OLELT (ONLINE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING) AS A TOOL TO PROPAGATE LIFELONG LEARNING CULTURE AMONG EDUCATORS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT
The rapid development of e-learning in most public and private higher institutions in Malaysia leads to a growing demand for lecturers to be well-versed in web-based applications for teaching and learning. This challenges some fundamental issues in education as lecturers now have to change the way they think and work. This paper presents the results of a case study on self-directed learning experience in an on-line English Language training program known as Online English Language Training (OLELT) to help students improve their English Language proficiency. The instruments used to measure the learning experience are observations and in-depth interviews. Data from in-depth interviews and observation from ten lecturers from various disciplines in a public university can provide an insight in developing an effective online English Language Training for lecturers to propagate life-long adult learners and to foster creative and critical professional adult learners. The results of this research found that online training is efficient, cost-effective, and motivating if it is properly planned and designed according to the needs of the users. It also promotes lifelong learning culture among educators. However, there are barriers and constraints faced by the participants that need to be addressed.

WORKPLACE TRAINING AS A MEANS FOR GENERATING LIFE-LONG LEARNERS AMONG ACADEMICIANS
There is no lifelong qualification, lifelong degree or lifelong master’s degree as education received ten years back might not be relevant nor has little relevance to the current situation. Lecturers who are unable

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to keep up have either to leave or lose promotion. This means everyone has to be a successful learner and learning does not stop after one obtains his or her master’s degree or doctorate. Contrary to the current belief, education is not to fill people with knowledge; knowledge soon becomes obsolete and has to be renewed. Education is the acquisition of knowledge and skills. In reality, workplace appreciates people with skills (Cheng, 2004). Education is not just subjected to examination but now total solution to real problems must be constructed creatively and effectively. In other words, education must prepare students to be continuous learners (Garrison and Anderson, 2003). Therefore, lecturers are now expected to be not just knowledgable in their own fields but able to upgrade their knowledge and become life-long learners. By doing so, they are preparing their students to be life-long learners as well. This paper proposes E-training for academicians as a way to create a knowledge worker and learning organization for UiTM. By presenting literature related to online training for workplace and data from in-depth interviews and observation, it is hoped that to provide an insight in developing an effective online English Language Training for lecturers to propagate life-long adult learners and to foster creative and critical professional adult learners.

With rapid development in integration of information and communication technology in schools and higher learning institutions, soon online learning will be adapted widely. At a higher education level, radical changes are taking place from policy change to upgraded infrastructure in the effort to produce professionals who can meet national human resource needs and requirement. Learning and teaching via computer are widely used through the integration of computers, or coursewares, or using web-based learning as a teaching and learning tool (Wan Zumusni and Supyan Hussin, 2001). Infusion of Internet also expands lecturers’ space and access to greater world of knowledge with the mushrooming of websites offering information on anything they can possibly imagine, known as ‘network-based language teaching’, where computers are connected to one another in either a local or global network (Warschauer and Kern, 2000).

In Malaysia, E-learning is gaining popularity among public and private higher learning institutions as practiced by University Tun Abdul Razak (Unitar) and Open University Malaysia (OUM) which offer all degree programs via the hybrid and blended mode (Raja Maznah Raja Hussain, 2004). Other similar e-learning systems include MMLS (Multimedia Learning System) in Multimedia University (MMU), Online Learning Interactive System (OLIS) in International Medical University (IMU) and Virtual Online Instructional Support System (VOISS) in Unitar. UMT is another institution which uses online learning
and web-based technologies to train its 150 academic staff and staff from Philippines, Singapore and Thailand in five phases. Recently, an online English Language proficiency assessment for UKM lecturers has been developed by Norizan Abdul Razak et al. (2004). Subsequently, its potential for online professional training for academicians must be harnessed so that lecturers are more equipped and confident to use the technology not only to teach but to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Since school, college and university provide and prepare students for work by grounding in numeracy, literacy and other skills, further training at workplace to cope with the demand of the works and survive in the changing working environment is needed for the academicians. Horton (2000) and Schaaf (1998) in Richards (2002) reported that recent research documented several critical trends in workers’ desire for more training and workers’ preference for learning on the job which is informal and self-paced to formal classroom training.

Although there are dissenting views regarding the adoption of computers in facilitating language teaching and learning (Wan Zumusni, 2001) among educators, it is no doubt that computers are gaining its popularity in a language classroom to facilitate language learning, particularly English language. As English Language is becoming increasingly important as the medium of instruction, computer literacy has also become a necessity for graduates to secure a promising job in the market.

According to Hiemstra (1994), most adults spend a substantial time acquiring information and learning new skills to respond to the rapidity of change, the continuous creation of new knowledge and an ever-widening access to information making such acquisitions necessary. Much of this learning takes place at the learner's initiative, even if available through formal settings. A common label given to such activity is self-directed learning, which is seen as any study form in which individuals have primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and even evaluating the effort. At workplace, training is part and parcel of the workers either through directive or voluntarily measures.

Workplace training is a transition from college or university education in enhancing one’s professionalism to be able to perform more efficiently and in upgrading their skills and knowledge. It is a set of processes which occur within specific organizational contexts and focus on acquiring and assimilating an integrated cluster of knowledge, skills, values and feelings that result in individuals and teams refocusing and fundamentally changing their behaviour (Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle and McGuire (2002: 61 in Muhamad and Idris, 2004).

One of the three important dimensions to be considered in developing Malaysia that Yip (1997 in Norsaidatul, Harneive, and Valida, 1999) stressed is to equip the workforce with training in the latest
technology. Retraining and skills upgrading of the present workforce must be a priority within the framework. In facing this new challenge, higher learning institutions must now recognize and play an active role in the national development by tackling the shortage of knowledge workers. The term “knowledge workers” has long been highlighted by Drucker (1993 in Norsaidatul, Harneive, and Valida, 1999: 19) as:

We know that the source of wealth is something specifically human: knowledge. If we apply knowledge to tasks we already know how to do, we call it productivity. If we apply knowledge to tasks that are new and different, we call it innovation. Only knowledge allows us to achieve those two goals.

Abdul Rahim (1997) defines knowledge workers as an information literate person who internalizes information and creates values by applying knowledge. Here, information literacy is seen as the ability to access, evaluating and use information from a variety of sources including on the world-wide websites. As “knowledge and skills” providers, higher learning institutions must address their institutional role to keep up with the current development by undergoing a change management process, chart new strategic directions, enhance knowledge delivery methods, and increase Research and Development involvement and industrial linkages. The fact that advances in multimedia and IT have revolutionized the channels through which education is delivered such as using personal computers and video conferencing systems means lectures are now accessible at different places. The advancement of the Internet has allowed the scope of education to be widened and PCs are now viewed as powerful complement to textbooks, and not just the main and sole source of information and reference (Norsaidatul, Harneive, and Valida, 1999).

Studies on web-based learning in educational setting in virtual campuses have been done from undergraduate to post graduate level (Teare and Baker, 1998; Griffith, Ashworth and Ward, 1999; Clarke, 2000 and Butler, 2000). Case studies are drawn from different countries namely UK, Canada, USA, Australia, Malaysia, France, Finland and Northern Ireland and different educational level and training situations by Mason (2000) who looks at the context of the application, the medium used and educational outcomes from evaluation reports. Applications range from computer-mediated communication (CMC) to audio graphics. Othman’s (1999) survey on Malaysian government Agency distribution of course category found that only 10.5% of the courses conducted is on language. On the other hand, 11.5% courses conducted by private education agencies are language courses. Such job-related courses by government
education agencies and private education providers are meant more for skills training to prepare employees to adequately manage their jobs, enhance productivity and performance.

Studies show that Malaysian workforce participate in informal workplace learning as part of their employment directed by political and economic agenda other than for organizational effectiveness. These adult learners are engaged in training and development activities where the organizations provide the funds, facilities and time for them to acquire competencies such as higher-order skills, life enrichment and risk taking to become proficient in non-routine and ‘frontier’ skills (Muhamad and Idris, 2005). Since today’s work environment has become more virtual and technology dependent, the nature of training has also moved from traditional to web-based training environment.

Due to low participation, Muhammad (2001) indicated that there are only a few studies on adult learners in Malaysia. Nevertheless, in a nation-wide survey on workplace learning, in terms of the training program content, Muhamad and Idris (2004) reported that communication or language is below 5% while most courses are on technical skills (30%), motivation and self improvement (22%) and education information and general knowledge (15%). In a study on the readiness of UiTM Shah Alam lecturers in using technology in distance learning education, a high level of confidence and comfort in information technology usage (63%) is found among the lecturers (Nor Hapiza Mohd Ariffin and Zawiyah, 2002). They found positive attitudes towards computers as knowledge and experience contribute to the lecturers’ readiness, apart from usage and involvement as mentioned by Loyd and Gressard (1986) and Dupagne and Krendl (1992). Another useful indispensable feature of an online training is e-mail and forum to discuss and present suggestions for the portal. Email as a form of organization communication has drawn considerable interest and has discoursal and socio-cultural impact (Zubaida, 2000). It addresses the issue of critical sensitivity for professionals interested in improving their English language communication skills. The implicitness and indirectness associated with web-based materials makes online training the most suitable avenue to train the lecturers.

WORKPLACE ONLINE TRAINING IN MALAYSIA HEIS (HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS)
The increasing interest and wide usage of ICT at Higher Institutions of learning have significant impact on web-based learning and eventually have spurred the need for studies on e-training in upgrading academicians’ knowledge and skills. This is because due to the nature of their work, it is impossible to
train them via the conventional method i.e. attending a regular language course. With the rapid advance of technology and changes in educational policy, workplace training is responding to current revolutions taking place in the Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia. Sulong (1996) asserted that changes in the University and University College Act (1971) and the introduction of the Private Higher Education Act (1996) have enabled private sectors to play a greater role in the tertiary education. With new knowledge and new technology, keeping up with demand of the job market is not an easy or pleasant task for some educators who have to keep abreast with the upcoming changes in teaching trend and mode of learning. This calls for redefining their roles in the classroom as technology is paving its way particularly into Malaysian higher education institution settings. With new knowledge and new technology, keeping up with demand of the work is not an easy or pleasant task for some educators who have to keep abreast with the teaching trend and mode of instruction. One of the current technologies that has gained heightened interest in language classrooms is online learning as a mode of instruction and lesson delivery.

Technology is now easily available and is changing the way educators think about teaching and the way they disseminate their knowledge. Educators are not merely information giver; they have to be resourceful and their learning process is an on-going process. Since computers are slowly becoming part of the education fabric, it is important for educators to have a better understanding of integrating technology in the classroom. As technology becomes increasingly dominant in education, educators are required to incorporate technology into their classroom. As technologies advance and educators become more proficient with them, teaching quality and students’ achievement would eventually improve. Therefore, there is a need to provide practicing educators with opportunities for professional development via technology. Besides spending more budget on improving infrastructure, efforts should also be made to provide more avenues for professional development.

Filippeli (2003) feels that opportunities for professional development in technology is increasing and these opportunities need to be made available and more emphasis must be placed on the integration of technology across the curriculum. The time, quality and scope of technology related to professional development provided to teachers clearly impact the type and degree of technology use in the classroom. However, when devising a technology training, teachers feel it is much better when it was spread out over a few days than a one-day in-service training session (Bryan et.al., 1999) in order to take part in the learning process and to be allowed to innovate ways of using technology to enhance instruction. Wentworth (1988) asserts
informal, one-on-one training from a lead teacher media specialist provides the vast majority of technology training valued by teachers. They feel more comfortable exploring the potential of technology with their colleagues than a paid consultant or professional trainer. An effective model would be one that stimulates teachers’ curiosity and motivates them to work collaboratively.

Moyer (2004) argues on effectiveness of learning at the workplace by offering suggestions on how to design the expected outcome accordingly. When planning a workplace training module, it is important to prepare the website according to their needs. When it comes to designing the program, Jong and Sarti (1994) provide useful guidelines in terms of the presentation of text, colour, graphics and layout. For an organization, a number of case studies and evaluations of telecommunication applications underline the importance of top-level administrative support to the success of any program. Although many small-scale uses of these technologies begin at grass-roots level with a few enthusiastic teachers, their growth within an organization must have backing at the highest levels because so many major policy issues are at stake. Some major issues include managing and supporting the equipment through its lifetime.

Web-based training which incorporates online discussion group and computer-mediated communication (CMC) promote constructive, cognitive, collaborative and sociocultural models of learning (Leidner and Jarvenpaa, 1995 and Garrison and Anderson, 2003). The phases of critical thinking induced through web-based learning include the triggering event, exploration, integration and resolution. On the other hand, self-directed learning is a complementary social model, which addresses issues of management, monitoring and motivation. It is an important conceptual model towards understanding issues raised by technology that have the potential to transfer enormous control to the learner.

Educators are people who disseminate knowledge in education settings like classroom, lecture hall or beyond the four walls in cyberspace. In doing so, they use and recommend a list of reading or teaching material such as notes and textbooks. For a public university like Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) which uses English Language (EL) as the medium of instruction, naturally teaching notes, questions papers, assignment and tutorials are in the English Language; although this might not be applicable in all cases. Some lecturers may revert to the students’ mother tongue to clarify certain terms to facilitate understanding but EL is significantly used in the teaching and learning. This is because EL is becoming increasingly important as it is widely used as the main medium of instruction in the internet.
Consequently, possessing sound EL proficiency is an asset as for academicians, their professional works entails extensive usage of EL such as during meeting, reading reference materials, delivering lectures and talks, writing and presenting academic papers in conference and journals. Therefore, having good proficiency in EL is expected as they are professionals who are also the stakeholder in the educational institutions.

METHODOLOGY

This research was designed as a comparative case study (Yin, 1994) to examine the online learning processes and the impact of OLELT on lecturers using in-depth interviews with participants. The study also used regular, in-depth discussions with colleagues, staff and administrators. The qualitative approach is used to study the online training participants’ learning process and experience. Data from OLELT participants are collected through in-depth semi-structured interview protocol and observations. During the 12 weeks online training, the moderator advised and helped participants to set achievable learning tasks, reflecting on their English Language knowledge and skills and producing high quality learning outputs to fulfill the participants’ learning objectives determined in the beginning of the course.

Observations were made while they work and their comments and other noteworthy incidents were recorded. The information was gathered and then organized to be used in conjunction with the in depth questionnaires to study the learning process. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their learning experience, motivation, self-esteem and managing their learning. The interviews took place at the participants’ respective offices and were taped recorded and transcribed with the permission of the participants. The interview guide was developed in a semi-structured interview protocol which was conducted for 1 to 2 hours each session.

Initially, 20 lecturers signed up for OLELT. However, since the research adopts a qualitative approach, the sample for the primary data collection was collected from ten most active lecturers only. They consist of educated professionals who possess at least a master’s degree with more than three years of teaching experience. They specialize in their knowledge and are from different disciplines. Other than being highly educated and experts in their respective disciplines, they are considered as a privileged group because they have access to personal computers and internet in their office and at their workplace, making online instruction accessible to them.
The narrative analysis was used to report the findings since it is now central to qualitative social science research as stories or narratives constitute, rather than reflect, some aspect of a socially constructed reality (Riessman, 1993 and Padgett, 2004). These stories as constructions which were created through interpersonal, sociocultural and historical process. Before commencing on data analysis, transcriptions of the interviews were carefully reviewed for accuracy. The transcriptions were analyzed using selective coding, which involved joining theoretical or narrative categories into a working understanding of target phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Items in the data were drawn for their relationships and arranged according to categories and layers to clarify and develop models.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
After the workshop, participants brought back the file to their respective offices and delayed in getting started and incorporating OLELT as part of their daily tasks, or planning on going through OLELT at least 2-3 times a week, 20 minutes to an hour. Failure to plan is planning to fail. After getting caught with other matters, they realized that a few weeks had already gone. Some participants emailed the moderator and asked her to come to their office to help them to get started. This means helping them to save the OLELT website address in “Favorites” so that every time they surf on the net, they can go to OLELT website without having to type the address. The researcher also encouraged them to paste a small reminder near their computer screens so that they make it a habit to check on OLELT and achieve their learning objectives by doing some tasks.

It is undeniable that every adult learner has to carry out their personal duties as husband/wives, mothers, daughters, caregivers which takes a lot of time and effort. On top of that, their official duties as head of program / unit, members of various committees in the campus such as Audit or Quality unit, lecturers (teaching more than one subject for 18-22 hours per week), researchers and mentors are as demanding as well and require their time and energy. As one participant emailed, “sorry, I haven’t started the engine” at Week 6.

Participants believe that OLELT can help them to a certain extent to improve their English Language proficiency if they put more time and effort in it. They do agree on the importance of OLELT to help them improve their English on their own as voiced out by Participant 1:

“… don’t have much practice here because nobody here speaks English except Mr. X”
I memang nampak especially masa buat IELTS benda tu membantu dan I nampak of course OLELT boleh improve tapi I nak focus on my speaking…no reason to do yang lain-lain tu…I’m good in English, confident in writing…connection, grammar. I can give someone to correct, dah ada dictionary, editing software.

Understanding and Overcoming Barriers and resistance

Despite his interest in OLELT, one participant got a scholarship to Australia, during the course so he had to focus on IELTS and did not have much time to surf OLELT and do the exercises.

“…in the beginning I want to improve my English but at the same time I got scholarship to further studies. Itu yang mengacau tu at the same time OLELT running so tak sempat nak explore sangat.”

Participants also did not allocate time for online self-directed learning in their schedule and just did it anytime they feel like surfing OLELT. Failing to plan learning time makes learning ineffective and not well-organized.

“Don’t know where to slot. I consider OLELT as minimal thing bukannya priority. Cuma I tak cakap benda tu kat you. I tau benda ni kalau I tak bagitau kat you. I want to stop OLELT ni, patutnya I kena bagitau I tak boleh carry on”.

Participants’ lack of interest in using OLELT to improve their English language proficiency can be explained by:

In terms of English if she or he is a lecturer dia ada ego – I’m a lecturer – buat apa nak belajar. Itu my personal view. Satu lagi, it doesn’t create fun, something exciting, sketchy something vogue ke, glamour ke…just remind you of school days – learning about words, pronunciation English Language could be a boring thing to do for lecturers since dia orang pun mengajar. Itu my personal view. Kalau you
nak tanya mungkin di kalangan pensyarah itulah social culture kecuali ada insentif. Duit ke macam direct selling ni dia panggil apa…pyramid. Tapi kalau I apa-apa pun sama juga. I tengok di kalangan lecturer bila ada benda macam tu of course human being or lecturer any program yang tak ada langsung insentif in terms of unsur-unsur gertak ke…kan dalam kerajaan kalau nak buat apa diwajipkan hadir, atau haramkan something. Kalau program tu dia hadir, masuk CV, prestasi, performance appraisal. No lecturer atau staff sanggup can reject or mess around. Sebab dia tak ada unsur-unsur begitu, gertak ataupun leader punya concern.

[Source : fieldwork transcription notes]

The above statement shows that OELT lacks incentive for participants because they cannot see the long-term abstract reward, that they are doing this for themselves. Furthermore, there is no directive from the management and their time and effort do not yield any immediate rewards. He feels that if the management stresses on the importance of English language and being involved in research among lecturers, they would take learning and improving their English language proficiency seriously:

Beza dulu dengan sekarang masa Saiful\(^3\) dulu, one good thing about Saiful encouraged lecturers to do research in English. Saiful pernah buat setiap orang diwajibkan ada research proposal. What can we do to involve…everyone must submit proposal and we work with each other. Edit…of courseelah edit..ni…kalau ramai-ramai memanglah banyak kerja. The consequence is on committee you [he’s referring to UiTM Academy of Language Studies lecturers who will be busy helping out with translation and proofreading work when more lecturers are involved in research due to lack of EL proficiency]…dulu benda ni jadi tapi tak sekarang. Tak ada effective enforcement [from the management].

[Source: fieldwork transcription notes]

Participation is one of the more thoroughly studied areas in adult education. Why those professional educated adult educators participate or do not participate is an important question with implications for both theory and practice. Houle’s (1961 and 1988) works on determining an underlying structure of motivational orientations can provide explanations on participation from a psychological or

\(^3\) pseudonym – the former vice director for academic affairs.
sociological perspective. Finally, people’s decisions to participation have less to do with their needs and motives than with their position in society and the social experiences that have happened in their lives.

A study indicates that of those who do sign up for an online course, between 50% and 80% never finish the course (Delio, 2000). The reasons include initial design issues, instructional design and development issues, dissemination and implementation issues and the issue of being self-directed (Romiszowski, 2004). Jenkins and Visser (2007) estimate from 50% to 80% of e-learning participants fail to finish their courses. During the field work, similar factors were described by Romiszowski (2004) on elearning success and failure namely technology, needs, management and learning are found.

Despite the enthusiasm and heightened awareness of the self-directed learning concept explained in the workshop, participants fail to incorporate the training into their busy schedule. It’s always at the back of their head, they silently whisper or reminding themselves about it especially upon seeing the researcher who looks like her, some can be plain ignorant, nonchalant, and pretended as if nothing happens but some apologetically come out with excuses without being asked. Reasons given are having to attend meetings, no time, busy, moving to a new house, on vacation, school holiday, attending PTK (competency evaluation course), constructing examination questions and the list goes on. These are common barriers other than the others as explained in the following section.

Crowther (2000) proposes from a critical theory perspective that nonparticipation can be construed as an act of resistance from a critical theory perspective. Rather than being prevented from participating because of some insurmountable barrier, learners choose not to participate, or participate at a minimum level because resistance is a deliberate choice.

**Participants do not reach out for assistance**

Participants do have confidence in themselves to improve their EL proficiency even though they admitted that if they put more time and effort, they would be able to achieve their goals. However, when in doubt of facing problem either in getting started or managing their time to include OLELT in their schedule, participants just keep it to themselves and do not communicate their obstacles, fears and concerns due to embarrassment and uneasy feeling. Despite the mailing list created for OLELT participants, they are reluctant to post their message due to the fear of exposing their weakness to other participants. Few
participants posted notes, most sent their questions and comments to the moderator personally. This lack of privacy also deter participants to post any notes that can be read by other OLELT members and their real names were exposed as voiced out by a participant.

It was until Week 6 when the course was not progressing as planned and not much feedback was obtained that the moderator decided to reach to the participants by posting several notices reminding them about the online course and whenever she met the participants, she gave her support and encouragement and avoided asking about their progress. More responses were coming from emails addressed personally to the moderator including a poem, questions and encouraging comments from participants. The messages were forwarded to OLELT mailing list, after deleting the sender’s name to show to the other participants that they are not alone and shouldn’t be ashamed if they have not got started. This was dealt by deleting the name of the sender and displaying the time, date and messages to share with other OLELT members similar problems and views. They could just make appointments and the moderator would go to their respective offices to help them going through the module. During the meetings at their respective offices, she also reminded them to allocate 10-20 minutes per day, 2-3 times per week to fulfill their learning objectives.

Mismatched learning needs with OLELT objectives

Another issue was a mismatch in training objectives as expressed by Participant 1. Participants who were already good in listening, writing and reading skills were more interested to improve their communicative or speaking skill not the linguistic skills or grammar. Crowther (2000, pp. 489-490) summarizes the notion on nonparticipation as resistance rather than barriers as:

> It seems reasonable to surmise that many people find adult education unattractive and irrelevant to their daily lives. Despite many well-intentioned efforts to attract people the sense of frustration felt by their failure to respond to what is offered is often evident. It is easy thereafter to assume people are “apathetic” and have limited horizons.

To improve my English related to English language secara online cumanya all the information on the internet in English. So the important thing is I read a lot samada I print out atau baca dari internet. Banyak juga improvement nampak part reading, writing, listening tak de masalah langsung. I know how to start, linking all the words, conclude my statement, manipulate content tapi in terms of speaking tu yang penting.
If I want to know something, best to check internet. Even *tengok tv contoh CSI tv* program and they try to solve an interesting case related to chemical I *tak pernah dengar*. Besok or after the program I check on the internet. *Contoh baru ni dia sebut ada kaitan dengan satu perkataan yang I tak familiar.. I surf if I look them in dictionary semua description of the word. But internet, ada image, video even detailed description.*

[Source: fieldwork transcription notes]

The above statements shows that Participant 1 did practice SDL in using web-based resource learning by looking up for information on the net, but not necessarily using OLELT.

**Cultural aspect**

Although the concept of self-directed learning (SDL) is popular and has long been practiced in western countries, it is not the Malay culture for learners to be independent, resourceful and, motivated due to the national education system which create spoon-fed rote learners. Changing the mindset of these adult learners cannot be done overnight or in 14 weeks but can be done by going out to reach and listening to them, telling them what to do rather than expecting them to come to me for help. This is a new dimension which is not found in previous studies and should be further explored. Malaysian education system is very structured and examination-oriented while OLELT is flexible and not examination-oriented, a system totally opposite from what the participants are used to. This is particularly obvious when they have to make decisions, construct their learning objectives and tasks, plan and manage their own learning system and fitting it into their schedule. They are used to having programs constructed for them and their ideas of taking a course is a 2 or 3 day course in a nice environment with nice food and accommodation provided, a get-away from their routine or a paid holiday even though at the end of the course, they might not apply what they have learned or in other words, the course is ineffective or not fulfilling their needs or does not improve any skills or knowledge for their professional development. It takes time to make them realize and adopt learning for the sake of learning and the love of knowledge, to experience novelty themselves so that they can adapt and adopt teaching via internet with their students, overcome their fears by sharing and solving problems in the learning group. This is not the culture of the lecturers here, but it can be
cultivated through education, encouragement and support. If left unaddressed, this can lead to boredom (Woodill, 2004) which was reported by participants who were drifted from OLELT.

Brander in Egbert and Petrie (2005) stress that educators must acknowledge the cultural influence on teaching and learning and of course English as a second language are acquired through social, cultural and linguistic interactions through which meaning is negotiated (Chappell, 1997). Based on Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural constructivism principles where the literary approach suggests that reading and writing in the second language involve far more than the simple decoding and encoding of texts. Chappelle (1997), Gray & Stockwell, (1998), Tam (2000) and Warschauer (1997) argue that the constructivist tools should be employed for target language performance and enhance intercultural awareness in a constructivist learning environment. Vygotsky’s sociocultural learning theory is applied in language learning context to emphasize how human intelligence originates in our society or culture & to illustrate how individual cognitive gain occurs first through interpersonal interaction (interaction with social environment) & then through intrapersonal interaction (internalization). In a sociocultural perspective, language learning is taught through skills in social interaction, discourse, literacy and negotiation of meaning. The decoding & encoding processes become critical to the understanding of social & cultural competencies by which we are able to reflect, analyze & interpret cross-cultural constructs (Warschauer, 1997).

Participant 1 voiced his uneasiness to use the mailing list created under OLELT because he is not comfortable posting his message because when submitting his entry, he wants it to be perfect because it will be read by other OLELT members.

One thing about OLELT, I ada sedikit negative thoughts pasal you punya tu [mailing list] …open to everybody. I prefer face to face have a bit…with privacy. Maksudnya you dengan I je yang tau.

[Source: fieldwork transcription notes]

**Pedagogical concerns**

Online training, which occurs in formal, nonformal & informal settings, presents both opportunities & challenges to adult educators. They need to think how the internet is facilitating adult learning in all three settings and how we can maximize its potential. At the same time, it presents challenges particularly with
regard to access, even in the information-rich technologically advanced US. Access issues, have also
haunted the field of adult education since its inception. It appears that it is yet another manifestation of this
worrysome social issue at the heart of our adult education practice. While online learning is designed to
open up access, and does so for thousands of adults who need the flexibility of time and space for their
learning, it may also be widening the gap between the have & the have-nots: In a study of rural learners
who had access to computers in community setting, Page (2005) finds other sociocultural and
psychological factors that impeded their use such as “uncertainty about change, fear of technology, need
for guidance, inexperience, relevance, the social context of the persistently impoverished county and the
perceived need” revealed the complexity of the digital divide (p. 334).

From the literature, it can be found that it is vital to integrate technology in the teaching and
learning experience of educators. However in Malaysia, one major barrier could be the widely use of
English language in technology-related application. Nevertheless, this barrier should not be seen as an
obstacle but rather a challenge. At higher education institutions, lecturers are now expected to be not just
knowledgeable in their own fields but able to upgrade their knowledge and become life-long learners. This
includes their linguistic knowledge to be better writers, researchers and educators. There is a great need to
train and provide adequate support for teachers to work with these technologies. Familiarity with the
equipment is fundamental for developing confidence in teaching with it. Similarly, practices in using the
equipment and observing a multi-site class in action also help to understand the dynamics of the situation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL THROUGH WEB-BASED
TRAINING IN PROPAGATING LEARNING CULTURE AMONG ACADEMICIANS

Educators play a vital role in training future employees who are required to function in a fast-paced,
competitive working environment. Education institutions are evolving, and those that survive reflect
structural flexibility and educators’ adaptability to new challenging demands. In order to effectively adapt,
they must respond, learn, and change quickly to function in today’s technological and knowledge-based
environment. The organizations which tend to succeed in this environment are what Peter Senge and
others have named learning organizations. Learning organizations are those that respond to their growth or
survival challenges by capitalizing on the capability of their employees to share a vision for the
contribution of the organization as part of a cohesive team. Learning organizations are those that respond
to their growth or survival challenges by capitalizing on the capability of their employees to share a vision
for the contribution of the organization; to modify their view of what constitutes “work” over time; to understand that as tasks change, different skills are needed and different roles are assumed; and to view teamwork as learning together, rather than merely working together, to accomplish a task. The organization truly learns because those in the organization learn collectively, not as individuals, but as connected members.

Educators should also be able to update their knowledge by making use of the technology such as internet so that they can be proficient and comfortable with using technology in disseminating knowledge. This means having basic computer literacy is insufficient and educators should be able to develop professional growth through the use of technology so that they can integrate it into their work and learning experiences. They should apply innovative uses of technology; they should be expected to use it in their own learning and teaching, while exploring creative uses of technology in their own teaching (ISTE, 2003). In the last 150 years, computer-based communication has been argued as the most fundamental change in communication technology (de la Sola Pool, 1984 in Garrison and Anderson, 2003). The possibility of E-learning transforming all forms of education and learning in the twenty-first century cannot be ignored by those who seriously committed to enhancing teaching and learning.

In a self-directed learning (SDL) environment, participants are involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their own learning (Ash, 1985). Therefore, SDL allows individual learners to be empowered to increasingly assume more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning endeavor as outlined in the principles of SDL. Other than that, SDL does not mean that learning takes place in isolation as learners are able to transfer learning in terms of knowledge and study skill from one situation to another. It can involve various activities and resources such as self-guided materials, participation in a discussion forum, electronic, reflective writing activities i.e. bloggings. The roles of teachers as facilitators are merely to have dialogues with learners, securing resources, and promote critical thinking. Based on these principles, more higher educational institutions are embedding SDL in learning and teaching programs through open-learning programs individualized study options, non-traditional course offerings and other innovations.

There is a great need to train and provide adequate support for lecturers to work with these technologies when using the program in order to sustain interest and motivation and to support continuous usage which eventually leads to autonomous learning. Although initial implementation is received lukewarm response, lecturers who take the challenge in developing collaborating learning strategies for their
courses report tremendous satisfaction despite the greater effort required. The reward lies in working towards the goal of developing independent and questioning learners. After all, Gunawardena (1992 cited in Mason, 2000: 42-43) found that respondents reported that using these technologies is a tremendous learning experience for themselves. However, preparing an online training module for lecturers would require a different approach and content selection.

As professional educated adult learners, they are also able to identify their learning needs and areas to focus on. They want to make decision on the learning content and want to have great involvement in the learning process. Therefore, they are capable of taking the risks and challenges to be life-long learners. The role of leaders at any level is to empower others, either their students or colleagues in their faculty by keeping up with the current development in the industries and build networks inside and outside the academia. The educators will find their work to be more meaningful and rich if they always update themselves with current knowledge and skills. However, in seeking and disseminating knowledge, they need to be humble at one continuum, but also assertive and aggressive in seeking knowledge and in their endeavors. They must be humble enough to admit their knowledge gap by not allowing ignorance to cloud their mind and not being judgmental. Being critical does not mean discriminating. Educators must not be afraid to reach for challenge in order to realize the university’s missions and visions.

REFERENCES


International Society for Teacher Education (ISTE, 2003).


