

INVESTIGATING THE USE OF ONLINE TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH COURSES AT MALAYSIA POLYTECHNICS

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INVESTIGATING THE USE OF ONLINE TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATIVE
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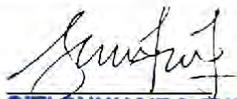
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ABSTRAK

Landskap pembelajaran dan pengajaran telah mengalami beberapa fasa perubahan yang disebabkan oleh pandemik COVID-19. Proses tersebut disifatkan sebagai sukar, kurang menyenangkan, tidak efektif serta memakan masa dan tenaga. Demi memastikan kelestarian pengalaman pembelajaran bagi setiap pelajar, pensyarah politeknik Malaysia perlu meneroka beberapa alatan digital untuk kegunaan kelas atas talian. Setelah dua tahun pelaksanaan kelas atas talian, kelas bersemuka semasa pasca-pandemik turut dijangka untuk berubah sewajarnya. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini dijalankan untuk: (i) mengenalpasti alatan atas talian yang digunakan pensyarah semasa sesi pembelajaran dan pengajaran kursus ‘Communicative English’ di politeknik Malaysia, (ii) mengkaji faktor yang mempengaruhi niat pensyarah politeknik Malaysia untuk meneruskan penggunaan alatan atas talian untuk kelas pasca-pandemik bagi kursus ‘Communicative English’ serta (iii) mengkaji alatan atas talian yang digunakan pensyarah bagi pembelajaran dan pengajaran kursus ‘Communicative English’ di dalam kelas pasca-pandemik. Kajian ini dijalankan berdasarkan rekabentuk kajian campuran menggunakan soal selidik, temu bual dan pemerhatian. Sampel kajian merupakan 86 orang pensyarah bahasa Inggeris di politeknik Malaysia yang dipilih melalui persampelan mudah. Pengumpulan data dilakukan secara bersistematik dalam dua fasa, didahului oleh pengumpulan data kuantitatif dan diikuti oleh pengumpulan data kualitatif. Analisa data kuantitatif dijalankan menggunakan ‘IBM SPSS Statistics’ versi 27 dan dipersembahkan dalam bentuk statistik deskriptif menggunakan purata dan sisihan piawai manakala analisis tematik pula digunakan bagi data kualitatif. Proses triangulasi data juga turut dilaksanakan bagi meningkatkan kesahan dapatan kajian. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa para pensyarah kerap menggunakan pelbagai alatan atas talian semasa sesi pembelajaran dan pengajaran kursus ‘Communicative English’. Selain itu, dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa para pensyarah mempunyai niat yang positif untuk meneruskan penggunaan alatan talian di dalam kelas pasca-pandemik dan sikap merupakan faktor yang paling mempengaruhi niat mereka. Kajian ini turut mendapati bahawa pensyarah tetap meneruskan penggunaan alatan atas talian dalam kelas pasca-pandemik meskipun berdepan beberapa cabaran.

Kata Kunci: alatan atas talian, Communicative English, faktor, niat meneruskan penggunaan alatan atas talian

ABSTRACT

The education landscape has undergone several changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The transitions were described by past researcher as difficult, inconvenient, ineffective, time-consuming and energy consuming. With the urge to continue providing sustainable teaching and learning experience for the students, lecturers at Malaysia polytechnics had to explore various online tools to be used in their classrooms. After two years of continuous experience in online teaching, there is a possibility for the delivery of teaching and learning in the post-pandemic classroom to transform accordingly. Hence, this study was conducted to: (i) examine the online tools used by the lecturers in the teaching and learning of Communicative English courses at Malaysia polytechnics; (ii) investigate the factors affecting the lecturers' continuance intention in using online tools in the post-pandemic Communicative English classroom at Malaysia polytechnics and (iii) investigate the lecturers' use of online tools in the post-pandemic Communicative English classroom at Malaysia polytechnics. This study employed explanatory sequential mixed methods design using an online questionnaire, semi-structured interview and non-participatory observation. The sample of this study was chosen based on convenience, consisting of 86 ESL lecturers teaching at six polytechnics. Data was collected in two phases, beginning with quantitative data collection, followed by qualitative data collection. Quantitative data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 and reported using descriptive statistics while thematic analysis was done for qualitative data. Qualitative data was used for triangulation with the findings from the questionnaire. The findings suggest that the lecturers used various online tools frequently in their Communicative English classroom. They also reported positive intention to continue using online tools in when the classroom resumes with attitude being the most probable factor affecting their intention. The findings also show that lecturers continued using online tools in the post-pandemic classroom despite some challenges.

Keywords: online tools, Communicative English, factors, continuance intention

CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
ABSTRACT	v
CONTENT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
APPENDIX LIST	xv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Problem	2
1.3 Problem Statement	3
1.4 Research Objectives	5
1.5 Research Questions	6
1.6 Theoretical Framework	6
1.7 Definition of Terms	7
1.7.1 Online tools	7

1.7.2 Synchronous online teaching and learning	8
1.7.3 Asynchronous online teaching and learning	8
1.7.4 Communicative English	9
1.7.5 Continuance intention	10
1.8 Limitation of Study	10
1.9 Significance of Study	10
1.10 Summary	11

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 The Use of Online Tools in the Teaching and Learning of English Language	12
2.3 Factors Affecting the Use and Continuance Intention of Using Technology in the Teaching and Learning	16
2.4 Summary	18

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction	19
3.2 Research Design	19
3.3 Population and Sample	21
3.4 Instrument	23
3.4.1 Questionnaire	24
3.4.2 Interview	27
3.4.3 Observation	29
3.5 Pilot Study	30

3.5.1 Reliability	31
3.5.2 Validity	32
3.6 Data Collection Procedures	32
3.7 Data Analysis Method	34
3.8 Summary	36

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction	37
4.2 Survey Findings	37
4.2.1 Survey Respondents	38
4.2.2 Lecturers' Use of Online Tools in the Teaching and Learning of Communicative English Courses	40
4.2.3 Factors Affecting Lecturers' Continuance Intention in Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom	45
4.2.4 Lecturers' Continuance Intention in Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom	53
4.3 Interview Findings	54
4.3.1 Interview Participants	55
4.3.2 Lecturers' Use of Online Tools in the Teaching and Learning of Communicative English Courses	56

4.3.3 Factors Affecting Lecturers’ Continuance Intention in Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom 62

4.3.4 Lecturers’ Continuance Intention in Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom 62

4.4 Observation Findings 63

4.4.1 Participants’ Background 63

4.4.2 Lecturers’ Use of Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom 66

4.5 Summary

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION 68

5.1 Introduction 68

5.2 Discussion 69

5.2.1 Lecturers’ Use of Online Tools in the Teaching and Learning of Communicative English Courses 71

5.2.2 Factors Affecting Lecturers’ Continuance Intention in Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom 74

5.2.3 Lecturers’ Continuance Intention in Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom 75

5.2.4 Lecturers' Use of Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic	
Communicative English Classroom	76
5.3 Research Implications	77
5.4 Future Research	78
5.5 Conclusion	80
REFERENCES	85
APPENDICES	

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.		Page
3.1	List of Malaysia Polytechnics according to Zones	21
3.2	Questionnaire Items	25
3.3	Cronbach's Alpha for Questionnaire Reliability	32
3.4	Mean Scores Interpretation for Analysis of Findings	35
4.1	Background of Survey Respondents	38
4.2	Lecturers' Use of Online Tools in the Teaching and Learning of Communicative English Courses	41
4.3	Lecturers' Use of Synchronous (Real-Time) Online Teaching and Learning Method	43
4.4	Lecturers' Use of Asynchronous (Not in Real-Time) Online Teaching and Learning Method	45
4.5	Lecturers' Overall Responses to Factors Affecting Continuance Intention in Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom	46
4.6	Factors Affecting Lecturers' Continuance Intention in Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom	50
4.7	Lecturers' Continuance Intention of Using Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom	54
4.8	Profile of Interview Participants	55
4.9	Emerging Themes Related to Factors Affecting Lecturers' Continuance Intention to Use Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic Communicative English Classroom	58

4.10

Lecturers' Use of Online Tools in the Post-Pandemic
Communicative English Classroom

63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure No.		Page
1.1	Technology Acceptance Model	7
3.1	Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design	20

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4IR	The Fourth Industrial Revolution
LMS	Learning Management System
MOE	Ministry of Education Malaysia
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
CIDOS	Curriculum Document Online System
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
DPCCE	Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
ESL	English as a Second Language
SNS	Social Networking Sites
UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
LCD	Liquid Crystal Display
TPACK	Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge

APPENDIX LIST

- A Questionnaire
- B Interview Protocol
- C Observation Checklist
- D Approval Letter to Conduct the Research at Malaysia Polytechnics
- E Appointment Letter of Experts for Validation of Instruments



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Teaching and learning is a dynamic process that undergoes changes over time in response to various factors and circumstances. Advancement in various industries especially technology has greatly affected the delivery of teaching and learning in the 21st century. In Malaysia, the education system has undergone transformation due to The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) which resulted in the need to redesign curriculum at all levels of education including higher education (Subramaniam, 2019). The impact of 4IR in education system is evident through the positioning of technology as the most important part in the delivery of teaching and learning. Healy (2018) indicated the goal of incorporating technology in education is to create a conducive environment which allows teachers to create engaging and effective learning experiences using digital tools to help achieve the intended teaching and learning objectives.





Emerging technology has led to the vast availability of online tools for the teaching and learning (Norfarahi, Mohd Isa & Nur Hazeleen, 2020). Such tools include synchronous and asynchronous media such as LMS, collaborative tools, online materials in the form of e-books and journals as well as content sharing tools (Mucudanyi & Woodley, 2021). However, to be able to use the tools, educators need sufficient knowledge, training and ability to analyse and select appropriate tools to be used in their classroom. At Malaysian polytechnics, the lecturers teaching Communicative English courses were also concerned about selecting the appropriate online tools to provide learners with opportunities to be actively engaged in a virtual English language classroom. This is due to the lack of attachment in online learning community as compared to traditional face-to-face teaching (Hasnan & Mohin, 2021).



Through Malaysian Education Blueprint, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has set out a long-term plan which redefines the goals and objectives of education in Malaysia in relation to the National Education Philosophy. The blueprint entails a strong emphasis on the development of English language skills and the use of technology to support teaching and learning with an aspiration to equip the learners with necessary knowledge and skills to survive in the global economy (MOE, 2015). Education institutions are also encouraged to leverage on the technology-enabled models which incorporate the use of online resources, applications and other digital tools to enhance collaboration and communication for more students' personalised learning experience.





More recently, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE) has outlined ten shifts including globalised online learning and transformed higher education delivery to meet the advancement of 4IR (MOHE, 2018) through Education 4.0 framework. The framework encouraged teaching faculty to adopt 21st century modes of instruction focusing on student-directed learning, peer-supported learning and virtual learning experiences. As one of the higher education providers, Malaysia polytechnics have continuously made efforts to meet the demands of digital natives through the incorporation of digital learning platforms and tools in their education system, including the use of its own Learning Management System (LMS) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) to promote blended learning.

The use of polytechnic's LMS, namely Curriculum Document Online System (CIDOS) and introduction of MOOC in 2015 should have equipped the lecturers with relevant experience in using online tools in their teaching and learning. However, their level of technology adoption was reported to be less than average (Siti Zuraidah, Mona & Nur Azlina, 2019) resulting in low level of usage. Prior to the pandemic, LMS was mostly used for sharing of materials and instructions, students' submission of assignments and self-learning (Mahanim & Mohaida, 2021) while the use of MOOC was eventually disrupted due to its inability to retain students' retention and completion (Norzaini & Doria, 2021).

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the grandiose transformation plan, the execution was described as sluggish, and the impact was visible when the educational institutions were forced to close





during the lockdown caused by the widespread of COVID-19 (Norzaini & Doria, 2021). At that time, the teaching and learning had to be entirely relocated into virtual environment, despite the lecturers' lack of readiness and preparation. In addition, lack of support and resources, limited experience in using technology, inadequate training and inaccessibility to equipment and online applications have also worsen the situation (Fabian, Gan & Yunus, 2021). The shift was also described as difficult, inconvenient, ineffective, time-consuming and energy consuming (Thumvichit, 2021).

Even though the transition of online teaching was not smooth at the beginning teachers and students seem to have benefited from the constant exposure to various technology-based tools for communicative activities such as discussions, collaborative group works, individual works and assessments. According to Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guardia and Koole (2021), teachers are reported to be more open towards innovation, contributing to a more dynamic and carefully designed online teaching environment called online distance learning. After two years of teaching online during the pandemic, teachers have developed more skills and become competent users of technology, creating opportunities for sustainable integration of technological tools to enrich the language classroom (Kohnke, 2021).

Currently, as conventional face-to-face classroom has been restored in most parts of the world, it is interesting to note how the lecturers would conduct their teaching and learning in the post-pandemic classroom. This is because there is a possibility for teaching and learning to not fully revert to traditional classroom instructions (Yusof et al., 2021) as past experience has exposed teachers the possibilities of having the best of both worlds. As nowadays, teaching environment is



no longer bound to the four walls of the physical classroom as the conditions have changed in the post-pandemic classroom. Assimilation of teachers' experience during the online teaching and learning into the face-to-face classroom instruction is expected to create an innovative instructional paradigm and approach, benefitting from the integration of technology to continue innovate the delivery of teaching and learning. In doing so, understanding what is worth keeping and what to abandon would provide a valuable insight on continuous improvements of their teaching quality in the post-pandemic classroom. Hence, investigating the lecturers' use of online tools in the virtual classroom and factors that may contribute to their decisions in sustaining the use of online tools in the post-pandemic classroom would be beneficial for education practitioners who have experienced the same transition. The question of whether the lecturers would stick to their intention is also an area to be explored in this study.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the online tools used by the lecturers in the teaching and learning of Communicative English courses at Malaysia polytechnics
2. To investigate the factors affecting the lecturers' continuance intention in using online tools in the post-pandemic Communicative English classroom at Malaysia polytechnics
3. To investigate the lecturers' use of online tools in the post-pandemic Communicative English classroom at Malaysia polytechnics



1.5 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the online tools used by lecturers in the teaching and learning of Communicative English courses at Malaysia polytechnics?
2. What are the factors affecting the lecturers' continuance intention in using online tools in the post-pandemic Communicative English classroom at Malaysia polytechnics?
3. How do the lecturers use the online tools in the post-pandemic Communicative English classroom at Malaysia polytechnics?



1.6 Theoretical Framework



This study was guided by Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in determining the factors which affect continuance intention of using online tools in the post-pandemic classroom. TAM was developed by Davis in 1989 and has been one of the most important models in predicting adoption and use of technology. Figure 1.1 illustrates two key factors which are the pre-determinants of acceptance and use of technology in TAM; the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a particular technology will help them achieve their goals or perform a task more efficiently. Meanwhile, perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a particular technology is easy and straightforward. The model indicates that if users



perceive the technology as easy to use and effective, they will most likely use it (Yong, Maslawati & M. Khalid, 2022).

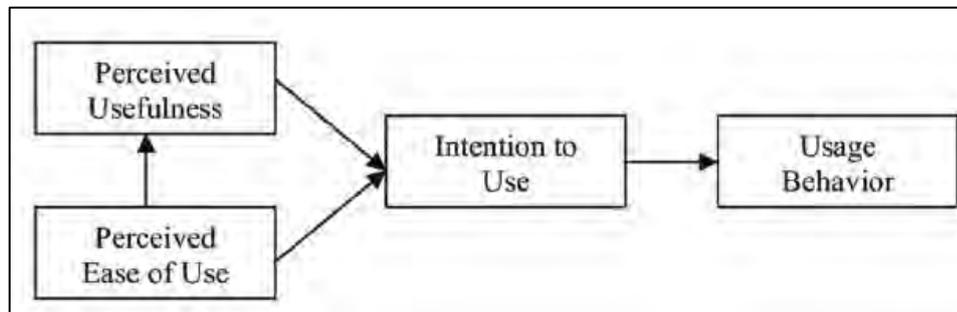


Figure 1.1 Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989)

Besides being widely used in determining acceptance of new technology, a number of studies have used models extended from TAM in determining continuance intention such as by Dolenc, Šorgo & Ploj-Virtič (2022), Nikou (2021) and Marhatul Akmal, Bazrina, Noor Shariena and Ilham Alia (2021). Similar to the original interpretation, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are two determinants for continuance intention to use technology which in turn will determine the user's actual usage.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Online tools

Online tools are software programs or applications that can be accessed and used via the internet. In this study, online tools refer to any online teaching and learning resources made available and accessible via the internet. The tools are in the form of mobile or computer applications, software, platforms,

programs or technology. Other terms that are interchangeably used with online tools are web tools (including Web 2.0 tools), digital tools, ICT tools, virtual tools and technological tools.

1.7.2 Synchronous online teaching and learning

According to Tan, Fairuladiah & Suria (2021), ‘synchronous’ means occurring at the same time, coinciding in time, contemporaneous and simultaneous. Murphy, Rodriguez-Manzanares and Barbour (2011) describes synchronous online teaching and learning as teachers and students communicating spontaneously like in a regular classroom despite not being physically together. The interaction is usually supported by media such as videoconferencing, audio conferencing or chats.

In this study, synchronous online teaching and learning refers to real-time teaching and learning activities with the presence of both the lecturers and students using teleconferencing systems. Lecturer-student and student-student interaction and communication take place simultaneously on set schedules during synchronous online teaching and learning.

1.7.3 Asynchronous online teaching and learning

The term ‘asynchronous’ is derived from the Greek words “asyn” which means ‘not with’ and “chronos” which means time. Murphy et al. (2011) describes asynchronous online teaching and learning as students working with

online materials on their own, under the guidance of a teacher. According to Wan Ab Aziz, Mohamad Najmi, Ahmad Zaki & Alia Nadhirah (2021) asynchronous teaching and learning is delayed in time, giving the students opportunity to engage with learning activities at their own time.

In this study, asynchronous online teaching and learning refers to any teaching and learning activities that occur when the lecturers and students are not together in terms of time and space. It allows the students to access the materials prepared by the lecturers beforehand and work on their own to complete the tasks at their own pace within the given time.

1.7.4 Communicative English

Communicative English in this study refers to the English courses offered at the Malaysia polytechnics with the aim to develop students' communicative ability in various social interactions and authentic situations (Thivviyah, Sarimah & Gunadevi, 2017). Based on the curriculum structure provided by Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education (DPCCE), polytechnic students are required to complete all three Communicative English modules; Communicative English 1, Communicative English 2 and Communicative English 3 before graduation. The Communicative English courses syllabus provide emphasis on social communication, communication at the workplace and job-hunting mechanics (DPCCE, 2019a,b,c).

1.7.5 Continuance intention

Continuance intention refers to decision to continue using a program (Bhattacharjee, 2001). In this study, continuance intention refers to the likelihood that a person will continue using online tools over time.

1.8 Limitation of Study

There are several limitations identified in this study. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small in which the findings might not be generalisable to the larger population of Communicative English lecturers at Malaysia polytechnics. Secondly, as the observations only involve two lecturers, the observation findings may not be representative of the whole respondents who participated in this study. In addition, it was a challenge to get lecturers to respond to the lengthy questionnaire within the stipulated time, thus delaying the second phase of data collection. The lack of research on continuance intention of using online tools also made it hard for comparison.

1.9 Significance of Study

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for educators who wish to integrate online tools in their teaching and learning. The educators will be able to weigh the factors that could affect their use of online tools, thus making informed decisions on how the tools can be effectively used in their teaching and learning. Secondly, this study is also significant for educators to rethink about their pedagogical knowledge in addressing the needs of digital natives. By reflecting on their experience



of using the online tools during the pandemic and post-pandemic, the findings will provide better understanding of the needs in quickly adapting to challenges in teaching and learning. This hopefully will help educators understand the concept of teacher agency and continuous professional growth.

1.10 Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive background of the problem and explained the problem statement. It has also outlined the research objectives and research questions that are sought to be answered in this study. In addition, it includes the explanation of the underlying theoretical framework that guides this study. This chapter has also provided the definition of terms related to this study. Lastly, it has also explained the limitations as well as the significance of this study.

