, social class, race, and their current attitudes towards one issue. Balnaves & Caputi (2001) added that a survey is a method of collecting data from people about who they are (education, finance, etc.), how they think (motivation, beliefs, etc.) and what they do (behavior). This study is categorized as cross-sectional survey since it collected information from a sample that has been determined from a population at a single point in time although the time which takes to collect all of the data may take anywhere from a day to a few weeks or more.

2.1 Population and Sample

Population and sample are two related terms in researches. They are needed as the step and part to do the research. Population is all members of well-defined class of events or objects, meanwhile, sample is a portion of population (Ary, Jacob & Sorensen, 2010). The population in this study is 335 senior high school English as a foreign language (EFL) students of SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar, North Sumatera.

Table 1. Population of grade ten students of SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar

Class	Number of Students		
	Male	Female	Total
X PMIA 1	8	23	31
X PMIA 2	10	22	32
X PMIA 3	21	8	29
X PMIA 4	10	22	32
X PMIA 5	12	18	30
X PMIA 6	13	19	32
X PMIA 7	21	9	30
X PMIA 8	18	11	29
X PIS 1	17	12	29
X PIS 2	19	10	29
X PIS 3	4	28	32
Total	153	182	335

The sample was chosen by occupying random sampling. As Creswell (2006) stated that random sampling is a research method in which each individual of the population has equal probability of being selected (a systematic or probabilistic sample). Thus, students of X PMIA 1, 2, 3 and X PIS 1 and 2 were as the sample. The number of each class was as the followings:

Table 2. Sample

Class	Number of Students		
	Male	Female	Total
X PMIA 1	8	23	31
X PMIA 2	10	22	32
X PMIA 3	21	8	29
X PIS 1	17	12	29
X PIS 2	19	10	29
Total	75	75	150

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data of this study were collected through closed-ended questionnaires. Closed-ended questions are used when all the possible, relevant responses to a question can be specified, and the number of possible responses is limited (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). The questionnaires contained 25 questions with 5 scaled items (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = usually, 5 = always).

After the data were collected, they were then be analyzed through the following procedures (Gravett and Caldwell, 2016):

2.2.1 Scoring the Questionnaires and Their Interpretations

To avoid misunderstanding while the participants (students) filling the questionnaires, the questionnaires were designed in Bahasa Indonesia. The questionnaires were distributed through Google Doc. application. The respondents filled it online. The scores of each student were then interpreted as the followings:

Table 4. Score Interpretations

Score	Agility Level	Interpretation
0 – 45	Low	Tend to avoid activities that promote learning agility. Gaining competency in this area will take effort and patience.
46 – 90	Moderate	Tend to be comfortable with activities that promote learning agility, although you do not always go out of your way to use this competency. With some effort you could build

		learning agility, and the experience would be very satisfying.
91 – 125	High	This is your comfort zone, where you show a high level of confidence and learning agility. You are encouraged to coach others on achieving higher levels of learning agility.

2.2.2 Finding the Percentage of the Agility of Male and Female Students

After all data were classified, they were finally calculated to find the percentage in order to know the comparison of learning agility between male and female students. To find the number of students agility level, the following formula was used:

$$P = \frac{r}{n} x\ 100$$

Note:

P = Percentage
r = Number of students
n = Sample of research

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Score of Male and Female Students' Agility

The score of male students' agility for each type can be seen on the table below. The subtotal score in mental agility is 1581; people agility is 1666; change agility is 1665; and result agility is 1886. Hence, the total score for all types of agility is 6798.

Table 5. Agility Scores of Male Students

	Score of Each Type of Agility			
No	Mental	People	Change	Result
1	266	260	275	267
2	248	278	238	279
3	271	275	292	250
4	257	288	274	273
5	283	289	287	272
6	256	276	299	257
7	-	-	-	288
Sub Total	1581	1666	1665	1886
Total	6798			

While, the score of female students' agility for each type can be seen on the table below. The subtotal score in mental agility is 1582; people agility is 1653; change agility is 1639; and result agility is 1957. Hence, the total score for all type of agility is 6831.

Table 6. Agility Scores of Female Students

	Score of Each Type of Agility			
No	Mental	People	Change	Result
1	277	269	276	271
2	244	253	231	283
3	287	288	269	223
4	234	288	286	279
5	287	282	288	305
6	253	273	289	284
7	-	-	-	312
Sub Total	1582	1653	1639	1957
Total	6831			

3.2 Levels of Male and Female Students' Agility

The number of male and female students who achieved low, moderate and high level of agility is described in the table below. It can be seen that: (1) there were 41 male students and 39 female students who had high agility; (2). there were 34 male students and 36 female students who had moderate agility. The high level means the students have a high level of confidence and learning agility as well as encouraged to coach others on achieving

higher levels of learning agility. While the moderate level means the students have some effort to build learning agility and the experience was satisfying. None of the male and female students had low level of agility.

Table 7. Agility Levels of Male and Female Students

Gender	Level of Agility		
	Low (0 - 45)	Moderate (46 - 90)	High (91 - 125)
Male	-	34	41
Female	-	36	39

The percentage of agility level between male and female students is described in table below. From 150 participants, the percentage of male students who had high level of agility was in 27,33%, while the female students was in 26%. As for the percentage of male students who had moderate level of agility was in 22,67%, while the female students was in 24%. None of the male and female students had low level of agility.

Table 8. Percentage of Male and Female Students' Agility Level

Gender	Level of Agility		
	Low (0 - 45)	Moderate (46 - 90)	High (91 - 125)
Male	-	22,67%	27,33%
Female	-	24%	26%

CONCLUSION

In relation to the scores of questionnaires filled by the students, female students' score was higher than male students'. However, in the learning activities, the male students was proven more agile than the female students. This means when it came to general calculation of score, the female students were higher or more agile. While when it was seen individually, especially in the learning activities, the number of male students had higher level of agility rather than the female students. So the term "nobody is perfect" is appropriate to mention regarding to the findings. Each gender has its own strengths and weaknesses. The female students are superior to male students in mental and result agility. The male students are superior to female students in people and change agility. Thus, it is important for EFL teachers to identify and develop students' learning agility to enhance their life skill since what is needed in the field of work is not merely knowledge, but also skills and attitudes. As such, it is the responsibility of teachers to be aware of EFL learning style and strategy especially during this Covid-19 pandemic era. Teachers should understand how to reach students and enhance them so that students' achievement can be effectively improved both in and out of the classroom (Wehrwein et. al, 2007). Naturally, both male and female students have strategies to endure themselves in EFL learning.

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