

**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

2021

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

NUR FATHIAH SYAHIRAH BINTI ISMAIL

DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO QUALIFY FOR A MASTER'S DEGREE IN
EDUCATION TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
(RESEARCH AND COURSEWORK MODE)

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2021



UNIVERSITI
PENDIDIKAN
SULTAN IDRIS

اونيورسي تي فئديقن سلطان ادريس

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

Please tick (✓)
Project Paper
Master by Research
Masters by Mix Mode
Ph.d

✓

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

This declaration is made on the 9 December 2021

i. Student's Declaration:

I, NUR FATHIAH SYAHIRAH BINTI ISMAIL, M20171000919, FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION hereby declare that the dissertation entitled GENDER DIFFERENCES IN WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN OUT-OF-CLASS CONTEXT FOR AUTONOMOUS ESL LEARNING is my original work. I have not plagiarised from any other scholar's work and any sources that contained copyright had been cited properly for the permitted meanings. Any quotations, excerpt, reference or re-publication from or any works that has copyright had been clearly and well cited.

Signature of the student

ii. Supervisor's Declaration:

I, DR. NORAINI ZULKEPLI, hereby certify that the work entitled GENDER DIFFERENCES IN WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN OUT-OF-CLASS CONTEXT FOR AUTONOMOUS ESL LEARNING was prepared by the above named student, and was submitted to the Institute of Graduate Studies as a full fulfillment for the conferment of MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATION TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, the aforementioned work, to the best of my knowledge, is the said student's work.

9 December 2021

Date

Signature of the Supervisor



**BORANG PENGESAHAN PENYERAHAN TESIS/LAPORAN KERTAS PROJEK
DECLARATION OF THESIS/DISSERTATION/PROJECT PAPER FORM**

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

No. Matrik / Matric's No.: M20171000919

Saya / I: NUR FATHIAH SYAHIRAH BINTI ISMAIL

(Nama pelajar / Student's Name)

Mengaku membenarkan Tesis/Desertasi/Laporan Kertas Projek (Doktor Falsafah/Sarjana)* ini disimpan di Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun) dengan syarat-syarat kegunaan seperti berikut:-

Acknowledge that Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Tuanku Bainun Library) reserves the right as follows:-

1. Tesis/Disertasi/Laporan Kertas Projek adalah hak milik UPSI.
 - i. *The thesis is the property of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.*
2. Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun dibenarkan membuat salinan untuk tujuan rujukan sahaja.
- ii. *Tuanku Bainun Library has the right to make copies for the purpose of research only.*
3. Perpustakaan dibenarkan membuat salinan Tesis/Disertasi ini sebagai bahan pertukaran antara Institusi Pengajian Tinggi.
 - iii. *The Library has the right to make copies of the thesis for academic exchange.*
4. Perpustakaan tidak dibenarkan membuat penjualan sanaan Tesis/Disertasi ini bagi kategori **TIDAK TERHAD**.
 - iv. *The library are not allowed to make any profit for 'Open Access' Thesis/Dissestation.*
5. Sila tandakan (✓) bagi pilihan kategori di bawah / Please tick (✓) for category below:-

SULIT/CONFIDENTIAL

Mengandungi maklumat yang berdarjah keselamatan atau kepentingan Malaysia seperti yang termaktub dalam Akta Rahsia Rasmi 1972. / *Contains confidential information under the Official Secret Act 1972*

TERHAD/RESTRICTED

Mengandungi maklumat terhad yang telah ditentukan oleh organisasi/ badan di mana penyelidikan ini dijalankan. / *Contains restricted information as specified by the organization where research was done.*

TIDAK TERHAD / OPEN ACCESS

(Tandatangan Pelajar / Signature)

Tarikh: 9 December 2021

(Tandatangan Penyelia / Signature of Supervisor
& (Nama & Cop Rasmi / Name & Official Stamp)

Catatan: Jika Tesis/Disertasi ini **SULIT @ TERHAD**, sila lampirkan surat daripada pihak berkuasa/organisasi berkenaan dengan menyatakan sekali sebab dan tempoh laporan ini perlu dikelaskan sebagai **SULIT** dan **TERHAD**.

Notes: If the thesis is CONFIDENTIAL or RESTRICTED, please attach with the letter from the organization with period and reasons for confidentiality or restriction.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful
All praises to Allah S.W.T. and His blessing for the completion of this dissertation. I thank God for all the opportunities, trials, and strength that have been showered on me to finish the writing of this dissertation.

I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Noraini Zulkepli, whose support and encouragement has been invaluable throughout the writing of this dissertation. I attribute the completion of my Masters Degree to her patience and knowledge, for without her guidance, this dissertation would not have been written or completed. Her kindness in dealing with my mistakes as well as her patient instruction has made me become who I am today. It has been a great pleasure and honour to have her as my supervisor.

My deepest gratitude goes to all of my family members especially my parents, Ismail Mat Hashim and Salamah Rosli, for without their support and encouragement, I am lost. They are my source of comfort and strength as well as constant reminder for me to constantly work harder in order to achieve my dreams. It would not be possible to write this dissertation without their support.

Last but not least, I offer my special thanks to my colleague, Nur Khairunnisa binti Amran, for being there with me through thick and thin. Her honest comments and feedbacks have helped me throughout the writing of this dissertation. Thank you for all of the bittersweet memories we had throughout the completion of this journey.

To all my readers, I hope this dissertation will be able to provide insightful knowledge that can help you to better understand the issues investigated for future reference. Thank you..





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.



CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK	ii
DECLARATION OF THESIS/DISSERTATION/PROJECT PAPER FORM	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRAK	v
ABSTRACT	vi
CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Background Information	1
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Purpose of the Study	6
1.4 Research Objectives	6
1.5 Research Questions	7
1.6 Significance of the Study	8

1.7	Limitations of the Study	8
1.8	Operational Definition	9
1.8.1	Out-of-class Learning	9
1.8.2	Autonomous Language Learning	10
1.8.3	Internet Platform	10
1.8.4	Web 2.0 Technology	10
1.8.5	Mobile Learning	11
1.9	Summary	11

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW 12

2.1	Introduction	12
2.2	Out-of-class Language Learning	12
2.3	Autonomous Language Learning	14
2.4	Technology in Language Learning	18
2.5	Mobile Learning	24
2.6	Social Aspects of Second Language Acquisition	26
2.6.1	Gender and ESL Learning	29
2.7	Previous Studies	33
2.8	Summary	37

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 38

3.1	Introduction	38
3.2	Research Design	38
3.3	Sampling	40

3.4	Research Instruments	43
3.4.1	Questionnaire	43
3.4.2	Interview	44
3.4.3	Pilot Study	46
3.5	Data Analysis	47
3.5.1	Quantitative Data (Questionnaire)	47
3.5.2	Qualitative Data (Open-ended question and Interview)	48
3.6	Strategies for Validity and Reliability Checks	51
3.7	Research Activities	53
3.7.1	Phase 1 – Survey via Questionnaire	53
3.7.2	Phase 2 – Interview	53
3.8	Ethical Issues	54
3.8.1	Informed Consent	54
3.8.2	Anonymity and Confidentiality	55
3.9	Summary	55

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS 56

4.1	Introduction	56
4.2	Findings from the Quantitative Phase	56
4.2.1	Descriptive Analysis	57
4.2.1.1	Part 1: Demographic Information	57
4.2.1.2	Part II: Time Spent on the Internet per day	60

4.2.1.3	Part III: Preferred Internet Platforms for Autonomous Language Learning	62
4.2.2	Inferential Analysis	64
4.3	Findings from Qualitative Phase	68
4.3.1	Category One - Using online platforms to learn English	68
4.3.2	Category Three - Helpful contents on online platform for learning English	79
4.3.2.1	YouTube: Informative and Educational Videos	79
4.3.2.2	YouTube: Sharing of learning materials	81
4.3.2.3	YouTube: Subtitles	82
4.3.2.4	YouTube: Audio-visual information	83

4.3.2.5	Other online platforms	84
4.4	Summary	86

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION 87

5.1	Discussion	87
5.1.1	Research Question 1: Are there any differences between the male and female learners' preferences on Web 2.0 tools for autonomous language learning?	87
5.1.1.1	Which Internet platforms do male learners prefer to use for autonomous language learning?	87
5.1.1.2	Which Internet platforms do female learners prefer to use for autonomous language learning?	89

5.1.2 Research Question 2: What are the learners' reasons for their choices of Internet environment for autonomous language learning? 92

5.1.2.1 Why do male learners choose these Internet platforms for autonomous language learning? 92

5.1.2.2 Why do female learners choose these Internet platforms for autonomous language learning? 94

5.1.3 Research Question 3: How do the learners use the Internet environment for autonomous language learning? 96

5.1.3.1 Are there any differences between male and female learners' use of Internet platforms for autonomous language learning? 96

5.1.4 The Use of Internet among Undergraduates 98

5.2 Conclusion 100

5.2.1 Versatility in the choices of Internet platform for Autonomous ESL Learning 100

5.2.2 Purposeful-type of engagement with technologies for Autonomous ESL Learning 102

5.2.3 Motivation for Autonomous ESL Learning via technology 105

5.3 Implications 106

5.3.1 Acknowledging the Different Styles of Technology Adoption 106

5.3.2 Guiding Learners with Skills for Autonomous ESL Learning 108

5.4 Recommendations 109

5.4.1 To look into more variables from the quantitative paradigm 110

5.4.2	To delve deeper into the different strategies and data collection methods	110
5.5	Summary	111
	REFERENCES	113
	APPENDIX	128

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.		Page
2.1	Dimensions of LBC (Reinders & Benson, 2017)	14
3.1	Interview Protocols	46
3.2	Data Labelling	49
3.3	Data Coding	49
3.4	Data Categorizing	50
3.5	Summary of the Data Collection	50
4.1	Gender of Learners	57
4.2	Percentage of Learners by Course	57
4.3	Cross tabulation data for Gender and Time Spent on the Internet	60
4.4	Mean	62
4.5	Chi Square Test for gender and online social networking	64
4.6	Chi Square Test for gender and online messaging	64
4.7	Chi Square Test for gender and online conferencing	65
4.8	Chi Square Test for gender and online digital audio/video	65

4.9	Chi Square Test for gender and online computer games	65
4.10	Chi Square Test for gender and online exercises/quizzes	66
4.11	Chi Square Test for gender and online discussion board/forum	66
4.12	Chi Square Test for gender and online dictionary	66
4.13	Chi Square Test for gender and blogs	67
4.14	Chi Square Test for gender and e-mail	67

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure No.		Page
2.1	Factors Affecting Learners' Autonomous Language Learning	18
2.2	The Conceptual Framework of the Study	32
3.1	Explanatory Sequential Design	40
3.2	The Research Activities	54
4.1	Learners' Mother tongue	58
4.2	MUET Results	59
4.3	Time Spent on the Internet	60

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 (Orawiatnakul & 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.

Alternative hypothesis: There are differences between the male and female 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.

