

The Correlation between Self-Regulated Online Reading Habits and Writing Argumentative Essay Ability among EFL Students

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Abstrak

Di era digital, keterlibatan membaca daring mahasiswa dimediasi oleh pembelajaran yang diatur secara mandiri (*self-regulated learning*). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara perilaku membaca daring yang diatur secara mandiri dengan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menulis esai argumentatif dalam konteks *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL). Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif korelasional dengan melibatkan 42 mahasiswa program sarjana dari Departemen Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Negeri Surabaya sebagai partisipan. Dua instrumen digunakan dalam penelitian ini, yaitu kuesioner pembelajaran mandiri terkait kebiasaan membaca daring dan tes menulis yang didasarkan pada Model Argumentasi Toulmin, yang merupakan kerangka kerja untuk menganalisis dan menyusun argumen. Analisis statistik deskriptif menggunakan SPSS versi 22 menunjukkan nilai rata-rata sebesar 4,3 untuk kebiasaan membaca daring yang diatur secara mandiri dan 4,21 untuk kemampuan menulis argumentatif. Hasil ini mengindikasikan bahwa mahasiswa memiliki kemampuan yang baik dalam mengolah sumber bacaan, memanfaatkan informasi secara efektif, serta mengekspresikan gagasan dalam bentuk tulisan. Selain itu, analisis korelasi Pearson menunjukkan koefisien korelasi sebesar 0,409, yang mengindikasikan adanya hubungan sedang antara kebiasaan membaca daring (X) dan keterampilan menulis (Y). Nilai korelasi Pearson tersebut menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif antarvariabel. Tingkat signifikansi $p < 0,05$ digunakan sebagai kriteria untuk menentukan adanya hubungan yang signifikan secara statistik. Temuan ini menegaskan potensi strategi membaca daring yang diatur secara mandiri dalam meningkatkan performa menulis akademik mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: *self-regulated learning*, kebiasaan membaca online, literasi digital, kemampuan menulis, essay argumentatif.

Abstract

In the digital age, students' online reading engagement is mediated by self-regulated learning. This study investigates the relationship between self-regulated online reading behavior and students' ability to write argumentative essays in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This study employed a quantitative correlational design involving 42 undergraduate students from the English Education Department at Surabaya State University as participants. Two instruments were used: a self-learning questionnaire on online reading habits and a writing test based on Toulmin's Argumentation Model, which is a framework for analyzing and constructing arguments. The descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS version 22 revealed mean scores of 4.3 for self-regulated online reading habits and 4.21 for argumentative writing ability. These results indicate that students demonstrated strong abilities in processing reading sources, utilizing information effectively, and expressing ideas in written form. In addition, Pearson correlation analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.409, indicating a moderate relationship between online reading habits (X) and writing skills (Y). The Pearson Correlation value shows a positive relationship or correlation between variables. The significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used as the criterion to determine the presence of a statistically significant correlation. These findings highlight the potential of self-regulated online reading strategies to enhance students' academic writing performance.

Keywords: self-regulated learning, online reading habits, digital literacy, writing ability, argumentative essay

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the integration of digital platforms in classrooms has increased, changing how students interact with academic literature. Online reading has become a prevalent activity among higher-level and EFL students,

who rely on internet resources to improve their language skills and accomplish their academic tasks (Khasanah, 2022; Grabe, 2021). However, the extent to which online reading contributes to academic writing improvement depends mainly on how effectively students self-regulate their reading processes. Self-regulated learning, defined as

a process in which students take control of their learning, and digital literacy, defined as the ability to use digital technology to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, are key concepts in this context (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009).

Self-regulated online reading refers to students' capability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading processes when engaging with digital texts. These processes include goal setting, selecting reputable sources, controlling reading time, and applying acquired information in academic assignments (Ng, 2012). In writing, particularly argumentative writing, these habits may help students organize their thoughts, develop logical structures, construct coherent arguments, and effectively use evidence. In previous research, the significance of digital literacy and reading strategies in developing academic writing performance, such as Morrison & Jacobsen (2024) and Wibowo & Kusumawardani (2022), has encouraged the arguments.

Although numerous studies have examined digital literacy and writing performance among EFL learners, most previous research has treated online reading and writing skills as separate constructs rather than examining their direct interaction. Furthermore, earlier studies frequently focused on general writing ability without distinguishing specific genres such as argumentative writing, which requires higher-order reasoning, evidence integration, and structured argumentation. In the Indonesian EFL context, empirical studies that simultaneously investigate self-regulated online reading habits and argumentative writing ability remain limited. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining the extent to which students' self-regulated online reading behaviors are associated with their ability to construct argumentative essays based on Toulmin's argumentation framework (Firdausa & Puspitasari, 2023; Li et al., 2024).

This paper addresses the relationship between students' self-regulated online reading habits and their production of argumentative essays. The current study examines whether EFL learners who manage their reading activities in the digital reading environment achieve higher argumentative writing performance based on the Self-Regulated Learning Theory and Digital Literacy Framework. This study has significant practical implications, as it links digital reading attitude and skills to formal writing performance using cognitive and genre analyses, thereby providing valuable insights for educators and researchers.

Online Reading Habit

Online reading habits include the interactive process of accessing, assessing, and understanding information digitally. Silva (2009) describes online Reading as a

process that includes comprehending verbal and non-verbal information in hypertext. Digital media formats often provide shorter texts and use visual elements such as images or videos, which are different from traditional print media. According to Coiro & Hobbs (2016), online reading requires additional skills, such as locating, evaluating, and effectively integrating information from multiple sources. In this context, online reading habits involve different patterns from conventional reading, where readers need to be able to sort out information critically.

Definition of Reading

Reading is the process of understanding written material by effectively taking the information that is needed from it. The process through which readers extract meaning from textual sources is called reading. In the opinion of Patel (2008), reading denotes comprehension of meaning. This suggests that reading can be used to extract meaning or information from written or digital content. (Grabe, 2020) claims that reading in a foreign language requires understanding the meaning expressed in written form.

The purpose of reading for each person is for various reasons, and each reason helps them in understanding the material they read. According to Brun-Mercer (2019), the readers typically know what they are reading for, at the very least. Anderson (1986) mentioned seven purposes of reading, namely: reading for details and facts, reading for main ideas, reading for sequence of organization, reading for inference, reading for classifying, reading for evaluating, and reading for comparing or contesting.

Reading Habit

A habit is a behavior that is repeated regularly and becomes automatic over time. Good et al. (2008) explain that habits are formed through frequent repetition until they become part of a person's daily life. Similarly, Nilsen (2012) describes a habit as a repeated behavior that eventually occurs without conscious thought. Reading is considered a habit when done regularly and becomes part of one's routine. Shen (2006) defines reading habit as the frequency, duration, and variety of reading materials a person engages with. It reflects how readers manage their reading activities. Maximilian (2020) also highlights that reading habits are shaped by how often people read, how long they spend reading, and the materials they choose.

Gaona (2010) identifies several indicators that can be used to measure reading habits. These indicators include: reading attitude, reading frequency, time for academic reading, time for non-academic reading, and motivation from family and school.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is viewed as a social practice, emphasizing participation in social practices rather than merely mastering digital skills. Unlike traditional print media, online texts integrate various multimedia elements such as icons, animated symbols, audio, interactive tables, and virtual reality environments (Kiili & Leu, 2019). A digitally literate student can effectively engage in discipline-specific digital practices (Brun-Mercer, 2019). Digital literacy can be defined as the ability to effectively participate in digitally saturated social practices, which are influenced by the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts in which individuals operate. This perspective emphasizes that digital literacy is not merely a collection of skills but involves being adept in social practices that are grounded in the digital domain (Brown et al, 2016).

The Digital Literacy Framework outlined by Ng, (2015) is one important framework in understanding the skills needed in online reading. These dimensions are: Technical Dimension, Cognitive Dimension, and Socio Dimension.

Self-Regulated Learning

Self-Regulated Learning, according to Zimmerman, B. J., & Schunk (2011), is defined as the ability of students to regulate their own learning process metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally. This means that students who perform *self-regulation* are active in managing their learning process, including in setting learning goals, choosing strategies, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the process. SRL is not just a passive reaction to teaching, but rather a proactive approach where students have full control over their learning process. Indicators of SRL, according to Zimmerman, are 3: Metacognition, Motivation, and Behavioral Control.

Writing Ability

Writing is considered a more complex language skill since it requires a well-organized and planned presentation of ideas. Students also concentrate on the content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and language use in addition to writing style when creating written works. According to Mahyar (2012), Writing is the process of gathering ideas and putting them into words.

The purpose of writing for each person is various. Grenville (2009) notes that there are 3 reasons to write: writing to entertain, writing to inform, and writing to persuade.

According to Harmer (2006) there are some stages that every piece of writing goes through, showing the process of developing writing skills. These are: pre-writing, editing, re-drafting, and revising.

Components of writing requires five key areas: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (Heaton, 1988); cited by Sukirman (2012).

Argumentative Essay

An argumentative essay is a type of essay that uses rational arguments and supporting data to persuade readers of a particular point of view. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), an argumentative essay is one in which the writer agrees or disagrees with a topic based on reasons.

Components of an argumentative essay in the book of "The Uses of Argument" by Toulmin (2003) introduced the concept that arguments can be logically analyzed through six core elements: claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal.

Characteristics of an effective argumentative essay have numerous crucial elements. According to Ramage, Bean, and Johnson (2015), a good argumentative essay requires 5 elements: a clear thesis, use of relevant and adequate evidence, strong logic, using appropriateness, and structured writing.

METHODS

This study was conducted during the 2023 academic year at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Surabaya. This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' self-regulated online reading habits and their argumentative essay writing ability. A correlational design was selected because it is a quantitative approach used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between two continuous variables without manipulation. The participants of this study were 42 undergraduate students from classes I and J of the English Education Study Program. They were selected using convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness to participate.

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select the participants in this study. This sampling method was chosen due to the accessibility of the students and their availability during the data collection period. All participants were undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Program who had previously taken academic writing courses. This criterion ensured that participants possessed sufficient background knowledge in writing argumentative essays, making them suitable subjects for the study.

Two research instruments—a questionnaire and a writing task—were used to collect the data. The questionnaire was developed based on the Self-Regulated Learning Theory (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009) and the Digital Literacy Framework proposed by Ng (2012). The questionnaire items were developed based on the

theoretical dimensions of Self-Regulated Learning, including planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009), as well as the cognitive and technical components of digital literacy proposed by Ng (2015). Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in English language teaching to ensure content relevance and clarity. Minor revisions were made to improve wording and avoid ambiguity before distributing the final version to participants. The instrument, which consisted of 20 items, a 5-point Likert-type scale, was a self-report instrument for assessing students' self-regulation strategy for online reading, including planning, monitoring, evaluation, and digital source evaluation. Both scales used a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) to indicate each line's responses.

In addition to the questionnaire, a writing test was administered to measure students' argumentative writing ability. Because academic and social topics were selected for the assignment, students were requested to write a 500-700-word argument paper in English. The writing test was administered in a controlled classroom setting to ensure consistency across participants. Students were given the same writing prompt and allocated approximately 90 minutes to complete the argumentative essay. The writing topics were designed to be relevant to students' academic and social contexts to encourage meaningful responses while maintaining comparability across submissions.

The essays were assessed according to rubric-based scoring, which was developed based on Toulmin's Model of Argumentation and Hyland's (2019) genre-based writing theory. Categories in the rubric were developed based on those elements, including claim development, evidence use, reasoning, rebuttal, structure and convention, all considered critical to teaching argumentative writing and applicable to the research focus on online reading practices. To ensure scoring consistency, the students' essays were evaluated using an analytic scoring rubric derived from Toulmin's argumentation elements. The scoring process was conducted systematically, focusing on components such as claim development, evidence usage, reasoning, rebuttal, organization, and language conventions. Where necessary, scoring guidelines were used to minimize subjectivity and maintain consistency across all evaluated essays.

Researchers ranked their responses to the Self-Regulated Online Reading Habit and the Writing Argumentative Essay Ability exam using Sugiyono's (2016) interval scale table, which ranged from 1 to 5.

The validity testing ensured that the instrument measured the intended constructs, while the reliability testing ensured the consistency of the measurement results. The content validity of the questionnaire and rubric

items was assessed using *SPSS Version 22*. All items exhibited r-values exceeding the r-table of 0.3044, indicating good construct validity. The reliability of the test (Cronbach's Alpha) was very high: 0.904 for the questionnaire and 0.743 for the writing rubric of the essay test, both acceptable for educational research. Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that their responses would remain confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Participation was voluntary, and students were allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Statistical analysis. Data analysis was conducted using *SPSS version 22*. Descriptive statistics, including mean, minimum, and maximum values, were calculated to summarize students' performance across variables. The hypothesis was tested, revealing the strength and significance of the relationship between the two variables using the Pearson correlation coefficient. This research holds important implications for educators, researchers, and students in education and literacy studies regarding the correlation between students' online reading and argumentative writing, as well as the development of effective teaching and learning strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

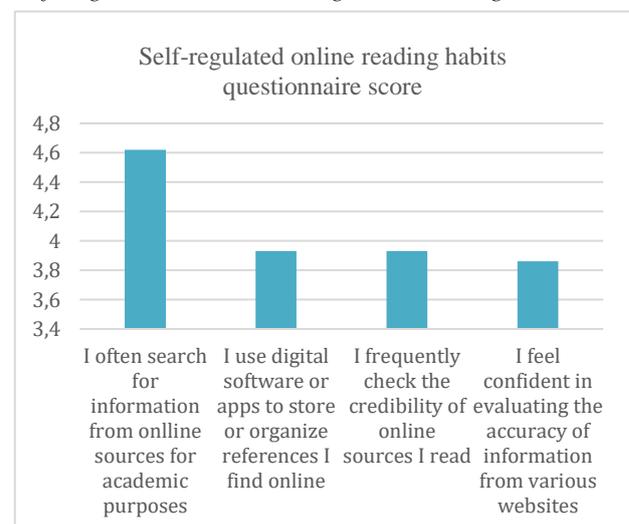
The study investigated the relationship between self-regulated online reading and students' ability to compose argumentative essays. Descriptive statistics and the Pearson correlation coefficient were used to answer the research questions using *SPSS version 22*.

Self-Regulated Online Reading Habits

The students achieved a very high level of self-regulated online reading habits, with an average value of 4.3.

Table 1

Self-Regulated Online Reading Habit Findings



Based on Table 1, the statement with the highest average value is “I often search for information from online sources for academic purposes,” which shows an average score of 4.62, and more than 64.3% of the 42 respondents answered “strongly agree,” corresponding to what they experienced directly from the statement.

Meanwhile, the statements with the middle average values are “I use digital software or applications to store or organize references that I find online” and “I often check the credibility of the online sources I read,” with an average score of 3.93 from the 42 respondents. This indicates that many students have not yet used digital software or applications to store and organize references they have found, which inevitably impacts their knowledge and skills, including writing skills, as the management of acquired sources is not carried out effectively and efficiently. Additionally, approximately 28.6% of the respondents in this study, namely English Education students in 2023, do not check the credibility of the reading sources they use as part of their online reading habits. This situation is regrettable and needs improvement so that the reading sources used by English Education students in 2023 have good quality and credibility, thereby ensuring that the content they read is also reliable.

This finding is also directly related to the statement used in this study, namely, “I feel confident in evaluating the accuracy of information from various websites,” which received one of the lowest scores in measuring self-regulated online reading habits. These results indicate that some students still do not trust or evaluate the accuracy of the information or reading materials they obtain from the internet, which is consistent with the discussion above, although this applies to only about 23.8% of the 2023 English Education students.

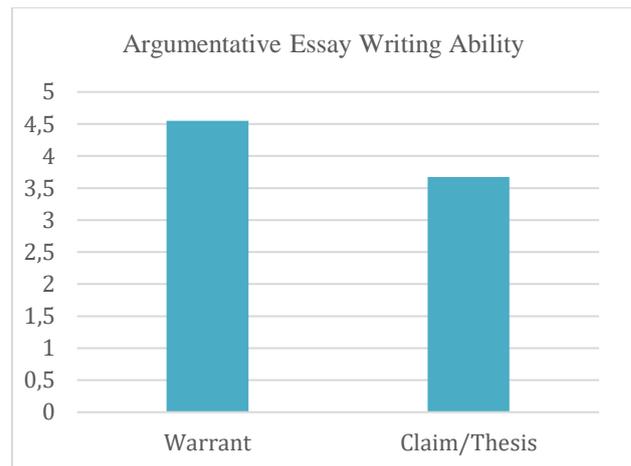
As mentioned earlier, the average value of the online reading habit variable was 4.3. This indicates that English Education students at Surabaya State University in 2023 have adopted good online reading habits, which is a positive development and should be maintained to enhance knowledge, understanding, and skills, including writing skills.

Argumentative Essay Writing Ability

On the other hand, students scored an average of 4.21 in argumentative writing ability, which indicated a very high level of performance in academic writing.

Table 2

Argumentative Essay Writing Ability Findings



Based on Table 2, the assessment aspect with the highest average was the Warrant aspect, which showed an average score of 4.55. This indicates that most students have mastered the Warrant assessment aspect, which involves evaluating writing ability in terms of their ability to clearly and logically connect evidence and claims as a whole, accompanied by explanations to support the claims.

Meanwhile, based on the results of the frequency distribution data above, the assessment aspect with the lowest average was the claim/thesis aspect, which showed an average score of 3.67. This can be interpreted to mean that many students in the English Education program at Surabaya State University in 2023 still lack writing skills in the claim/thesis aspect, namely the ability to formulate claims that can be logically supported and justified.

The average score for respondents' writing ability, that is, the writing ability variable, was 4.21. This indicates that students in the English Education program at Surabaya State University in 2023 already possess good writing skills. This writing ability is influenced by various factors, one of which is discussed in this study, namely online reading habits. This writing ability should be maintained as it reflects a good learning process.

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Table 3

Pearson Correlation Coefficient Correlations

	SLR Online Reading Habit	Writing Argumentative Essay Ability
Self-Regulated Pearson Correlation	1	.409**

Online Reading Habit	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	42	42
Argumentative Writing Ability	Pearson Correlation	.409**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	42	42

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 3, the correlation between these two was computed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis. The results indicated a significant positive correlation ($r = .409$, $p = .007$) between self-regulated online reading habits and students' argumentative writing achievement. The correlation was significant because p was less than 0.01. This means that students who take a more strategic approach to online reading—acting intentionally, evaluating sources, and applying what they read—are also more likely to perform better in writing structured argumentative texts.

Although the correlation between self-regulated online reading habits and argumentative writing ability was statistically significant ($r = .409$, $p = .007$), the strength of the relationship was categorized as moderate. This indicates that while self-regulated online reading contributes to writing performance, it is unlikely to be the sole determinant of students' argumentative writing ability. Writing proficiency is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct influenced by linguistic knowledge, cognitive skills, and instructional support (Hyland, 2019; Grabe, 2020). Therefore, the moderate correlation found in this study suggests that self-regulated online reading habits function as one of several contributing factors rather than a dominant predictor of writing performance.

The moderate level of correlation observed in this study was consistent with theoretical perspectives suggesting that reading and writing are interconnected but mediated by additional cognitive and linguistic processes (Grabe, 2021; Wolters & Brady, 2021). For example, students may demonstrate strong reading habits but still encounter difficulties in organizing arguments or constructing thesis statements effectively. This interpretation aligns with the present findings, which showed that the claim/thesis component received the lowest mean score among the writing components. Such evidence indicates that while students may access and understand digital sources effectively, transforming information into coherent argumentative claims remains a challenging process. Therefore, integrating reading

strategies with explicit writing instruction is essential to strengthen students' argumentative competence.

These results directly respond to the second research question, indicating that there is a correlation between the variables. This outcome was also based on Zimmerman and Moylan's (2009) self-regulated learning model, which stresses that monitoring and motivation-related strategies impact academic achievement. Students who proactively manage their digital reading not only have better comprehension but can also better organize ideas and evidence when writing (Ng, 2012; Morrison & Jacobsen, 2024).

Additionally, the current investigation adds to the literature by offering empirical evidence for the effect of SRL on academic writing, particularly argumentative writing, which entails high-level reasoning and synthesis abilities. Previous literature has generally studied either digital reading or writing strategies only (Firdausa & Puspitasari, 2023; Li et al., 2024), and this study unifies both concepts.

Previous findings, such as those by Wibowo and Kusumawardani (2022), also support the idea that Indonesian university students with strong digital literacy skills achieve better writing scores. In contrast, this study elaborates on their findings by stressing the importance of digital access and self-regulated interaction with digital texts to improve writing performance. This also implies that writing instruction should include self-regulated reading strategies (e.g., how to obtain information from academic online databases, take meaningful notes, and critically use information from the web).

Based on these findings, teachers should use digital literacy instruction alongside genre-based writing instruction. Reading strategies, integrated with argument frameworks such as Toulmin's (2003) model, may provide students with a more comprehensive approach to preparing for academic discourse. Moreover, the results help narrow the theory–practice gap by demonstrating that digital reading is not merely input but a productive process that can generate writing output, especially in an EFL setting.

In addition to theoretical implications, this study also offers practical insights for language educators. The findings suggest that writing instruction should not focus solely on text production but also incorporate structured online reading strategies. Activities such as evaluating digital sources, organizing references, summarizing online materials, and synthesizing information from multiple sources may help students develop stronger argumentative structures. Previous studies have emphasized that integrating digital literacy and self-regulated learning strategies into classroom instruction significantly enhances students' academic writing performance (Ng, 2015; Morrison & Jacobsen, 2024). These pedagogical

practices are particularly relevant in digital learning environments where students increasingly rely on online resources for academic tasks.

CONCLUSION

This research explored the correlation between self-regulated online reading and the argumentative writing competence of EFL learners. The results of the study also demonstrated a slightly positive correlation between the two variables, suggesting that students who use active reading strategies in digital contexts tend to have better academic argumentative writing performance.

These results are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of Self-Regulated Learning Theory and the Digital Literacy Framework. The findings show a significant impact of metacognition and critical engagement with online texts on academic writing performance. Combining these two domains offers a new approach to the field of EFL teaching, particularly within an increasingly digitalized teaching and learning environment.

Nevertheless, this work has limitations. The number of participants was limited, and the sample was taken from one institution, which may weaken the generalizability of the results. In addition, the study was limited to argumentative writing and omitted other academic genres that could also be affected by online reading habits.

It is recommended that future research include larger and more diverse samples to test these findings in other contexts. Future research might also address other facets of writing, such as narrative or analytical writing, and investigate whether self-regulated reading moderates the relationship between reading and other cognitive variables, such as critical thinking, grammar knowledge, and writing anxiety. In practice, one recommendation is that educators could integrate self-regulated online reading training as part of writing instruction to help students develop both cognitive and digital strategies needed for optimal learning.

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