SOCIAL INFLUENCE ASPECT AFFECTS ESL LEARNER'S ACCEPTANCE LEVEL TOWARDS FLIPPED LEARNING

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Abstract

Flipped learning is a common method that is widely used in secondary and tertiary education. So, how about primary education? Many would question whether this method could be utilised effectively in a primary school ESL classroom. Undoubtedly, this is indeed one of the main issues that worried the authorities. Due to the lack of empirical studies, the Malaysian society was not confident to use flipped learning in primary school. Therefore, this study would focus on and explore the relationship between social influence and its effect towards the acceptance level of flipped learning. A mixed-method design was carried out where 215 participants from a primary school in Malaysia were selected as survey participants while 15 participants among them were chosen as the group interviews participants. It had found out that social influence had a certain degree of impact towards the flipped learning acceptance level among ESL students. Influence from teachers, influence from parents, peer pressure (influence from friends) and even self-influence were found out to affect the learner's acceptance level towards flipped learning approach. Hence, social influence aspect is a vital part that should be deeply studied and discussed in order to increase the acceptance level towards flipped learning among ESL students.

***Keywords*:** Social Influence, Flipped Learning, Acceptance Level, ESL, Education

1. Introduction and Purpose

Malaysia Education Blueprint or which is known as the Educational Transformation Plan 2013-2025 has eleven shifts to transform the education system in Malaysia. In the 7th shift of Malaysia Education Blueprint, which is to leverage ICT to scale up quality learning across Malaysia, suggested that educators should opt for blended learning instead of merely using the traditional pedagogical approach to deliver a lesson. So, we could see that chalk and talk method was indeed a no-no for a 21st century English as Second Language (ESL) classroom. In fact, educators should take into consideration the four Cs, namely communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity in their teaching of language, literature, and even arts in order to be aligned with the 4th Industrial Revolution. According to Embi and Panah (2014), flipped classroom approach was another increasingly popular model in this era. They claimed that the flipped learning approach was indeed useful in getting students to be involved in the process of classroom learning activities actively (Embi and Panah, 2014). So, this paper was to find out the acceptance level of primary school students towards the use of the flipped learning approach in the English as Second Language classroom based on social influence aspect. It was to find out what are the factors that influenced student's level of acceptance towards flipped learning. It was hoped that this empirical study would act as a catalyst to encourage more teachers to opt for flipped learning approach instead of using the traditional pedagogy in their daily lesson plan.

2. Studies on Learner's Perception Towards
Flipped Learning Approach and the Role of Intrinsic Motivation

Numerous studies had been conducted on flipped learning in term of ESL or EFL contexts. Majority of the learners showed positive perception towards this approach. It is undeniable that the intrinsic motivation was high. According to Chen et al., (2018), the students had positive perception in term of the attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and lastly, satisfaction of the flipped learning task. Only a few of them had found flipped learning difficult and time-consuming. So, factors that might affect the learner's acceptance level based on social influence aspects should be explored in order to provide a more practical insight for English language.

Apart from that, Yang (2017) from Hong Kong conducted a study on a secondary English Language Classroom. She had found out that students in general were positive about the flipped classroom approach. The intrinsic motivation should not be neglected. The learners felt that flipped learning approach was very creative and interesting. Then, according to Thai et.al. (2017), learners felt that a flipped classroom had resulted in higher learning performance if compared to Face-to-Face and Fully E-Learning. Thus, this finding had suggested that the flipped classroom setting could be a promising way of enhancing students' learning performance (Thai et.al., 2017). Hence, by finding out the factors that affect the learners' acceptance level would definitely help to overcome all the shortcoming faced, especially based on the social influence aspects where we could know what influence the learner's choice.

Next, according to a study that was done by Lee and Wallace (2018), their surveys had indicated that most of the students seemed to enjoy learning English in a flipped learning environment. They only stated that students in the flipped classroom were found out to be more engaged in the learning process than those who did not flipped learning approach (Lee and Wallace, 2018). Other than this intrinsic motivation, factors that affect the ESL learners' choice were not being further explored and so it would be wise to find out in order to make the idea of using flipped learning approach in ESL classroom a success.

Furthermore, Alnuhayt (2018) had reported a positive result towards the use of flipped learning approach in an EFL vocabulary course too. This result was further found out to support the findings of Gross (2014) where he stated that flipped classroom method was enjoyable to learners since it allowed them to work collaboratively in the classroom. It was indeed undeniable that these findings could be a valuable reference for educators who intended to conduct an effective flipped classrooms lesson to improve their English vocabulary and enhance their learning in a fun way. Therefore, intrinsic motivation and factors that affect the learner's acceptance level should go hand-in-hand, it would surely help to create a new ripple in English as Second Language Classroom.

3. Methodology

This study opted for a mix-method research. A survey study together with group interviews (focus group) were used. This study was an explanatory mixed method design (Creswell, 2008) which utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. This study aimed to measure the relationship between social influence factors and acceptance level towards flipping learning approach among 440 learners who attempted to integrate flipped learning approach in their learning process.

Social influence aspect is one of the key factor in UTAUT framework. As such, a 5-point Likert scale survey was designed using the UTAUT framework. The students were purposefully selected based on the knowledge and experience in using flipped learning approach in their learning. A link to an electronic survey (polldaddy.com) was sent to each of the selected students to gauge results on the relationship between social influence and behavioural intention to use flipped learning approach. (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Lowther & Ross, 2000). In order to further commence

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the analysis of data, descriptive statistics were used to utilize as well as to summarize the findings of the survey, which included frequency distributions and percentages. In fact, the purpose of this data collection was to examine to what extend that flipped learning approach was accepted by the ESL learners based on social influence aspect.

Apart from that, based on Creswell's (2008) description on the explanatory mixed methods design, by collecting the qualitative interview data from the same participants as in the survey phase of the study would help in explaining in a better and greater depth on the quantitative results and themes that are derived. This research study also used open-ended questions for focus group interviews. The qualitative themes would supplement the quantitative data analysis therefore this research study could illustrate a more detailed comprehension of the impact that flipped learning has had on teaching and learning

4. Results and Discussions

Social influence is the construct that measures the influence of someone important to the user on the user's adoption behaviour towards any technology. Those people who were important to them may eventually exert a huge effect on the users. They commonly come from the community in which the user lives and on top of that, the user usually takes their views and advice as a significant guidance in their learning journey. In this study, many participants claimed that they got to know flipped learning as they were required to use it in class starting from year 2018. The acceptance process was initially considered as partially involuntarily.

On top of that, this study had found out that primary school students were largely influenced by people around the school in the process of accepting flipped learning in the ESL classroom. Based on the focus group interviews (refer to table 1), it had found out that 10 out of 15 participants (66.7%) claimed that teachers influence them a lot. So, influence from the teacher or class instructor was found out to be one of the factors that affect the learner's acceptance level. The participants recalled the days they began to utilize flipped learning method for English. The teacher kept stressing and required them to watch videos before any lessons, students became gradually accustomed to use this method. However, overstressing was found to be negative, the students felt stress eventually. Quoted,

"... sometime teachers will tell us like in one week time, you need to do like three times but sometimes we cannot use computer or go online every day. So, it is like we feel a bit scared that we will be scolded by teachers."   *Focus group 1*

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Table 1:Social Influence

Constructs	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)
People who influence my behaviour think that I should use flipped learning approach in learning English.	1 (0.5)	2 (0.9)	27 (12.6)	34 (15.8)	151 (70.2)
People who are important to me think that I should use flipped learning approach in learning English.	1 (0.5)	2 (0.9)	21 (9.8)	67 (31.2)	124 (57.7)
Teachers play an important role and have been helpful to me in the use of the flipped learning approach.	0 (0)	1 (0.5)	16 (7.4)	23 (10.7)	175 (81.4)
My school organisation supports the use of flipped learning approach.	0 (0)	2 (0.9)	14 (6.5)	57 (26.5)	142 (66.1)
My parents and family members support the use of flipped learning approach.	9 (4.2)	4 (1.9)	22 (10.2)	28 (13.0)	152 (70.7)
When I am at home, my parents show support by allowing me to go online to watch the videos uploaded by my teachers.	1 (0.5)	10 (4.7)	19 (8.8)	59 (27.4)	126 (58.6)
When I am at home, my parents show support by allowing me to go online to complete the tasks set by my teachers.	11 (5.1)	3 (1.4)	18 (8.4)	27 (12.6)	156 (72.6)

Back to the four main sub themes that emerged. There were four sub categories that derived from the Social Influence category, namely 'Influence from Parents', 'Influence from Teachers', 'Influence from Classmates' and 'Self-Influence'. These four were very essential as both criteria would influence the acceptance level of the learners towards flipped learning. Since there were young ESL learners, people around them really played an important role in their learning. Based on table 1 above, we could see that 151 students (70.2%) strongly agree that people who influence their behaviour think that they should use flipped learning approach in learning English. So, who are the people who influence their behaviour? Based on the interview transcripts, there were parents, teachers and friends. Among these three, teachers were found out to be the main person who influenced the learner's acceptance level as it scored the highest percentage which was 81.4%, followed by parents with 70.7%, school administrator with a rate of 66.1% and last but not least, people who are important to them which are their friends scored 57.7%. These results were further triangulated with the focus group interviews. All three groups derived with different answers. Group 1 stated that parents and teachers are the main people who influence their behaviour while there was one participant who said she influenced herself instead of others. Then, Group 2 mentioned about friends, parents while Group 3 discussed on all three, parents, teachers and classmates. Nobody (0%) talked about administrators in the school.

The first sub category was influence by teachers. Just like what the quantitative data had shown us. 175 (81.4%) of the participants strongly agree that teachers play an important role and have been helpful to them in the use of the flipped learning approach. Then 142 participants strongly agree that the school administrators support the use of flipped learning approach. This is vital and it can fill the research gap where it stated that many school administrator do not advocate the use of flipped learning due to less empirical studies. Hence, it is hoped that this finding could give the school administrators some confidence in choosing flipped learning approach for ESL classroom. Therefore, this study could strongly state that there was a relationship between social influence and acceptance level. We need someone to influence our behaviour though there was a minority who could self-influence themselves. Therefore, we need to check out the role that each parties play in order to ensure all the learners could accept flipped learning with an open heart.

The second subcategory was peer pressure or influence from classmates. Based on the interview transcripts and table 1, four participants (26.7%) stated that they were more impacted by their classmates or friends around them. These learners stated that the teacher could not affect them easily. They said that they were not into or passionate enough about new technology or new method. They usually waited until the last moment to adopt them. Quoted from group 1 interview transcript,

'I am so sorry that I did not log in into my account to watch all the videos.'

'it can be a good idea but it is kind of boring.'

'I know it can improve my English but it is a bit annoying.'

All these negative comments showed that there was still some weakness on the role of a teacher in influencing someone's behaviour.

The third subcategory was influence from parents. Based on table 1, it was found out that 152 participants (70.7%) strongly agree that parents and family members influence their choice of using flipped learning method. Then, there were two different perspectives that appear for the following statements below:

- 156 participants strongly agree that their parents show support by allowing them to go online to complete the task sets given buy the teachers.
- 126 participants strongly agree that their parents show support by allowing them to go online to watch the videos uploaded.

Both statements were about parents showing support, one was on complete the works given, one was on watching videos. We could realise that the difference was by 30. This may reveal to us that there were still some parents who do not allow their children to go online to watch the videos. But, if in term of doing homework, the children were allowed to use the computer. This was indeed one of the challenges faced that many parents were still conservative and still think that watching online videos were not good. So, it would eventually affect the acceptance level of learners towards flipped learning. Then, one of the participants from the focus group also showed us that they could not go online every day. Quoted from focus group 1,

'…but sometimes we cannot use computer or go online every day…'

Thus, it was wise to solve this issue in order to increase the acceptance level and made flipped learning an enjoyable and fruitful experience who could benefit the learners.

The last subcategory for this Social Influence category was self-influence.

This sub category was not discussed in the questionnaire. It was emerged from the focus group interview. There were a total of 3 out of 15 participants (20%) with one from each focus group that

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claimed that nobody influence their choice. They help themselves or look for information themselves. Quoted,

'I help myself…I explore it myself.'	*Group 1*
'Me. I check out myself…by going to Google to look for information.'	*Group 2*
'(raise his hand) Me. I use Google.'	*Group 3*

Therefore, this self-influence was interrelated with the previous sub category that was discussed in Perception Category, which was a psychological aspect. The finding would also prove that there is a relationship between social influence and the student's level of acceptance towards flipped learning approach. In fact, we should further explore the role of each parties for the future research.

Conclusion

This study defines social influence as the learner's perceptions regarding other important people in their live who believe and influence them on the use of flipped learning in their learning journey. Based on this study, there were four sub categories that emerged. There were influence from teachers, influence from parents, peer pressure (influence from friends) and even self-influence. Social influence aspect played a vital role in affecting the student's acceptance level. It was found out to be the second important contributor towards this study. This finding is consistent with findings from Wang et al. (2009) where social influence was claimed to have a significant influence on students' behavioral intention to use. However, the results of this study were found out not in line with Al-Hujran et al. (2014); Iqbal and Qureshi (2012); Nassuora (2012) where they stated that social influence construct did not influence students' behaviour to use any learning technology, disregarding students' ages and experiences. This might be due to the reason of eliminating the age factor and experience factor in this study. In fact, the research could consider to include these two factors in order to get a holistic picture of it.

In the current study, it had found out that the role of a teacher was of paramount importance in influencing the learner's acceptance level. Based on the qualitative data, majority of the students claimed that they continue to use flipped learning despite of any difficulties met was due to their instructor or teachers. They claimed that as long as the teachers asked them to use, they will be more confident to try. The next important influence was parents. If parents really support their children to use flipped learning, make sure support it whole-heartedly, regardless of any tasks, be it watching videos or typing tasks. They should show their support by allowing them to use the computer. As based on this study, it had found out that parents were slightly confused with their decisions, they support their children to use flipped learning, they support them to use computer to complete their tasks and yet a number of them did not support their children to watch the videos posted by the teachers. All these will surely affect the acceptance level. Perhaps parents should supervise their kids instead of forbidding them to watch.

Peer pressure was another important factor. It had found out that the classmates will influence each other. They will do whatever their friends asked them to do. Therefore, this finding had eventually suggested policymakers of flipped learning in Malaysia primary school should create a supportive environment before implementing flipped learning in ESL classroom. It should include peers, teacher, administrators and parents. Such an encouraging and supportive environment will automatically and positively influence students' behavioral intention to try out this new technology (Tan, Ooi, Sim, & Phusavat, 2012).

Then, in term of self-influence. The available self-learning resources such as YouTube or Google, increases self-influence towards flipped learning as well. Based on the interview transcripts, a few of them use Google to look for more information. In short, all these factors were interrelated. They relied on each other and there was relationship between each constructs and behavioral intention.

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