YOUTUBE AS A RESOURCEFUL TOOL TO ENHANCE LEARNER AUTONOMY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Classroom education in universities is a managed environment where every input students receive is analysed, collaborated and organized by both educators and learners. Educators are within limits when students carry out learning outside of the classroom. Learning turns independent and students are altogether responsible in controlling, choosing and exercising learnt knowledge and setting their own learning environment. The English language, being globally spoken, serves variety of advantages in the education, business and work life. Students from different courses are encouraged to equip themselves with basic spoken and written English to achieve reasonable success in their education and career life. Simultaneously, to achieve such accomplishment, they need to allocate enough time, energy and cost as efforts to learn the English language outside of the classroom. Finding physical classes that will be able to aid their English language proficiency outside of classroom education can be a burden due to time constraints, course works and examination preparation occupying their schedule, resulting in very little motivation among students to conduct self-regulated learning in order to enhance their English language proficiency. Learner autonomy needs to be conducted in a proper way where time, energy and costs can be saved altogether and increasing their motivation to move further with the basics of spoken and written English. Autonomous learning is considered as outside of classroom learning because students learn and take responsibility of their own learning in their own environment. Technology being the backbone of modern education has provided plenty of platforms to promote learner autonomy and the English language proficiency. YouTube is the most common video platform exercised among university students in efforts to conduct proper learner autonomy and English language learning. This paper discusses the theories, concepts and approaches which build up a theoretical and conceptual framework on the process of learner autonomy to enhance English language learning using YouTube.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, YouTube, English language, autonomous learning, video

INTRODUCTION

Independent learning using YouTube videos among university students to enhance their English language proficiency is far more advantageous than we think. Students are prone to using online platforms that offer instant, accessible and data saving features that assist their day-to-day tasks and assignments in their university life. YouTube is an online video streaming platform from Google that gained vast popularity in this modern age that provides unlimited benefits to university students as it serves as the pre-eminent method for learner autonomy especially in mastering spoken and written English. The English language is used worldwide and is the universal language for communication. Technology along with this language has aided various business and education aspects in successful growth and development. The high adaptation and user-interactive technological devices used among students assisted their learning experiences and results (Zain & Din, 2020). University students have their own environmental factors that influence their learning culture. They reside in a society that continuously adapts to sharing and applying knowledge, enhancing their learning skills, abilities and performances. This study aims to outline the theories, concepts and approaches that are prioritized to develop the process of learner autonomy to enhance English language learning using YouTube.

Learner Autonomy

The ability to take control of one's own learning is known as learner autonomy where students are able to conduct self-directed learning outside of classroom (Benson, 2013). *"Students take control and responsibility for their own learning, both in terms of what they learn and how they learn it. It takes as its starting point the idea that students are capable of self-direction and are able to develop an independent, proactive approach to their studies"* (Hardy-Gould, 2013) . In this case, learners are responsible for what they want to learn and how they want to learn it in their own environment which is outside of classroom education. While learners are often guided in understanding topics taught in the classroom and completing given assignments through consultations and guided experiments, be it with their lecturers or peers, it can be entirely different than self-regulated learning where the learner alone plays an active role in acquiring knowledge. Learners are usually equipped with reference books, dictionaries, technological devices such as phones, laptops, tablets and computers and a stable internet plan and connection in the process of conducting learner autonomy as these tools will aid their independent knowledge research. Ivan Moore from Sheffield Hallam University (2021) states that in conducting learner autonomy, learners grasp the responsibility to identify their learning goals as what they need to learn, their learning process as how they will learn it, evaluating and using their autonomous learning, having well-founded conceptions of learning, range of learning approaches and skills, organizing their learning, having good information processing skills and are well motivated to learn. In achieving such skills in the process of learner autonomy, some of the benefits learners gain are being able to think critically, acquiring digital literacy, creativity, collaboration and communication skills (Lewis, 2019). The figure below outlines the skills developed in the process of learner autonomy:

THINKING AND LEARNING SKILLS	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS
Creativity	Communication
Critical thinking	Collaboration
Digital literacy	Emotional development
Learning to learn	Social responsibilities

Figure 1. Skills Developed in the Process of Learner Autonomy

The English Language Learning using Learner Autonomy

In the Malaysian education system, the English language comes in second to the Malay language in most aspects and importance but not all Malaysian learners are proficient in the language (Ramiza & Peter, 2013). Being a universal language, learners are encouraged to equip themselves with correct grammar usage when writing, speaking, reading and listening in English. Learning this global language even the basics aid individuals to strive in their educational life and workplace particularly due to the fact that it is widely and broadly used to conduct job instructions and executions. Speakers know when to infuse casual English or formal English. Studying English can help individuals to progress in life both personally and professionally. Individuals can compete in the global job market, increase their career skills and start to meet people around the world (ETS Global, 2020). This prominent language is widely encouraged to be used extensively among students while they pursue their future in various courses of their choice. Languages play a part in bringing many cultural aspects together in the economic, political, educational and career-driven world. Learning the English language while pursuing courses of their choice can enhance one's knowledge horizon. With this importance in mind, the English language proficiency can be pursued by students using autonomous methods. Students spend almost 12 to 16 hours a week in university classes and the rest of the days to complete their assignments and carry out their routine. This becomes an obstacle when they are faced with the responsibility to make time for extra classes to enhance their English language proficiency. They need proper guidance and organized instructions to help them learn the language and to stay motivated when learning outside of the classroom.

YouTube Promoting Learner Autonomy

In the 21st century learning, integrating the use of technology in education by both educators and learners is a crucial step in education. Due to the fact that technology has proven over and over of its effectiveness in language teaching and learning, educators and learners must be willing to go far to integrate technology in their learning routine. The modern education world sees an increased popularity in learning using videos from the internet. The abundance of online materials and tutorials found in the YouTube video streaming platform is a game changer especially for university students who seek to perform learner autonomy to enhance their English language proficiency. This well-known online video streaming platform is a technology-enhanced learning tool that strategizes students' learning methods and motivation. Learner autonomy allows students to move independently in their own learning speed and YouTube videos that provide English language learning tutorials assist them flawlessly in this matter. The playback features in YouTube where students can view hosted online tutorials in the English language learning provides them with the ease to revise, recall and relearn in their own comfort. Large number of certified educators, youtubers and language instructors perform free and complete online courses for the English language learning in YouTube. The lesson instruction along with self-evaluation tests provided in the videos in YouTube promotes clear understanding among students as they pick-up the pace on their own as the video hosts guide viewers in an organized and strategized manner.

Students largely benefit from this autonomous method where they are able to share the viewed content with their study peers in an instant, thus increasing learner motivation among students. The online materials can be easily accessed for free across the online platform. At the same time, the informal environment found in this method creates high comfortability among students as well. English language tutorials in YouTube such as grammar lessons and learning how to speak and write basic English, business English and casual English are found in a great deal. With time flexibility in one hand, students' fluency increases as they are able to perform frequent self-checks after learning and adapting to one lesson. This autonomous method motivates students to invest further efforts in learning the English language easily. A common issue that can be found in this autonomous method having a stable internet connection as students need it to view the online videos using the YouTube platform.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories are group of ideas and observed explanations that guide studies in order to achieve reasonable and logical results that benefits the educational society in whole. In this theoretical study, the main theory that formulates learner autonomy enhancing English language learning through YouTube solely focuses on cognitive constructivism theory by Jean Piaget and the difference between traditional classroom and constructivist classroom in pursuit of successful independent learning using online platforms in the 21st century learning style.

Cognitive Constructivism Theory in Learner Autonomy enhancing English Language Learning through YouTube

Learning a language independently where students are outside of the education institution framework and without the intervention of a teacher cognizes students to be their own monitor, instructor and evaluator. Students will be constantly trying to develop their own individual mental model of the real world from their perceptions of that world, and in this case, increasing their English language proficiency in grammatical, spoken and written English aspects (McLeod, 2019). The experience students perceive through autonomous learning using YouTube motivates them to constantly update their own mental models of the language in order to reflect the brand-new information and input they receive. Through this, students construct an interpretation of the English language learning on their own (McLeod, 2019). Jean Piaget worked on the theory of cognitive constructivism that students actively construct knowledge based on their existing cognitive structure. This shows that their learning is relative to their stage of cognitive development as they go through trials and errors in learning the English language autonomously (McLeod, 2019). Students have their prior knowledge in place when they grasped the basics of learning the English language during their school days and through potent observation throughout their studying life, they also absorb the teaching methods and skills performed by their educators. This comes down to application of this observation when they move independently to learn something for the benefit of their future. The methods students learn through cognitivist theory assists them in assimilating new information to existing knowledge. This allows them to perform appropriate and concise modifications to their existing intellectual framework to accommodate that information (McLeod, 2019).

Traditional Classroom	Constructivist Classroom
Strict adherence to a fixed curriculum is highly valued.	Pursuit of student questions and interests is valued.
Learning is based on repetition.	Learning is interactive, building on what the student already knows.
Teacher-centered.	Student-centered.

Figure 2. Traditional Classroom vs. Constructivist Classroom (McLeod, 2019)

The traditional classroom as stated in the figure above is highly related to inside classroom instruction where students' knowledge input is controlled and organized by instructors whereas when performing autonomous learning, students become their own constructivists as they pursuit questions and values on their own. During classroom hours, students learn based on instructor's repeated lessons and they later on receive evaluation based on what they have understood during the lesson. The case is slightly different during learner autonomy process where students construct knowledge based independently and their interaction with the online videos on YouTube is monitored on their own, thus becoming their own constructivists. Autonomous learners have insights into their own learning styles and they take active approach to the learning tasks at hand (Lowry, 2008)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concepts in research and studies serve as developing ideas that wrap around certain principles and general notions. These concepts guide research and studies to obtain a clear and objective picture of what is needed to be conveyed, the planned process of the study and themes that suit the aim of the study. In this conceptual study, the themes and concepts that are discussed focuses on the psychological development of university students when they perform learner autonomy in pursuits of enhancing their English language proficiency that is observed using the Dynamic Model of Learner Autonomy and utilizing competent technology such as YouTube videos as a platform for English language learning and an opportunity for learners to perform autonomous learning.

Psychology Behind Learner Autonomy that Benefits Students' Learning Process in Learning English (Using Dynamic Model of Learner Autonomy)

Language learning requires daily practice and routinal habits in order for students to reach a high level of proficiency in English. This process helps students to develop a sense of tolerance as they approach learner autonomy to reach their targeted language proficiency. Such independency as they depend on themselves to enhance English language learning instead of instructors as knowledge sources creates a strategized learner autonomy process and psychologically prepares them for independent endeavours. Upon reaching such level, their encouragement to increase learning capacity rises along with the motivation to equip themselves with appropriate psychological skills in order to help them tackle with English language learning challenges and obstacles successfully. Students grow aware and would often infuse concise practices of their own learning style in other learning environments as well. This is known as learner application, where they use a constructed and learned knowledge from one experience and apply it to another similar or modifiable situation. Transferrable knowledge works best when students can successfully adapt from one learning experience to another environment (Abdul Manaf et al., 2015). From here, they develop the ability to strategize their learning experience by choosing how they can initiate their learning procedure, what they want to include in the process of reaching to their targeted language proficiency and when self-evaluation and monitoring is needed to corroborate they are on the right track.
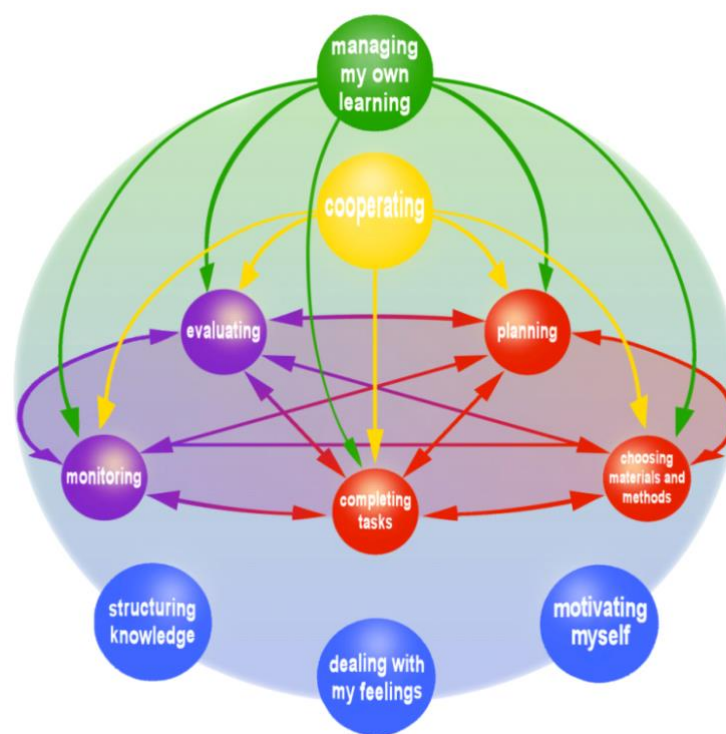
Figure 3. The Dynamic Model of Learner Autonomy (Tassinari, 2012)

The dynamic model of learner autonomy consists of spheres of competencies that sums up psychological skills such as 'managing my own learning', cooperating', 'evaluating', 'planning', 'monitoring', completing tasks', 'choosing materials and methods', 'structuring knowledge', 'dealing with my feelings', 'motivating myself'. This is to stress on the action-oriented and process-oriented character of students while performing the learner autonomy process. The action of managing students' own learning gives a general view of how the whole process works independently. As stated by Tassinari (2012), the components of the model are directly related to each other giving students the freedom to start with any actions from the model and entering the model from what they feel to start with according to their needs and purposes.

YouTube as a Competent Technology to Perform Learner Autonomy and a Platform for English Language Learning

The dynamic model of learner autonomy consists of spheres of competencies that sums up psychological skills such as 'managing my own learning', cooperating', 'evaluating', 'planning', 'monitoring', completing tasks', 'choosing materials and methods', 'structuring knowledge', 'dealing with my feelings', 'motivating myself, . This is to stress on the action-oriented and process-oriented character of students while performing the learner autonomy process. The action of managing students' own learning gives a general view of how the whole process works independently. As YouTube videos are one of the compelling technological method for learning especially for autonomous learning. As much entertainment it provides, this common video streaming platform benefits students in increasing and enhancing their knowledge in English language learning. Various improvements and development can be seen by YouTube users as they upgrade this platform preferably a lot of times to suit users' comfortability and accessibility. Students have the choice to access English language lessons from other countries and even different language experts. This online learning platform truly saves time and money. When students are faced with language components that are not understandable, they have the option of watching again. Graphics and visuals provided in the video motivates students to learn more effectively as this type of learning method grabs their attention better and makes learning comfortable and easy.

Figure 4. 8 YouTube Benefits for Language Learning (LFB, 2020)

The YouTube technology used for English language learning and to promote learner autonomy has features that students find beneficial and adaptable to. Students can receive convenient courses and activities incorporated easily by language instructors and experts across the video streaming platform. They are introduced to large range of topics, encouraged by the video hosts and are explained of the activity and extension carefully. Learner autonomy requires student to move on their own and find opportunities to discover knowledge that helps them to convey thoughts, ideas, contribution and comment of a learnt topic. YouTube functions as a learning community conducted online. This gives the space to broaden their experiences as they discover more qualified and experienced language hosts and students can share this content around the world. They can participate online discussions in order to convey their thoughts and even share information about the learnt topic. The online community in YouTube are also fast enough to reply, like and share other contents at the same time. Students can freely access through the YouTube network for topics that need further understanding and view presentations, webinars, educational shows and participate in live educational talks. These are some of the content that can help them motivate in the process of learner autonomy. YouTube allows the option of watching longer videos in short segments which makes the language learning process more understandable. One of the important skills students can adapt to is note-taking skills. Some of the important points can be viewed again and replayed as many times as the student wishes which also gives plenty of time for them take down important notes. Complex topics are even explained in a detailed yet simpler manner for better comprehension of a topic while learning the English language.

CONCLUSION

This paper briefly discusses on what learner autonomy is this 21st century learning age, how students incorporate them in efforts to enhance their English language proficiency as this universal language is crucial for their future benefits, how YouTube's features and accessibility assist students' day-to-day tasks and learning experiences which helps them to move independently and allow them to apply to other autonomous learning situations. Students develop beneficial skills in the process of learner autonomy in this digital age and psychological tolerance to independency as they discover and engage in English language learning on their own. Wide ranges of choices are given to students to strategize their learner autonomy process in order to achieve their targeted language and this process is shown by the dynamic model of learner autonomy.

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