



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN OUT-OF-CLASS CONTEXT FOR AUTONOMOUS ESL LEARNING



NUR FATHIAH SYAHIRAH BINTI ISMAIL

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

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UNDERGRADUATES IN OUT-OF-CLASS CONTEXT FOR
AUTONOMOUS ESL LEARNING

NUR FATHIAH SYAHIRAH BINTI ISMAIL

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perbezaan gender terhadap penggunaan teknologi Web 2.0 untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris secara autonomi dalam konteks pendidikan tahap tinggi di salah sebuah universiti awam di Perak, Malaysia. Objektif pertama adalah untuk mengenalpasti perbezaan antara pilihan pelajar lelaki dan wanita dengan alat Web 2.0 untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris secara autonomi. Objektif kedua adalah untuk membincangkan alasan pelajar lelaki dan wanita memilih teknologi Web 2.0 tersebut untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris secara autonomi. Objektif ketiga adalah untuk menganalisis bagaimana pelajar lelaki dan wanita menggunakan teknologi Web 2.0 untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris secara autonomi. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk urutan penjelasan melalui borang soal selidik dan temu bual separa berstruktur sebagai instrumen. Borang soal selidik dianalisis melalui analisis inferensi manakala temu bual dianalisis melalui analisis tematik. Sebanyak 92 orang pelajar universiti dipilih melalui sampel secara rawak. 12 pelajar dipilih untuk ditemu bual; enam daripadanya adalah lelaki dan enam adalah perempuan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tiada perbezaan signifikan secara statistik antara gender dan pilihan terhadap pelantar Internet untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris secara autonomi. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar perempuan lebih berkebolehan dalam memilih pelantar Internet, menggunakan teknologi Web 2.0 untuk pelbagai tujuan, dan lebih terdorong untuk belajar bahasa Inggeris melalui teknologi berbanding pelajar lelaki. Dari aspek pedagogi, kajian ini mencadangkan guru supaya mengambil tahu gaya penggunaan teknologi yang berbeza bagi setiap pelajar. Di samping itu, terdapat juga keperluan untuk membimbing pelajar dengan kemahiran pembelajaran secara autonomi agar mereka dapat memanfaatkan pembelajaran di luar konteks bilik darjah melalui teknologi dengan baik.





GENDER DIFFERENCES IN WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN OUT-OF-CLASS CONTEXT FOR AUTONOMOUS ESL LEARNING

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the use of Web 2.0 technology for autonomous language learning among undergraduates in regard to gender differences within the context of higher education level in one of the public universities in Perak, Malaysia. The first objective was to identify the differences between the male and female learners' preferences of Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning. The second objective was to investigate male and female learners' reasons for their preferences of Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning. The third objective was to investigate how male and female learners used Web 2.0 technologies for autonomous language learning. An explanatory sequential design was employed in the study by using questionnaires and semi-structured interview as the instruments. The questionnaires were analysed through inferential analysis by employing Chi-Square Test while the interview was analysed through thematic analysis. Using random sampling, 92 undergraduates from a public university took part in the survey. Using purposeful sampling, 12 participants were selected for the interview; six of them were males and six were females. The results suggested that there were no statistically significant differences between gender differences and preferences towards Internet platform for language learning. The results indicated that female learners were more versatile, engaged in more purposeful-type of engagement with technologies, and more motivated to learn language via technology as compared to male learners. Based on the findings, pedagogically it is suggested that ESL teachers need to acknowledge the different styles of technology adoption for autonomous language learning between male and female learners. In addition, there is also a need to guide learners with skills for autonomous language learning in order to make their out-of-class engagement with English resources via the use of technology more meaningful.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL	English as a Second Language
LBC	Language Learning and Teaching Beyond Classroom
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
ICT	Information Communication Technology
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science



LIST OF APPENDICES

- A Questionnaire
- B Semi-structured Interview



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background Information

The advancement of technology has created vast opportunities for language learning. The rapid growth and improvement in Information Communication Technology (ICT) has led to the diffusion of technology in education. Since technology has revolutionized the field of education, its importance cannot be ignored. The utilization of technology has made it easier for teachers to impart knowledge and for students to acquire it (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). In addition, the rapid advancement of technology nowadays provides a variety of platforms on the Internet to which learners would be able to learn English autonomously such as via Facebook, YouTube, blogs, online dictionaries, online forums, and wikis. Recently, the world health systems have been greatly affected by a pandemic outbreak. Covid-19 is an acute respiratory disease caused by Coronavirus Sars-Cov-2. Declared recently as pandemic disease, Covid-19 has affected educational systems worldwide as well. Many countries around the world have closed educational institutions to reduce the spread of this pandemic

(Naciri, Baba, Achbani & Kharbach, 2020). Due to this unfortunate event, many schools and higher education institutions transitioned to online learning (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). Thankfully, the advent of technology nowadays allows its users to access Internet through mobile phones. Hence, learning can easily take place outside the classroom (Traxler & Kukulska-Hulme, 2016).

In addition, the advancement of technology has seen English as the main language used on the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2019) and has become one of the important languages in the era of globalization (Reddy & Mahavidyalaya, as cited in Razali, Hashim & Yunus, 2019). According to Bhutada (2021), English is the most commonly used language on the Internet, in which 60.4% of the top ten million websites using the language with 16.2% of the world population speak the language.

In Malaysia, the importance of English has become evident especially with the increasingly globally integrated economies that demand fluency in the language (Malaysia & Lim, 2020). Hence, English is widely spoken and it is an important second language to vast majority of Malaysian (Thirusanku & Md. Yunus, 2012). The importance of English to Malaysia is proven when it is adopted along with the country's national language, *Bahasa Melayu*, to create a bilingual system of education (Ahmad et al., 2019). In addition, Malaysian curriculum has made English as a compulsory subject for those who attend public schools (Ahmad et al., 2019). In relation to this, most universities in Malaysia adopt English language as their medium of teaching and communication in campus (Joferi & Manap, 2018). This is to ensure that their graduates are able to market and commercialize themselves, as well as compete well in the world demand. However, the use of English language as a medium of teaching has become a challenge for the undergraduates as they are unable

to understand technical vocabulary, comprehend lectures, and achieve an appropriate academic style (Evans & Morrison, as cited in Joferi & Manap, 2018).

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education has provided the use of information and communication technology (ICT) around schools and higher education institutions with hope that teachers and students are equipped with the skills necessary to use this technology meaningfully and effectively (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, 2013). At the same time, ICT is not only a tool to access knowledge but also one of the main resources for lifelong learning (Romero, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to support learners to become autonomous in order to achieve successful language learning via technology (Lai et al., 2015). However, there might be some differences in terms of technology usage between male and female learners. Orji (2010) reveals that the use of technology is most favoured by male as compared to female. However, Davison and Argyriou (2016) states that technology adoption is consistent across genders but there are some distinct trends in their preferences. Therefore, this study will investigate gender differences in Web 2.0 technology adoption for autonomous ESL learning.

1.2 Problem Statement

Given that Malaysian universities produce a large number of graduates, however the proportion of graduates acquire a job is surprisingly low (Hossain et al., 2018). High unemployment rate among graduates is often attributed to their lack of English proficiency and communication skills (Ting et al., 2017). In addition, poor English



command among undergraduates undeniably has been one of the top five issues confronting Malaysian employers (Rusli, 2018). Some scholars suggest this happens due to the undergraduates' lack of use of the language in day-to-day verbal discourse (Chin, Ling & Yih, 2016; Pillai, 2017).

According to Chin, Ling and Yeh (2016), many ESL learners refuse to speak in English because they experience anxiety. The level of anxiety affects the learners' interest in the language class which in turn promotes or hinders their language learning performances. Chin, Ling & Yeh (2016) in their study concluded factors causing language anxiety include learners feeling unmotivated in attending their English language classes, fear of tests, and fear of negative feedback. Meanwhile, in regard to gender differences, female learners are said to be more motivated when it comes to learning language via ICT as compared to male learners (Alakrash, 2019).



Pillai (2017) states that many Malaysian ESL learners do not use the language either at home or with their friends. Thus, they lack practices in English which in turn has led to low standard of English proficiency. In addition, the inadequate exposure to the language itself became the reason of not practicing the language at home (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019).

The above scenario highlights one important issue among ESL learners in the country, ie. lack of engagement in face to face communication, as well as engagement with English medium resources in daily life. However, a survey done by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia has found that undergraduates are among the active users of the Internet in the country (MCMM, as cited in Zulkepli, Tajuddin, Atan & Khaja, 2018) where they spend a major portion of their time accessing the





Internet for both academic and extracurricular activities (Ayub, Hamid & Nawawi, 2014). The fact that English is the most used language on the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2019) can lead one to assume that it is possible for them to learn the language via their engagement with the Internet resources. Nonetheless, despite this vast opportunity for out-of-class language learning, as stated earlier, the standard of English among this group of youth is still low (David, Thang & Azman, 2015; Zainuddin, Pillai, Dumanig & Philip, 2018).

Poor English proficiency has led to unemployment among undergraduates. As stated earlier, since English is the main language used on the Internet, their engagement with the Internet however still could not help them to improve their English because they still have anxiety and lack of practices with English in daily communication. On top of these concerns, past studies have shown that there are differences in technology adoption for language learning between male and female learners. Teong and Ang (2016) state that male learners are more inclined to use the Internet as compared to female learners. Davison and Argyriou (2016) on the other hand state that technology adoption in language learning is actually consistent across genders but there are some distinct trends in their preferences. Given these situations, it is crucial that issues such as the differences of preferences and adoption of Web 2.0 tools between male and female learners to be investigated and understood.





1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out how a group of undergraduates in a public university in Malaysia utilize Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning. Given the importance of technology in language learning, it is crucial to understand its use among the undergraduates. Since autonomous learning has been regarded as a vital aspect of learning process, the concept of learner autonomy has become an important role in the language learning field as well. This study focuses on gender because female learners are better language learners, hence are likely to perceive autonomous learning more positively than male learners (Orawiwatnakul & Wichadee, 2017). Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the differences between male and female learners' use of Internet platforms for the purpose of autonomous language learning.



1.4 Research Objectives

This research aims to fulfil the following objectives:

1. To identify the differences between male and female learners' preferences towards Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning.
2. To find out male and female learners' reasons for their preferences of Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning.
3. To find out how male and female learners use Web 2.0 technologies for autonomous language learning.





1.5 Research Questions

1. Are there any differences between the male and female learners' preferences on Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning?
 - a. Which Internet platforms do male learners prefer to use for autonomous language learning?
 - b. Which Internet platforms do female learners prefer to use for autonomous language learning?

Null hypothesis: There are no differences between the male and female learners' preferences on Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning.



learners' preferences on Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning.

2. What are the learners' reasons for their choices of Internet environment for autonomous language learning?
 - a. Why do male learners choose these Internet platforms for autonomous language learning?
 - b. Why do female learners choose these Internet platforms for autonomous language learning?
3. How do the learners use the Internet environment for autonomous language learning?
 - a. Are there any differences between the male and female learners' use of Internet platforms for autonomous language learning?



1.6 Significance of the Study

This study has several significances. First of all, it may benefit ESL practitioners who have the intention of incorporating Web 2.0 technology tools in classroom. This study provides an understanding of the learners' views and preferences on the use of Web 2.0 technology tools in language learning. Gender differences play a role in technology preferences hence knowing both genders' views and preferences on the use of Web 2.0 technology tools in language learning allows ESL practitioners to be able to guide their students on which Web 2.0 technologies can benefit them the most for language learning.

Second, this study would also benefit the educational policy makers. It provides a better understanding of the use of Web 2.0 technologies for autonomous language learning. Hence, it would be one of the alternatives, not just for out-of-class learning, but also for in-class learning, in ESL classrooms.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There were two limitations found in this study. First and foremost, this study is limited in terms of its context. It was carried out in one of the public universities in Malaysia, as the researcher had an easy access to the participants in this university only. The inclusion of other higher education institutions could yield a more accurate

and detailed explanation on the issue investigated in this research. Therefore, this study cannot be used to generalize the issue investigated as a whole.

Next, the number of participants itself was one of the limitations that arose in this study. The number of participants for quantitative data was not large enough for the results to be generalized. However, it was suggested that the number of participants for quantitative data must not be less than 50 samples (Borg & Gall, as cited in Delice, 2010). Therefore, 92 participants were chosen for the purpose of this study, in which they were a representation of the whole population. Also, due to a pandemic outbreak, the survey was carried out online.

1.8 Operational Definition

1.8.1 Out-of-class Learning

Benson (2001) defines out-of-class learning as any kind of learning that takes place beyond the classroom context and involves self-instruction learning. It is a type of informal learning without the presence of a teacher and is unintended, opportunistic and unstructured in terms of way of learning (Traxler & Kukulska-Hulme, 2016). In the present study, out-of-class learning refers to how a group of undergraduates learn English outside the classroom context by utilizing the use of technology.

1.8.2 Autonomous Language Learning

Autonomous learning refers to the action of taking more control over one's learning both inside and outside classroom. The learner decides which activities to involve with in order to improve his/her communicative skills in the target language (Benson, as cited in Yurdakul, 2017). In the present study, autonomous language learning refers to the undergraduates' willingness to improve their English proficiency on their own. In addition, they carry their own responsibility in choosing and deciding activities in order to learn English autonomously.

1.8.3 Internet Platform

Internet platform refers to the online platform, in which a range of services are available on the Internet. This includes marketplace, search engines, social media, creative content outlets, app stores as well as payment systems (OECD, 2019). In this research, online platform refers to the social media platforms and app stores platforms as well as online games, online dictionaries, and online forums.

1.8.4 Web 2.0 Technology

Web 2.0 is a revolutionary technology (Jena et al., 2018), which is a second generations web services emphasizing on online collaboration and sharing among web users and allows online users to connect with each other and share information

(Akbulut & Kiyici, 2007). In the present study, Web 2.0 technology refers to Internet platforms such as social networks (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Skype), blogs, online games, online dictionaries and online forums, and how these platforms are used by the undergraduates to learn English autonomously.

1.8.5 Mobile Learning

Mobile learning is a methodology that involves the use of mobile devices to carry out the teaching-learning process (Romero-Rodriguez, Aznar-Diaz, Hinojo-Lucena & Gomez-Garcia, 2020). It also allows a greater scope of teaching (Diez, Valencia & Bermudez, 2017). In this study, learners use mobile devices that are known to be small enough it can be pocketed which in turn makes it possible for mobile learning to take place anytime, anyplace and anywhere.

1.9 Summary

This chapter explained the background information of the research as well as the statement of problem. Research objectives and research questions were also discussed as well as the significance and limitations of the study. Next chapter will elaborate more on the concepts that are related to this research.