

# Students' Learning Approach in SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja in The EFL Online Learning Context

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the learning approach of tenth-grade students in SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja in the EFL online learning context. The study employed quantitative research. The sample involves 89 students in tenth grade in the Hotel Accommodation program. This study used the R-SPQ-2F questionnaire which was modified for the online learning context. The data analysis was implemented in the R-SPQ-2F questionnaire mean score analysis. The results showed that tenth-grade students in SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja tend to surface approach ( $t_{sap} = 29.55 > t_{dap} = 28.32$ ). It is suggested students will study in-depth to build meaningful learning by understanding concepts and developing potential optimally in the implication of learning English as a foreign language in the online learning context.*

**Keywords:** EFL, Online Learning, Students' Learning Approach

## Introduction

Knowledge is the basis of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, which affects all aspects of life (Santyasa, 2018). As a result of globalization, technological improvements also followed this era. Technology is developing rapidly, and it is possible to combine it with knowledge. In the learning process, both teachers and students are required to use technology like today (Wijaya et al., 2022). Technology advancements also followed this era, which enhances the development of independent learners by highlighting the potential characteristics of the twenty-first century (Wiraningsih & Santosa, 2020). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, students are emphasized to be able to master 4C namely communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation (Miller & Northern, 2011; Santyasa, 2018; Wijaya et al., 2016).

Globalization has an impact on human life in the education field. In this era, students are digitally literate (Budiarta & Santosa, 2020). As a result, now in the learning process, there is the involvement of technology. This shifts the role of the teacher, whereas in conventional learning the teacher's role dominates the class compared to students causing students passive (Dipayana et al., 2019). With the development of technology as it is now, both teachers and students are required to use technology in the learning process (Wijaya et al., 2022). The ability to master English is important since it is an international language. Due to the global competitiveness, students must have good communication skills, which is one of the 21st century competencies. In a vocational context, since vocational schools are likely to focus on practical learning, it is known as skill-based education (Lumatauw et al., 2020). Vocational schools educate students in the acquisition of practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge in order to create students who are professional and competent to work in line with the program studied (Kurniawati, 2022; Lumatauw et al., 2020; Suartini, 2019). In terms of English learning, vocational students are taught how to use English for specific needs (Vogt & Kantelinen, 2013). The students' learning needs should be clearly represented in the development of English learning materials in vocational high school in order to encourage students in achieving better performance in the real work field (Mahbub, 2019).

The world is currently facing a pandemic covid-19 and has a huge influence on many aspects. Since the pandemic, online learning came out to answer the challenge in to omit the barrier of distance since it offers the flexibility of learning (Suputra, 2021). Online learning is defined as learning at a distance (Rakhmanina et al., 2020). Due to the limited flexibility of presence in sharing the material, conducting the meeting is supported by utilizing several platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp (Sumadi et al., 2022). As it is the safest and easiest way of learning during the outbreak, online learning is considered as the new normal for young minds across the world. In this context, all activities take place in a fully virtual environment, which raises a number of problems that include devices and facilities to learning and teaching processes and learning strategies, all of which have the potential to influence student learning approaches in the learning process today.

The students' learning approach is defined by the strategies that students use to solve problems whose motives are determined by students (Biggs, 1989). A two concepts approach to deep and surface learning might be used to understand similar results related to the way students process knowledge (Biggs, 1989; Marton & Saljo, 1976). The findings of this research suggest that while developing a learning approach, students can either adopt a deep approach or adopt a surface approach. Each student may use a different learning approach, according to Rosito (2020) the concept of a learning approach where an individual is in the learning process and the selection of an effective strategy in mastering the subject matter is related to the strength and will of the individual. Further, since adopting a specific learning approach is important, several contextual factors might influence students' preference for a learning approach (Dinsmore, 2017).

Research on learning approach has been carried out in countries such as Australia, Europe and Korea. In higher education, the learning approach used is mostly a deep approach (Asikainen & Gijbels, 2017; Desierto et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020). This is due to factors such as specific learning skills, strategies to manage information, quality of teaching and educational environment

(Desierto et al., 2018). According to Lee et al. (2020), belief in growing an independent person as lifelong learning. By promoting a deep approach in order to achieve better performance and professionalism as life-long learner (Lee et al., 2020). Thus, these may be enabling students to adopt deep learning. In order directing students to use an in-depth learning approach assisting in the implementation of the knowledge in real world application as it is a matter in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

In the Indonesian context, students tend to adopt a surface approach. A study carried out by Hulreski et al. (2020) found that the large number of students oriented surface learning more than deep one. Other results of the learning approach adopted by the students found in Hussin et al. (2017) regardless of their faculties or gender, prefer a thorough approach to learning. In this context, learning English as foreign language is still faced problems by Indonesian learners. Most Indonesian students think English is difficult (Tambunsaribu & Galingging, 2022). This assumption causes a setback in improving skills in learning languages, especially English. There are differences in Asian and Western students, according to Gan (2009), Asian learners apply rote learning and lack critical thinking skills, rely on teachers and are reluctant to ask. This can lead students to learn in a surface approach. According to Cheng (2000) Asian students while studying tend to wait for the teacher and are passive. This is contrary to vocational context learning in learning English directed to real-world applications since the vocational context is prepared for the world of work (Handoko et al., 2020; Mahbub, 2019).

In SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja, students tend to apply a surface learning approach. This happens due to several factors that lead students to apply a surface learning approach. First, students put minimal effort in learning by meeting subject requirements. Second, tend to be passive by waiting for their friend's answer. In the implementation of online learning, some students might face technical problems in terms of signals, quotas, and devices which might influence students' learning approach since it is considered conducting online learning. In this situation, all of them play a very influential role in the context of the student learning approach. Based on this background, this study aims to investigate the learning approach of tenth grade students in learning English as foreign language during an online learning context at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja.

## **Method**

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design. This design was used to describe the situation or phenomenon without explaining relationships and does not test hypotheses or make predictions (Rakhmat, 2009). The data was collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire is typically used to collect full information on the concerns of the respondents by selecting the answer to the questions in the sample (Smarandache et al., 2020). The study was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja. The setting was chosen due to the research regarding students' learning approach never being conducted before in SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja. This research used the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5% to determine the representative of students. Based on calculation by using the Slovin formula there were 85 students as representative respondents for the survey. In this research non-probability sampling of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling in which researchers choose participants for their surveys

by using their judgments (Tongco, 2007). The instrument used is the R-SPQ-2F questionnaire which was developed by Biggs et al. (2001). The questionnaire consists of 20 statements with two main dimensions namely deep approach and surface approach and uses five Likert scales. The questionnaire has been calculated by using Gregory's formula before being used. The results showed that the instrument was valid and reliable since the results showed that the validity of the questionnaire's items was 1 and the reliability test through Cronbach's Alpha was 0.894. Based on a validity test on questionnaire items from 20 items, and 1 item was considered invalid due to the significance (sig.)  $< 0.361$ . It can be concluded that the questionnaire was valid and reliable. The questionnaire data were analyzed using the R-SPQ-2F mean score formula (Biggs et al., 2001).

## Findings

The following table presented the result of students' approach to learning in 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja.

*Table 1. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade SAL in the EFL online learning context*

Students' Learning Approach	Deep Approach	Surface Approach
	Tdap (total deep approach)	Tsap (total surface approach)
N/Valid	89	89
Mean	28.32	29.65
Std. Dev	6.044	6.056

Based on the results of a questionnaire regarding the learning approach of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja in the Hotel Accommodation program showed that they are more likely to use the surface approach. It can be seen from the total of surface approach is higher rather than the total of deep approach (tsap= 29.65 > tdap= 28.32). In an online learning context, students prefer to learn by minimum effort to passing the grades without meaning the content of learning. The deep approach score standard deviation is 6,04, while the surface approach score standard deviation is 6,05. The low standard deviation implies that the data distribution is homogenous, indicating that the majority of the answers are the same.

## Discussion

The questionnaire result showed that the tenth-grade students in SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja in the Hotel Accommodation program tend to perform in the surface approach. This finding is similar to Irgatoğlu (2021) who found that the surface approach was the dominant approach used by students in Turkey towards learning foreign languages. Similar findings on high school students in the Indonesian context, according to Mulyani et al. (2020) on their study suggest that the tendency of students in learning English was at surface level. Further, in their study, they found the students who are learning English as a duty. This happens due to students' thoughts and beliefs

regarding the concept of learning as defined by culture and society (Alkhateeb & Milhem, 2020). Previous research by Dardjowidjojo (2006) supports findings in the study which reveal Indonesian students lean towards a surface rather than a deep approach in terms of rote strategy, low order thinking skills, passive, compliant and unreflective learning. According to Biggs (1988), surface learning approach classified students' learning tendency to complete the course, get a high score, and use rote learning. Students use their ability in memorization and focus on the bare minimum of subject requirement (Hu & Yeo, 2020). In the context of the academic year, Marušić et al. (2017) study on approaches to learning among first-year and fifth-year students' teachers on a number of variables relevant to students' academic performance. In their study, the first-year students who are likely to have a surface approach to learning compared with final-year students are likely to apply a deep approach due to being more adaptive and proactive. The first-year students had experienced transition to higher education which they are not well prepared for a new environment, compared with final-year students are familiar with the demands of the teacher studied and it makes them to be more confident regarding their performance (Marušić et al., 2017).

This study also indicates some students applied a deep approach. Unlike surface approach, students who tend to perform a deep approach have intention to meaningfully comprehend the information. This is in line with study from Takase et al. (2020), students engage meaningfully in learning by linking one idea to another, grasping the topic through reading widely, and analyzing thoughts critically. Similar study also was found in Hussin et al. (2017) students in vocational schools are aware of the need to engage in deep learning to develop criteria required by the profession. Students are conscious of the importance of learning English as it is used today, and they want to be able to communicate effectively in it. This is in line with Iswati (2019) in order to be able to compete worldwide in the current era, understanding English is one of the competencies that are taken into consideration. It is needed to take the requirements of the students into consideration when developing meaningful learning. Further, as it fits with students' necessity, it could be beneficial for them (Albiansyah et al., 2020). Students would implement it in the real world if they found it is beneficial for them. Developing long-term individual interest and ongoing learning by providing relevant knowledge (O'Keefe et al., 2017). According to Precourt & Gainor (2019), students are willing to pursue if they think the subject interesting and relevant. Students apply a deep approach to subjects in which students are intrinsically motivated (Biggs 1987). According to Triyanto (2019) defined intrinsic motivation when they enjoy doing an activity meanwhile extrinsic motivation when they want to gain a reward or avoid a punishment. Students' motivation has influential roles in defining learning approach.

## **Conclusions and Suggestions**

In this study, it was found that the tendency of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja in the Hotel Accommodation program tends to perform a surface approach in learning English. Students with a surface learning approach show a minimum effort by meeting the subject requirements. This study also revealed students with a deep approach. Unlike surface approach, students with a deep approach are intrinsically motivated due to finding some topics that could be interesting and beneficial to apply in the real world. After conducting the study, several



suggestions can be given. It is suggested that teachers recognize the importance of learners having in-depth learning in order to produce meaningful learning. Besides teachers, the students are encouraged to adopt a deep approach since an online system like today is required to be able to develop 4C skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study might be utilized as a resource for other researchers conducting related studies in the topic of students' learning approach.

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