AGENCY IN ONLINE FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AMIDST THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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ABSTRACT

The coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) outbreak has forced a sudden transition from face-to-face learning to online learning in higher education. This circumstance challenges university students to be more self-directed in learning with relatively minimum assistance from their lecturers or peers. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important to conduct a study on the issue of learner agency which remains little explored. The present study aimed at investigating the agency of first-year university students in online learning of Arabic as a foreign language. In particular, this study examines their intention, motivation, self-regulation and self-efficacy in online learning of Arabic delivered synchronously by using Google Meet and asynchronously by using Edmodo. An exploratory research method was employed in the study with the participation of 76 first-year university students at an Islamic public university in Jakarta, Indonesia. Results of the study reveal that first-year university students have a relatively high intention, motivation, self-regulation and self-efficacy in Arabic online learning. Looking these findings into more detail, however, the students seem to have limited information and preparation to achieve their goals, are undermotivated to speak with native Arabic speakers, have shallow learning commitments, and are less likely to believe their performance. One of the practical implications that emerge from this study is to introduce first-year university students to a variety of strategies for learning Arabic in more self-directed ways, and this may be supported by lecturers as to not only delivering content but also promoting skills during their teaching practices.

Keywords: Learner agency, online learning, distance learning, Arabic as a foreign language.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) as a global pandemic has forced higher education institutions to immediately shift from face-to-face learning to online learning. Consequently, this circumstance has also challenged university students to learn in more independent ways. While it is evidence that remote learning could be the measure to prevent massive transmission of the virus, this way of learning serves considerable challenges which mainly regarding students' lack of motivation and engagement (Argaheni, 2020; Lee et al., 2015). The effectiveness of online learning relies on the active participation of learners

(Mick, 2011). Learners must be able to drive themselves by taking advantage of available resources in web-based learning environments (Li, 2020). Furthermore, being a highly self-directed learner is inevitable so that they could learn flexibly at anytime and anywhere with minimum assistance from their lecturers and peers (McClaskey, 2018). Their abilities to learn independently thus appears to have a significant influence on online learning performances.

Learner agency could play a pivotal role in Arabic online learning at this tumultuous time. The concept of learner agency refers to learners' natural potential for self-directed engagement (Mercer, 2011) and their capability to deal appropriately with any particular learning circumstances (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Xiao (2014) argues that learner agency may support students to learn more independently by enhancing self-efficacy, identity, motivation, and learner metacognition. Accordingly, Larsen-Freeman (2019) recommends that learner agency should be improved gradually to promote effective foreign language learning. By doing so, it contributes to increasing learners' awareness of their responsibilities in learning.

So far, however, there have been few studies exploring learner agency in the learning of Arabic as a foreign language. Previous studies focused on the role of learner agency in English as foreign language learning (Chi & Hamid, 2015; Ferlazzo & Hull-Sypnieski, 2016; Liao, 2019; Teng, 2019). Research on Arabic online teaching and learning In Indonesia by far tend to address the online learning process and students' attitude (Febriani et al., 2020), the use of teaching media (Ahmadi & Ilmiani, 2020), the impact of technology (Febriani & Anasruddin, 2020), and obstacles faced by teachers (Zulaini et al., 2020). The significance of this study lies in the fact that Arabic is a foreign language used by more than 150 million people as the language of everyday communication and is in the fifth position after Chinese, English, Spanish and Indian (Muis, 2020). Moreover, Arabic is the second most widely used foreign language in Indonesia and becomes the icon of Islamic higher education (Warnis et al., 2019). Studying the agency of learners in Arabic as second language learning thus could contribute to the growing body of knowledge in foreign language learning.

The present study investigates the agency of first-year university students in online learning of Arabic as a foreign language by drawing on the theory of human agency (Bandura, 2008) with four core elements namely intentionality, forethought or learning motivation, self-regulated learning and self-efficacy. After reviewing the literature and describing the research methodologies used in this study, the results are presented and discussed according to the focus that covers intentionality, learning motivation, self-regulated learning and self-efficacy in online learning of Arabic as a foreign language.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Learner Agency in an Online Learning Setting

Agency plays a prominent role in learning. It is generally defined as an individual's awareness and capability to decide and be responsible for the decision (Gao, 2010; Martin, 2004). According to Vaughn (2020), agency consists of dispositional, motivational and positional dimensions which allow individuals to transform environments, regulate actions, and interact with complex societal contexts. Regarding learner agency, Larsen–Freeman (2019) defines it as learners' ownership and control of their learning (pp. 70–71). It comprises both ability and preparedness of learners to take fully-responsible actions, which can be identified from their interest and commitment to undertake learning assignments or tasks (Siry et al., 2016). More specifically, learner agency establishes students' capacities to be aware of individual goals, manage classroom interactions, personalise learning, and enhance overall learning environments (Jaaskela et al., 2017; Luo et al., 2019; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Those performances may happen with an active interplay between students' autonomous learning engagement and contextual factors (Mercer, 2012). Chaaban et al., (2021) point out that learner agency is influenced by students' motivation and self-regulation as well as socio-cultural support. The higher agency of the students, the higher possibilities for them to succeed in learning.

Learner agency plays an even more critical in the context of online instructions as the learning environments are by far different to that of face-to-face ones. Students have limited physical contact and social interaction with their lectures and peers (Almendingen et al., 2021). They have to be able to manage their cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes themselves as they interact mainly with virtual learning resources and environments (Code, 2020). Students' learning intention, motivation, and self-regulation are therefore critical and have significant influences on their online learning outcomes (Greener, 2010; Zeiser et al.,

2018). It is evident that learning remotely requires intensive learner agency.

There are several aspects of learner agency. Based on Bandura (2006) conceptualises four features of learner agency namely intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness (self-regulation), and self-reflectiveness (self-efficacy). Intentionality is a deliberate action by an individual to achieve properly a particular planned outcome (Bandura, 2001) with full awareness in action and mind (Brownell, 2013; Noctor, 2017). In the learning context, intentionality can be seen as students' competence for planning and achieving learning goals. Forethought refers to the individual ability to stimulate self-motivation and manage outcomes in an appropriate way (Bandura, 2006). If students are motivated to learn, they may regulate their behaviour to attain established goals (Brady & Gilligan, 2020; Garcia-Martin & Garcia-Sanchez, 2020). Self-reactiveness or self-regulation is an active process where students could monitor, regulate and control their motivation and behaviour to reach their goals (Pintrich, 2004). According to Zimmerman (2002), self-regulation was defined as a learner's self-directive process to transform mental abilities into academic skills. The application in learning is that students should be able to select and regulate appropriate strategies to achieve desired goals (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy is awareness to conduct self-reflection and self-improvement on their efficacy, thoughts, and actions (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy empowers students to evaluate their plans for the corresponding outcomes.

As this study investigates agency in online learning, it is also important to acknowledge the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model. Within this model, it is possible to describe how learning happens in a particular context by individual or group with the intersection of social, cognitive and teaching presence (Garrison et al., 2001). In the latest literature, this also involves learning presence (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010; 2012). Learning presence indicates students' proactiveness to organise thoughts, motivations, behaviours and strategies (Shea et al., 2012) which is related closely to the notion of learner agency. Meanwhile, in comparison with learning presence, learner agency has one more component namely self-reflectiveness or self-efficacy as a final element that enables students to self-evaluate their milestones contributing to the continued motivation, interest, and performance (Garcia-Martin & Garcia-Sanchez, 2018; Panadero et al., 2017) specifically in the online classroom (Landrum, 2020; Yokoyama, 2019). The concept of learner agency complements learning presence in a way that students have not only the capability to control and direct themselves but also the capacity to reflect and improve their personal decisions, actions, and goals in digital environments.

Arabic Language Teaching in the Indonesian Context

Since the vast majority of Indonesian are Muslim, the Arabic language has been very well-accepted in the country. It is the language of the Holy Qur'an (Al Shlowiy, 2019) and Islamic worship (Wekke, 2015). Following the popularity of English, Arabic becomes the second most learned language in Indonesia (Lauder, 2008) widely taught in state and private schools and universities. In Indonesian Islamic universities, Arabic is a compulsory language course for all students (Albantani & Madkur, 2019). Therefore, the language is very familiar to almost everyone although with different levels of proficiency.

Despite the familiarity, there are still many challenges in teaching the Arabic language in Indonesia. It can be said that the learning of Arabic was not as successful compared to those of English, Korean, or Mandarin (Kuraedah et al., 2018). One of the critical problems is that Arabic language teaching practices remain teacher-centred and based mainly on textbooks (Taha-Thomure, 2008). As a result, the learners are rather passive and have minimum engagement in the classroom. Another main problem is that the integration of educational technologies into Arabic learning is somehow limited compared to the English ones (Harahap, 2017; Andika 2020). These challenges indicate further work in the future.

Teaching Arabic as a foreign language for Indonesian students has become more challenging during the Covid-19 pandemic. The dramatic shift from conventional to online learning was demanded a high degree of learning agency (Xiao, 2014; Zeiser et al., 2018). The tendency of students for being passive and non-independent learners may create bigger barriers to the successful implementation of Arabic remote learning. Therefore, this study was aimed at exploring learner agency in online learning of Arabic as a second language in higher education with the main research question: how do university students perceive their agency and how do they apply it in online Arabic language learning?

The study may contribute to understanding university students' agency in a distance learning environment. Learner agency has a dynamic process and varies in a different context (Schoon, 2018). It is another vital concern to study learner agency in a digital learning setting (Jaaskela et al., 2017) as it has a typical learning experience and presence (Prakasha et al., 2020). The results of this study could be valuable for practitioners and policymakers to design and develop more tailored instructions and policies in the field of Arabic online learning.

METHOD

An investigative exploration approach (Stebbins, 2001) was administered in this study to understand learner agency in Arabic language learning delivered remotely during the Covid-19 crisis. The exploratory research method was chosen as it seems to be suitable to investigate learner agency within an online learning mode during the pandemic, and it also provides flexibility to comprehensively reflect the understudied problems (Schutt, 2019). Moreover, it was conducted at an Islamic public university in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, from July to October 2020. The research setting was decided in an urban area as it appears to have relatively proper access to Internet connections.

Participants

The present study was participated by 76 first-year university students after attending an Arabic language online course in one semester. Those students come from two classes with the same instructor. Detailed information about their profiles is provided in the following table.

Table 1. The Profile of the First-Year University Students

Class	Students	Percentage
A	38	50%
B	38	50%
Total	76	100%
Gender	**Students**	**Percentage**
Male	33	43 .42 %
Female	43	5 6.58 %
Total	76	100%
Age	**Students**	**Percentage**
<18	7	9 .21 %
18-20	50	6 5.79 %
21-23	14	18 .42 %
24-26	4	5.26 %
> 26	1	1 .32 %
Total	76	100%
Marital status	**Students**	**Percentage**
Single	70	92 .11 %
Married	6	7.89 %
Total	76	100%
Socioeconomic status	**Students**	**Percentage**
High	4	5.26 %
Middle	54	71.05 %
Low	18	23 .69 %
Total	76	100%

Devices for distance learning	Students	Percentage
Smartphones	67	88 .16 %
Tablets	1	1 .32 %
Laptops	8	1 0.52 %
Desktop computers	0	0 %
Total	76	100%

Table 1 describes the profile of first-year university students participating in this study and their used technologies for distance learning. The majority of students are female, aged between 18 and 20 years old and come from middle socioeconomic status with more than 70% of them. In terms of devices, smartphones are the most used ones (88%) to access online learning, followed by laptops (10%) and tablets (1%). No one uses desktop computers to participate in remote learning.

Procedures

An online questionnaire (using Google Form) was distributed to the first-year university students following their attendance in an Arabic online course delivered in asynchronous (using Edmodo) and synchronous (using Google Meet) modes. The course consists of 14 weekly meetings including midterm and final examinations. Regarding the questionnaire, the study employed the Agency for Learning Questionnaire (AFLQ) developed by Code (2020) from the theoretical framework of human agency comprising its features: intentionality, learning motivation, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2008). It has six levels on the Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree.

Regarding the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, AFLQ was chosen as it offers a reliable, valid, multidimensional measure of agency for learning based on current theoretical and empirical findings (Code, 2020). All data from the questionnaire were then analysed using descriptive statistical techniques to simplify, analyse, and describe the main features of the data (Holcomb, 2017). It started by tabulating the data in the Microsoft Excel application, adding a percentage score to the data, then presenting the analysed data in a summary table.

Ethics

The participants voluntarily participated in this study and information related to ethical research has been also communicated to them. It was informed in advance to the students that their participation would not affect the formative and summative examination grades. Further, all generated data from the questionnaire could only be used for scientific purposes.

RESULTS

The main findings of the study are presented in this section. The findings focus on the analysis of students' learner agency in the Arabic language course and are divided into four sub-headings including intentionality, learning motivation, self-regulated learning, and self-efficacy. Furthermore, the discussion in this study criticises some specific issues in students' learner agency. Several implications for improving students' Arabic language proficiency and Arabic language learning are presented as well.

Intentionality

Intentions are realised by setting the goals of learning and planning the strategies to achieve them (Bandura, 2008). To see students' intention in online learning of Arabic as a foreign language, the developed questionnaire examines some specific aspects such as their decision making, willingness to master language skills, learning goals and strategies.

Table 2. The intentionality of the First-Year University Students in Arabic Online Learning

Statements	Mean	SD
I decided to study Arabic of my own accord	5.37	0.73
I gathered a lot of information in deciding to learn Arabic	4. 79	1. 00
I feel confident in deciding to learn the Arabic language	5.03	0.83
I want to master the elements of the Arabic language (mufradat, qawaid, ashwat)	5.18	0.99
I want to master Arabic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing)	5.43	0.57
I have a specific goal in learning Arabic	5.04	0.86
I prepared a strategy to achieve the goal of learning Arabic	4.91	0.91
Total	**5.11**	**0.84**

Table 2 describes the intention of first-year university students in Arabic online learning. Overall, students have a relatively high intention to learn Arabic, but they seem to have limited abilities to search for information and prepare learning strategies. The students' decision to learn Arabic and intention to master elements and skills related to the Arabic language have an average score over 5.15. In contrast, students' efforts to obtain information and use strategies to achieve learning goals have an average of less than 5.00. The average in other aspects could be categorised in the medium category with a slightly higher value than the previous category. The data is quite varied as indicated by the standard deviation values for all items that reach above 0.5.

Learning Motivation

Learning motivation in this study refers to what Bandura (2008) named forethought. Code (2020) highlights that through forethought, students motivate themselves and guide their actions to anticipate upcoming events. The more detailed objective of this study is to investigate the internal and external motivation of students in Arabic online learning. More specifically, it was aimed to evaluate students' motivation in learning the Arabic language in terms of their future orientation, interest in learning Arabic, willingness to face challenges, and target making.

Table 3. The Motivation of the First-Year University Students in Arabic Online Learning

Statements	Mean	SD
I feel that learning Arabic is important for the future of my education	5.49	0.55
I feel that learning Arabic will allow me to get to know more people from various countries	5.33	0.62
I am very interested in learning Arabic	5.37	0.56
I am challenged to be able to speak to native Arabic speakers well	5.07	0.81
I am challenged to be able to complete all assignments in Arabic courses well	5.17	0.72
I am challenged to be able to read Arabic texts well	5.22	0.70
I try to make the results of studying Arabic courses satisfying	5.38	0.56
Total	**5.29**	**0.64**

Table 3 describes the motivation of first-year university students in Arabic online learning. It is noticeable that overall students have a relatively high motivation to learn Arabic, but they appear to be less challenged to practice speaking with native Arabic speakers. The importance of learning Arabic has an average value of over 5. 40. On the contrary, students' motivation to challenge themselves to speak with native speakers has an average value below 5.10. The average value on other aspects can be categorised in the medium category with a slightly higher value than the previous category. The data is quite varied as indicated by the standard deviation values for all items that reach above 0.5.

Self-Regulated Learning

To investigate students' self-regulated learning ability in Arabic language learning, this study addressed some specific aspects such as their plan makings, target settings, learning strategies selection, problem-solving strategies, learning strategies adjustment and use of reward and punishment in the learning process.

Table 4. The Self-Regulation of the First-Year University Students in Arabic Online Learning

Statements	Mean	SD
I make plans (for example, what to do, when to start, where to do it, etc.) before starting to work on assignments in Arabic courses.	4.82	0.71
I set the target I should achieve in Arabic language courses	4.92	0.69
I chose learning strategies that can help me achieve the targets to be achieved	5.05	0.71
I will find ways to solve the problem if problems arise in the process of learning Arabic	5.08	0.63
I can judge whether I have progressed or not in learning Arabic	5.01	0.76
I will adjust or change the learning strategy if my learning strategy is not effective	5.18	0.53
I give rewards or punishment to myself if my assignments have or have not been completed	4.43	1.18
Total	**4.93**	**0.74**

Table 4 describes the self-regulation of first-year university students in Arabic online learning. Overall, it can be seen that students have relatively high self-regulation to learn Arabic, but they still do not provide rewards or punishment for learning outcomes. Student self-regulation to adjust or change Arabic learning strategies has an average score above 5.15. Conversely, a lower value of 4.50 was shown in giving rewards or punishment for learning outcomes. The average in other aspects can be categorised in the medium category with a slightly higher value than the previous category. The data is quite varied as indicated by the standard deviation values for all items that reach above 0.5.

Self-Efficacy

To examine students' self-efficacy in online learning of Arabic as a foreign language, this study focused on some specific issues such as their effort, self-judgment, sustained interest in learning, reflection of their proficiency and adjustment in any necessary circumstances.

Table 5. The Self-Efficacy of the First-Year University Students in Arabic Online Learning

Statements	Mean	SD
I feel that my efforts have been maximized in understanding the lecture material	4.42	1.15
I understood the material presented after attending Arabic language lectures	4.68	0.88
I continued studying during the Arabic class even though other things were more interesting	4.82	0.96
I have better Arabic skills than some of my friends	3.25	1.47
I was able to motivate myself to do all assignments in Arabic courses	4.75	0.98
I am proud to be able to use Arabic in my daily life	5.00	0.94
I was able to help a friend who had difficulty understanding Arabic course material	4.42	1.15
Total	**4.48**	**1.08**

Table 4 describes the self-efficacy of first-year university students in Arabic online learning. In general, it is clear that students have relatively high confidence in learning Arabic, but they are unlikely to believe themselves when creating any judgments about their Arabic proficiency. Students' confidence in using

Arabic in their daily life have an average score above 5.15. However, their belief in Arabic proficiency has an average of only 3.25. The average in other aspects can be categorised in the medium category with a slightly higher value than the previous category. The data is quite varied as indicated by the standard deviation values for all items that reach above 0.5.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is presented critically according to the aims and results of this study which covers intentionality, learning motivation, self-regulated learning and self-efficacy in online learning of Arabic as a foreign language.

Intentionality

First-year university students have a relatively high intention to learn Arabic although they prepare minimum strategies to achieve learning goals. Knowing which strategies are suitable for students to reach their goals is essential as it benefits learners to overcome any arisen problems in learning the Arabic language (Hapsari, 2019). A study by Sukardi (2014) has also shown that learners who can determine and use language-learning strategies have higher possibilities to achieve good examination scores. It is suggested for lecturers to promote strategies for learning Arabic in remote ways during teaching practices.

Students gather little information before deciding to learn Arabic. It is common for students to assume that online learning of Arabic could be joined without any preparations (Ediyani et al., 2020; Robinson, 2020). They also tend to learn Arabic as a means of completing obligations as it is a mandatory course (Alghamdi & Li, 2012). Lecturers have an important role, in this case, to provide information as rich as possible about the Arabic language course before it starts.

It is of great importance to introduce students to a variety of strategies for learning Arabic and this must be supported by lecturers with not only teach the content but also the language skills during their teaching in the online classroom. A study shows that Arabic learners understand the subject matter well but they are poor in implementing oral and written communication skills (Ghani et al., 2011). Mastery of content and language skills could certainly prepare students to practice Arabic as a foreign language more communicatively in both oral and written means (Mistar & Umamah, 2014; Yaqub, 2012).

Learning Motivation

First-year university students have a relatively high motivation to learn Arabic and it is mainly due to their perception that Arabic is important for their future. This finding inlines with Husseianali (2005) reveals that students perceive learning Arabic as more valuable compared to other languages from the standpoint of the labour market. The previous evidence is in contrast with Ajape et al (2015) which show that, from the students' perspectives, learning Arabic cannot provide proper jobs in the future. They believe that Arabic is only useful for better understanding Islam. Therefore, lecturers may strengthen students' motivation in online learning of Arabic in terms of job and religious orientation. In this sense, Sa'fan & Mahmud (2005) noted that Arabic language teaching should address four demands, namely demand for technological change, demand for value changes that develop in society, demand for social and economic change, and demand for educational change.

Students appear to be less challenged to speak with native Arabic speakers. This contradicts Al-Mohsen (2016) who shows that students are by far very interested to interact with native speakers in the Arabic language. According to Haron et al (2016), students are not challenged to speak with native Arabic speakers because there is no institutional support to provide an adequate Arabic language environment. Additionally, the practice of teaching and learning Arabic tends to memorise structured dialogues rather than teaching students to have natural speaking competencies with native speakers (Sarip et al., 2018). Lecturers individually or institutionally have to provide more real-world language instructions so that students may have a higher interest in speaking with natives (Zailaini et al., 2015).

In online learning, the use of audio-visual media could increase students' motivation to learn and practice Arabic language communicative skills (Rachmawati et al., 2020). Although there are no native Arabic teachers who can be involved in the learning process (Binti Jasni & Ardiansyah, 2020; Haron et al., 2016) or students tend to be afraid to make mistakes when speaking in Arabic (Dajani et al., 2014), integrating learning technologies (Rahmadi, 2021) and advanced lesson plans that provide students possibilities to remotely communicate with native Arabic speakers such as OME TV could be a solution.

Self-Regulated Learning

First-year university students have relatively high self-regulation to learn Arabic and they have attempted to adapt relevant learning strategies according to the current situation. It is great to know that students have tried to decide possible strategies for them to learn Arabic as it may enhance Arabic learning performance (Al-Ahdal and Al-Ma'amari 2015; Nurhidayati, Irhamni, and Ainin 2020). Lecturers could help students with corresponding learning strategies personalised to their characteristics and learning styles.

Students are less likely to reward or punish themselves for achieving goals in Arabic online learning. Having balance to appreciate or penalise is of great importance to disciplinaries students and this could be done by verbal and non-verbal actions (Irawati & Syafei, 2016). This is also in line with a study by Putri and Refnaldi (2020) stating that a reward-and-punishment strategy may change students' behaviour so that students would join the course more seriously (Sutaman & Febriani, 2021).

Self-regulated learning requires students' independencies in online learning of Arabic. They must be prepared to plan, gain, and reflect on their accomplishments. Properly planning the learning is useful to improve target achievements significantly in Arabic online learning (Arifin et al., 2020; Wekke, 2018; Faryadi, 2012; Hazhar Fachrial et al., 2018). In the teaching practice, lecturers may also help students to improve their independencies in learning by introducing a variety of tactics for being more self-regulated learners.

Self-Efficacy

First-year university students have relatively high self-efficacy to learn Arabic and they can evaluate their efforts in online learning of Arabic. This skill is critical in the current situation where students are mostly separated from their lecturers and peers. Students who could assess themselves are commonly more interested in their studies (Tillema, 2010). Since they know what they learn, the students achieve relatively better performance as well.

Students are unlikely to believe themselves about their performance compared to their peers. Self-confidence contributes to the development of students' learning strategies to improve Arabic language skills (Adnan & Mohamad 2011; Tibi et al. 2016), thus this might be a serious issue to address. Promoting peer learning may be one of the solutions (Albantani and Madkur 2019; Arifin et al 2020) and could increase their learning achievements (Zarifnejad et al., 2018) more collaboratively.

Another issue is related to cooperation among students when facing difficulties in learning Arabic. This happens due to students' backgrounds who come from public schools where Arabic is not included in the curriculum (Al-Wabil, 2012; Syukran, 2019; Zubaidah, 2020). They are more struggle to understand Arabic learning as they learn it for the first time (Zurqoni et al., 2020). Lecturers may deal with this issue by mixing these students with students who graduated from Islamic schools.

Overall, consistent with the previous research on learner agency in an online educational setting (e.g., Xiao, 2014; Ligorio, Impedovo, & Arcidiacono, 2017; Stenalt, 2021), the findings of this study delineate the positive nature of agency among Arabic language learners in an online learning environment. The findings are also in line with the other study focused on students' self-regulation or labelled as learning presence by Shea & Bidjerano (2012)a construct that we label \"learning presence\" moderates relationships of the other components within the CoI model. Consistent with previous research (e.g.; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009; Shea & Bidjerano, 2011 for the significant role of students' self-regulated learning strategies within a fully online learning environment. In addition, while Shea & Bidjerano's (2012)a construct that we label \"learning presence\" moderates relationships of the other components within the CoI model.

Consistent with previous research (e.g.; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009; Shea & Bidjerano, 2011 study showed differences in students' help-seeking behaviour as an important aspect of self-regulated learning, the present study unpacked not only students' help-seeking but also their beliefs to be able to give help to other students.

The present study has some limitations and future research directions. Firstly, this study has the nature of exploratory research, in which the results are less generalisable thus it should be strengthened with other studies. The exploration of learner agency in online foreign language learning amidst the Covid-19 crisis is an ongoing study that may be investigated further by comparing among several languages or with the post-pandemic context. Secondly, the survey was administered at a university located in the city with a relatively small number of participants. Expanding the survey coverage that not only cover urban areas but also rural areas of Indonesia would be inevitable fruitful to enrich the data and broaden comprehensive understanding towards university students' learning agency in foreign language instructions. Finally, this study focused on investigating learner agency based on Bandura's (2008) theory of human agency with four core properties, namely intentionality, forethought, self-regulated learning and self-efficacy. Meanwhile, the agency of the learner has many underlying theories and dimensions that could also be relevant to guide future studies. In addition, more research employing mix-method is recommended to provide a wider understanding of learner agency in online language learning.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the agency of first-year university students in online learning of Arabic as a foreign language with a focus on their intentionality, motivation, self-regulation and self-efficacy. Results of the study reveal that first-year university students have a relatively high intention, motivation, self-regulation and self-efficacy in online learning of Arabic. Looking the findings into more detail, however, the students do not understand how to search and learn Arabic learning resources properly, are less challenged to practice speaking with native Arabic speakers, have a minimum commitment to rewards and punishments in learning, and are less likely to believe that they have good Arabic skills compared with their peers. The current findings add to a growing body of literature on learner agency in online foreign language learning amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some implications have emerged from this study for the practice of remote Arabic language teaching and learning in higher education. Firstly, it is of practical relevance for lectures to raise students' awareness of their goals and to tailor learning based on their needs in terms of stimulating active engagements in online classes. Secondly, lecturers should continuously motivate students by informing the real-life benefits of mastering the Arabic language for their future careers. Last but not least, lecturers are expected to assure students' performance as accurately as possible by ameliorating their weaknesses and maximising their strengths. For the students themselves, they may reflect regularly on their learning achievements and endeavour possible strategies to better enhance performances on online learning of Arabic as their second language.

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