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Students' sociocultural perspectives in online EFL learning in Indonesia

Dodi Erwin Prasetyo

¹STIE Pembangunan Nasional Indonesia, Kota Malang, Indonesia

Corresponding author: ddodierwiniprasetyo@stiepemnas.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Research examining sociocultural perspectives in online EFL learning within the Indonesian context remains limited. This study aimed to explore students' sociocultural perspectives in digitally mediated EFL learning and to examine whether sociocultural interaction patterns differed across gender. Using a descriptive quantitative design, the study involved 27 senior high school students in East Java, comprising 21 females and 6 males. Data were collected through a questionnaire adapted from established sociocultural indicators social act, distributed context, invention perspective, dialogism, and intertextuality and analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Mann-Whitney U test. The findings indicate that most students demonstrated positive sociocultural engagement in online learning, including understanding instructional explanations, seeking help, using additional learning resources, and participating in discussions with teachers and peers. The analysis further revealed no statistically significant differences between male and female students across all sociocultural indicators. These findings suggest that sociocultural interaction in online EFL learning is shaped more by mediated learning environments than by gender differences, offering pedagogical implications for designing interactive and supportive online EFL instruction.

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INTRODUCTION

In post-emergency online EFL classrooms, education systems are increasingly transitioning toward online or blended learning environments. Online or blended learning has been widely adopted across educational contexts to ensure continuity of teaching and learning (Yustisia et al., 2023). Within this shift, English language teaching cannot be separated from its sociocultural context, as language learning is

inherently shaped by interaction, mediation, and social engagement. Sociocultural perspectives emphasize that learning occurs through participation in socially organized activities, making them particularly relevant in digitally mediated learning environments, where interaction patterns differ from those in conventional face-to-face classrooms.

Previous studies have explored sociocultural dimensions in English language learning across diverse contexts. [Mungai \(2019\)](#), for instance, examined the influence of sociocultural factors on girls' education and career aspirations using a descriptive survey involving 132 female participants. The findings revealed a significant relationship between educational aspirations and socioeconomic factors. Similarly, [Ozfidan et al., \(2014\)](#) investigated sociocultural factors in second-language learning among adult learners through interviews and questionnaires. Their study highlighted limited peer interaction and raised concerns about corrective feedback practices that discouraged student participation, suggesting that feedback should extend beyond error correction. [Shaukat & Pell \(2017\)](#) further examined sociocultural influences on female participation in higher education, drawing on data from 2,188 female students and teachers. Their findings indicated that although female success in higher education was often situated within male-dominated environments, intrinsic motivation played a dominant role in educational and workplace achievement.

Other studies have incorporated sociocultural perspectives alongside technological mediation. [Yan \(2019\)](#) analyzed gender and sociocultural factors in mobile-based language learning, involving 138 participants, and found that students responded positively to Mobile-Based Language Learning (MBLL), particularly when sociocultural pedagogy was integrated to enhance self-esteem. From a theoretical standpoint, [Ellis \(2000\)](#) emphasized that psycholinguistic perspectives inform task design by enabling teachers to provide richer input and foster learner engagement. [Yang \(2013\)](#) applied sociocultural theory to English reading instruction by developing a unit plan incorporating collaborative scaffolding, self-regulation, and mediated learning experiences, highlighting the importance of empathy and learner agency in instructional design.

Embedding sociocultural principles into online learning environments has also been examined by several researchers. [Dobberfuhr-Quinlan \(2018\)](#) explored sociocultural applications in online language courses involving 43 students and found that although online materials sometimes required greater learner effort and offered less instructor support, student achievement remained stable, accompanied by positive learner feedback. [Krish et al., \(2012\)](#) analyzed sociocultural factors and social presence in an online learning environment involving 83 learners from various disciplines. The study identified social presence as a key factor in improving

instructional quality. Similarly, [Prasetyo \(2021b\)](#) reported that virtual learning environments positively influenced students' attitudes. However, [Nadtochiy \(2021\)](#) reported contrasting findings, arguing that distance learning should function primarily as a supplementary educational mode rather than a replacement for face-to-face instruction. [Erdogan \(2016\)](#) identified key sociocultural emphases in online learning research through a review of 15 studies, including knowledge construction, learner engagement, and problem-solving. [Wolter et al., \(2012\)](#) further demonstrated that online learning environments could enhance students' curiosity and motivation, reinforcing the close relationship between sociocultural interaction and motivational aspects in learning ([Prasetyo, 2021a](#)).

While numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of online learning during the emergency remote-teaching period, fewer have examined how sociocultural interaction is enacted and sustained through students' everyday learning practices in online EFL classrooms beyond the emergency phase. Rather than emphasizing technological affordances alone, there remains a need to foreground learners' sociocultural interaction patterns, such as help-seeking behavior, peer discussion, and resource mediation, using established sociocultural indicators. Examining these interactional dimensions can provide deeper insight into how online learning environments support meaning-making processes, particularly in underrepresented educational contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate Indonesian students' perceptions of sociocultural aspects in online EFL learning and to examine whether students, regardless of gender, share similar sociocultural interaction patterns during online courses. The research is guided by the following questions: (1) What are students' perspectives toward sociocultural aspects during the online course? and (2) Do students, regardless of gender, demonstrate similar sociocultural interaction patterns in online learning environments? This study contributes to current EFL research by highlighting how sociocultural interaction is sustained in online EFL classrooms beyond the emergency remote-teaching phase. It demonstrates students' reliance on peer interaction and mediated learning resources to negotiate meaning and support comprehension, while also providing empirical evidence from an underrepresented Indonesian senior high school context through the application of established sociocultural indicators.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to examine students' sociocultural interaction patterns in digitally mediated EFL learning environments. As online and blended learning increasingly replace emergency remote teaching, understanding how students experience sociocultural interaction in virtual

classrooms becomes essential. Accordingly, this study focused on learners' perceptions of sociocultural aspects in online EFL learning and explored whether students demonstrated similar interaction patterns regardless of gender.

The participants included 27 senior high school students taking an online EFL course in East Java, Indonesia, with 21 females and 6 males. All were native Indonesian speakers with previous experience in digitally mediated English learning. They were chosen via convenience sampling, based on their availability and participation in the online class.

Data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from Rish et al.,'s (2015) sociocultural indicators, which conceptualize sociocultural interaction in learning environments through five dimensions: social act, distributed context, invention perspective, dialogism, and intertextuality. These indicators capture learners' confidence in interacting, help-seeking behavior, use of mediated learning resources, peer-supported discussion, and comprehension of learning materials within online contexts. Table 1 presents a detailed description of each sociocultural indicator used in this study.

Table 1 - The sociocultural indicators (SOC)

Indicators	Items	Code
Social act	Comprehending teachers and other students' explanation	Sa
Distributed context	Showing the part of material which they did not understand to the teacher and other students	Dc
Invention perspective	Using other's additional learning references	Ip
Dialogism	Discussing the learning materials to teachers and students	Di
Intertextuality	Understanding all parts of the learning material	In

The questionnaire was administered online after students had experienced sustained online EFL instruction. Responses were measured using a six-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (6) to strongly disagree (1) strongly. A neutral option was intentionally excluded to encourage respondents to express explicit evaluative judgments and reduce response ambiguity.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify students' overall perceptions of sociocultural interaction in online EFL learning. Questionnaire responses were tabulated using Microsoft Excel and converted into percentage scores ranging from 1 to 100 to facilitate interpretation. To examine whether sociocultural interaction patterns differed across gender groups, the data were further analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test via SPSS version 25. This non-parametric test was selected due to the unequal group sizes and to ensure

appropriate statistical comparison between male and female participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section reports the empirical findings of the study regarding students' sociocultural interaction patterns in digitally mediated EFL learning environments. The results focus on students' comprehension of instructional explanations, help-seeking behavior, use of mediated learning resources, engagement in discussions, overall understanding of learning materials, and potential differences across gender.

Students' perspectives on sociocultural aspects during the online course

Figure 1 shows students' perceptions of their comprehension of teachers' and peers' explanations during the online course. The results indicate that 33.3% of students slightly agreed that they understood the explanations, while 29.6% agreed and 25.9% strongly agreed. In contrast, 11.1% of students slightly disagreed, suggesting some difficulty in understanding explanations in the online learning environment.

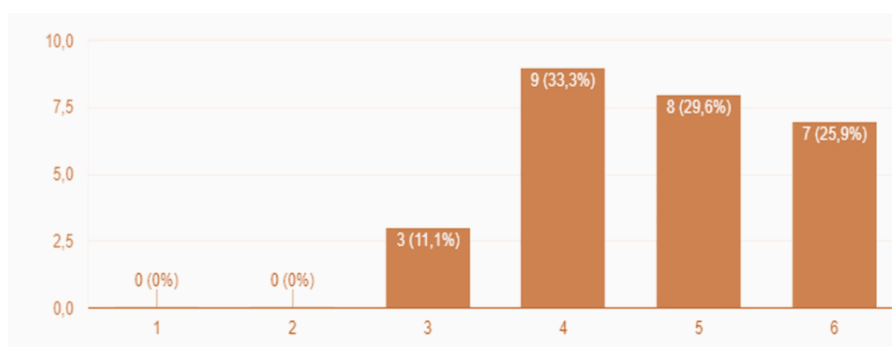


Figure 1- Students' perceptions toward comprehension of teachers' and other students' explanation

The implementation of online or blended learning environments influences several aspects of learning, including students' comprehension of explanations provided by teachers and peers. As shown in Figure 1, 33.3% of students slightly agreed that they understood their teachers' and classmates' explanations during the online course. In addition, 25.9% of students strongly agreed, and 29.6% agreed, that they understood the explanations given by teachers and peers. In contrast, 11.1% of students slightly disagreed, indicating some difficulty in understanding explanations in the online learning environment.

To further examine students' help-seeking behavior in online EFL learning, the following figure illustrates students' perceptions of indicating to teachers and/or peers parts of the learning material they did not understand. Figure 2 presents students' perceptions of indicating learning difficulties to teachers and peers

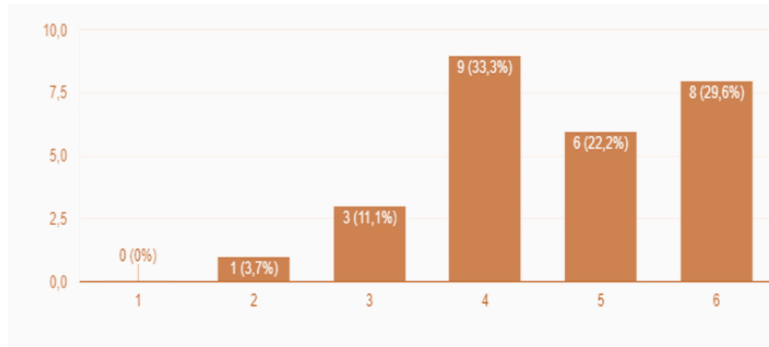


Figure 2 - Students' perceptions of indicating learning difficulties to teachers and peers

Figure 2 presents students' perceptions of indicating learning difficulties to teachers and peers. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is mediated through social interaction, making teacher guidance and peer discussion crucial for resolving varied interpretations of online learning materials. However, digitally mediated interaction may also heighten learners' affective barriers, such as anxiety, when expressing misunderstandings. The findings reveal that 33.3% of students slightly agreed that they communicated parts of the material they did not understand, while 29.6% strongly agreed. Additionally, 22.2% of students agreed that expressing misunderstandings was part of the learning process. However, 11.1% slightly disagreed and 3.7% disagreed, indicating hesitation among a small number of learners in engaging in help-seeking behavior.

As learning is mediated through tools and resources; therefore, Figure 3 illustrates students' perceptions of using additional learning references to support their understanding in online EFL learning.

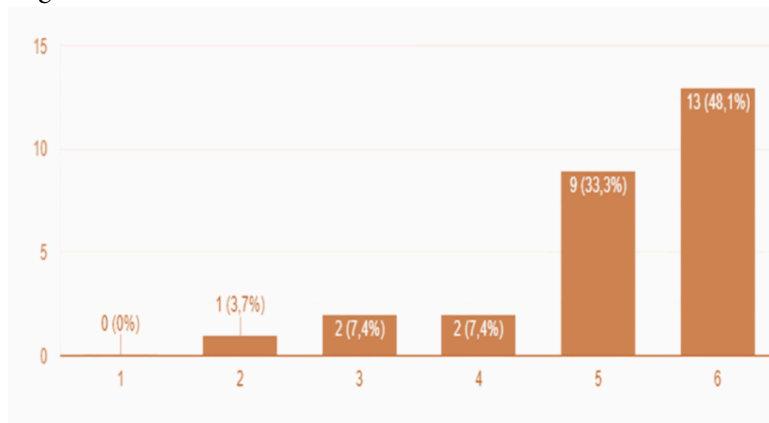


Figure 3 – Students' perception of using additional learning reference

The results show that 48.1% of students strongly agreed that they used additional references to support their learning, 33.3% agreed, and 7.4% slightly agreed. Conversely, 7.4% disagreed and 3.7% strongly disagreed, indicating limited engagement with additional resources among a minority of students.

Dialogic interaction plays a central role in meaning-making; therefore, Figure 4 illustrates students' perceptions of discussing learning materials with teachers and peers in the online EFL learning environment. Figure 4 displays students' engagement in discussions with teachers and peers.

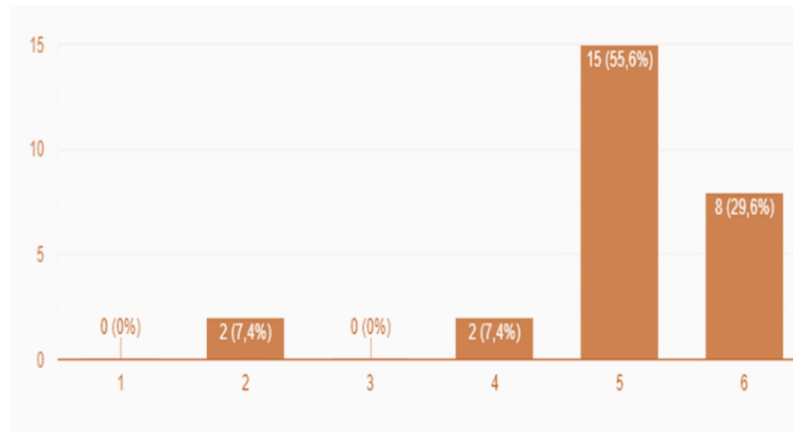


Figure 4 - Students' perceptions of engaging in discussions with teachers and peers

The findings indicate that 55.6% of students agreed that they actively participated in discussions, while 29.6% strongly agreed. A smaller proportion (7.4%) slightly agreed, whereas 7.4% disagreed, suggesting limited discussion participation among a few students.

Learners' grasp of the learning materials reflects how well they internalize meaning through interaction and available resources. Figure 5 reports students' perceived understanding of learning materials.

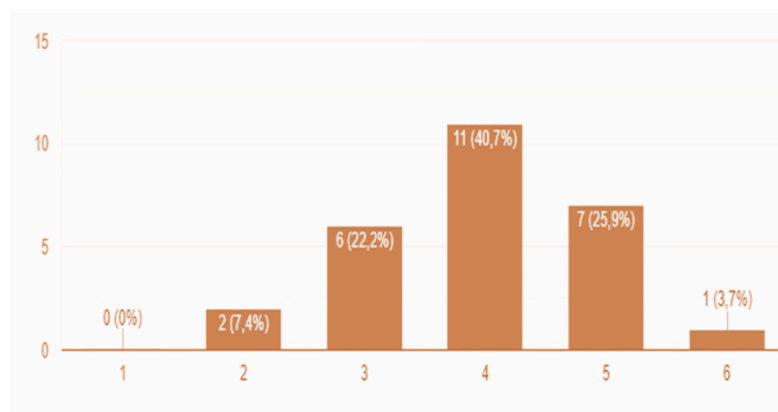


Figure 5 - Students' perceived understanding of learning materials

From figure 5 the results show that 40.7% of students slightly agreed that they understood the materials, 25.9% agreed, and 3.7% strongly agreed. In contrast, 22.2% slightly disagreed and 7.4% disagreed, indicating that some students experienced difficulties in fully understanding the learning content. Overall, the findings

presented in Figures 1 to 5 indicate generally positive sociocultural engagement among students in the online EFL learning environment, with variations in levels of comprehension and participation.

Sociocultural interaction patterns across gender in the online course

Another point is the analysis of students' overall sociocultural interaction patterns, this subsection examines whether there are differences in the sociocultural perspectives of male and female students in the online EFL learning environment. Rather than presuming gender-based distinctions, this analysis aims to determine whether students across genders exhibit similar or different sociocultural interaction tendencies in digitally mediated learning.

To address this objective, a comparative statistical analysis was conducted to examine differences in sociocultural perspectives between male and female students. Given the unequal group sizes and the nature of the data, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied to assess potential differences between the two groups. The decision criteria were established as follows: if the two-tailed significance value were less than .05, the null hypothesis (H0) would be rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) accepted; conversely, if the significance value exceeded .05, H0 would be accepted and Ha rejected.

The hypotheses tested in this analysis are stated as follows:

- H0: There are no differences between male and female students in sociocultural perspectives during the online course.
- Ha: There are differences between male and female students in sociocultural perspectives during the online course.

In order to examine whether sociocultural interaction patterns differed by gender, a Mann–Whitney U test was conducted for each sociocultural indicator; the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Mann–Whitney U Test results for sociocultural interaction indicators across gender

	Code				
	Sa	Dc	Ip	Di	In
Mann-Whitney U	62.500	56.500	48.000	55.000	46.500
Wilcoxon W	83.500	77.500	69.000	76.000	67.500
Z	-.030	-.394	-.948	-.521	-1.012
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.976	.694	.343	.603	.312
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.977	.712	.408	.670	.345

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female students across all sociocultural interaction indicators. The significance values for social act, distributed context, invention perspective, dialogism, and intertextuality were all greater than .05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis (H0) and the rejection of the alternative hypothesis (Ha). From a sociocultural perspective, this suggests that learning mediation through teacher guidance, peer interaction, and learning resources operated similarly across gender groups in the online EFL learning environment.

Consequently, male and female students demonstrated comparable patterns in their comprehension of teachers' and peers' explanations. This finding aligns with Figure 1, which shows that students across gender groups generally reported partial to moderate comprehension of instructional explanations during online learning.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide deeper insight into how sociocultural interaction operates within digitally mediated EFL learning environments in the post-emergency context. Overall, the results indicate that students were actively engaged in online learning through interaction with teachers, peers, and mediational resources, although their levels of comprehension and participation varied. From a sociocultural perspective, this variation reflects learning as a dynamic and gradual process shaped by interaction, mediation, and contextual affordances rather than immediate mastery of content.

Students' partial to moderate comprehension of teachers' and peers' explanations suggests that meaning-making in online EFL classrooms occurs through continuous negotiation. The predominance of "slightly agree" responses across several indicators indicates that learners were still in the process of internalizing knowledge. This finding aligns with sociocultural theory, which views learning as emerging through guided participation and scaffolded interaction. Consistent with previous studies ([Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014](#); [Ramadiani et al., 2017](#); [Coman et al., 2020](#)), online learning may demand additional clarification and interpretive effort due to reduced immediacy and technical constraints, reinforcing the need for intentional instructional support.

Help-seeking behavior further illustrates the interplay between social mediation and affective factors in digitally mediated learning. While most students reported communicating their learning difficulties, a small proportion hesitated to do so. From a sociocultural standpoint, interaction alone does not guarantee effective mediation unless learners perceive the environment as supportive and psychologically safe. Anxiety, limited social presence, or fear of negative evaluation may inhibit students' willingness to externalize misunderstandings. This finding echoes previous research emphasizing the role of motivation and emotional factors in online participation ([Hartnett, 2020](#); [Meşe & Sevilen, 2021](#)) and highlights the importance of teachers' facilitative roles in encouraging dialogic openness and help-seeking practices.

The extensive use of additional learning resources underscores the central role of cultural tools in mediating learning. Students' reliance on e-books, online articles, and other digital materials reflects adaptive strategies to overcome the limitations of virtual instruction. In sociocultural terms, these tools function not merely as sources

of information but as mediators that shape learners' engagement with content. This finding aligns with studies reporting positive student responses toward e-resources (Bhat & Mudhol, 2014; Bamidele et al., 2013), while also supporting the view that learners often combine digital and printed materials to enhance understanding (Makwanya & Oni, 2019; Yamson et al., 2018).

Engagement in discussions with teachers and peers emerged as a key feature of sociocultural interaction in the online EFL environment. The high level of participation indicates that dialogic interaction served as a primary mechanism for collaborative meaning-making. Through discussions, learners were able to articulate ideas, negotiate interpretations, and receive feedback, compensating for the absence of physical co-presence. This supports sociocultural claims that learning is distributed across individuals, discourse, and technological platforms (Hawkins, 2010; Abawajy, 2012), and that well-structured online discussions can foster critical thinking and deeper understanding (Klisc et al., 2009; Ghadirian & Ayub, 2017).

Despite active interaction and resource use, many students reported only partial understanding of the learning materials. This finding suggests that comprehension in online EFL learning is influenced by multiple factors, including instructional design, learner motivation, and opportunities for active engagement. Prior studies have shown that student-centered approaches, appropriate learning media, and interactive tasks contribute significantly to improved understanding (Chryso, 2016; Andrew et al., 2018; Valenti et al., 2019). Therefore, sociocultural engagement should be supported by pedagogical strategies that promote sustained interaction and reflective learning.

The analysis of gender differences revealed no statistically significant variation in sociocultural interaction patterns between male and female students. This indicates that learning mediation through teacher guidance, peer interaction, and technological tools operated similarly across gender groups. From a sociocultural perspective, this suggests that the design of the mediated learning environment plays a more decisive role in shaping learning experiences than individual demographic characteristics. This finding supports earlier research emphasizing the centrality of interaction, feedback, and collaboration in enhancing learning outcomes regardless of gender (Fear & Erikson-Brown, 2014; Ferris & Robberts, 2001; Ellis, 2009).

Taken together, the findings highlight that effective online EFL learning in the post-emergency context relies on the intentional integration of sociocultural interaction, mediational tools, and supportive instructional design. Teachers' roles in facilitating dialogue, encouraging help-seeking, and guiding the use of learning resources are crucial for fostering collaborative meaning-making. When these elements are aligned, digitally mediated EFL classrooms can support equitable

participation, sustained engagement, and meaningful learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study examined Indonesian senior high school students' sociocultural perspectives in digitally mediated EFL learning and explored whether sociocultural interaction patterns differed across gender. The findings indicate that students generally demonstrated positive sociocultural engagement in online education, including understanding teachers' and peers' explanations, seeking help, using additional learning resources, and participating in discussions. Although levels of perceived comprehension varied, sociocultural interaction through mediation and dialogic engagement supported students' meaning-making processes in online EFL classrooms. Furthermore, no statistically significant differences were found between male and female students across all sociocultural indicators, suggesting shared interaction patterns regardless of gender.

Pedagogically, the results emphasize the importance of designing online EFL instruction that promotes dialogic interaction, encourages help-seeking, and integrates mediated learning resources. Future research may involve larger and more diverse samples and employ qualitative approaches to further explore sociocultural interaction in digitally mediated EFL learning environments.

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