FACTORS INFLUENCING ESP LEARNERS' BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION TOWARDS THE USE OF *EDMODO* AT A MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

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by

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

α	Cronbach's alpha
n	Number of indicator
$\boldsymbol{\lambda i}$	Standardised factor loadings
$\delta \boldsymbol{i}$	Error variance term
χ^2	Chi-square
df	Degree of freedom
χ^2/df	Normed chi-square
β	Coefficient value
c.r.	Critical ratio
r^2	R square

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
AVE	Average Variance Extraction
BI	Behavioural Intention
BCE	Business and Communication English
C-TAM-TPB	Combined Technology Acceptance Model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CoI	Community of Inquiry
CoP	Community of Practice
CR	Composite Reliability
EE	Effort Expectancy
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
ELAM	E-Learning Acceptance Model
ELT	English Language Teaching
FC	Facilitating Conditions
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
IDT	Innovation Diffusion Theory
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LMS	Learning management system
MCO	Movement Control Order
MEB(HE)	Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint
MM	Motivational Model
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
Moodle	Modular object-oriented dynamic learning environment
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
MPCU	Model of Personal Computing Utilisation
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SI	Social Influence
SLN	Social learning network
SME	Scientific and Medical English
SNS	Social network sites
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
PE	Performance Expectancy
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
VCoP	Virtual Community of Practice

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FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI TUJUAN TINGKAHLAKU PELAJAR ESP TERHADAP PENGGUNAAN *EDMODO* DI SEBUAH UNIVERSITI AWAM MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Edmodo, laman rangkaian pembelajaran sosial telah diakui potensinya dalam meningkatkan kemahiran berbahasa dan perbincangan pelajar secara dalam talian. Namun, kajian mengenai niat untuk menggunakan *Edmodo* sebagai platform komuniti pembelajaran maya dalam kalangan pelajar ESP masih lagi kekurangan. Konsep komuniti pembelajaran maya telah muncul sebagai jambatan untuk menyatukan pelajar melalui platform pembelajaran dalam talian walaupun mereka dipisahkan oleh jarak fizikal. Dalam bidang penerimaan teknologi dalam pendidikan, kajian telah mengukur penerimaan *Edmodo* melalui faktor penerimaan teknologi tetapi telah mengabaikan faktor pendidikan. Oleh itu, Teori Penerimaan dan Penggunaan Teknologi yang Disatukan (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use Technology) yang terdiri daripada faktor penerimaan teknologi seperti jangkaan prestasi, jangkaan usaha, pengaruh sosial, dan keadaan pemudahcaraan diperluas dengan memasukkan faktor pendidikan, iaitu Amalan Komuniti Maya (Virtual Community of Practice) untuk menentukan faktor yang mempengaruhi niat tingkah laku pelajar ESP dalam menggunakan *Edmodo* sebagai platform untuk komuniti pembelajaran maya. Di samping itu, perbezaan dalam kalangan pelajar ESP seperti jantina, bidang pengajian, dan tahap kecekapan telah disatukan sebagai kesan moderasi. Kajian ini dilakukan melalui tinjauan soal selidik kepada 200 pelajar ESP dan secara wawancara kumpulan fokus dengan 16 pelajar. Hasil kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa penyertaan dalam Amalan Komuniti Maya mempunyai daya ramalan yang lebih tinggi daripada faktor

Teori Penerimaan dan Penggunaan Teknologi yang Disatukam dengan koefisien beta standard 0.47. Ini menjelaskan bahawa semakin tinggi penyertaan pelajar ESP dalam Amalan Komuniti Maya, semakin tinggi niat tingkah laku mereka untuk menggunakan *Edmodo*. Hasilnya telah menarik perhatian pihak berkepentingan bahawa harapan untuk mengembangkan kemahiran berfikir autonomi dan kemahiran berfikir aras tinggi menjadi penyebab utama penerimaan *Edmodo* oleh pelajar ESP. Walaupun kesan moderasi nampaknya tidak signifikan bagi kebanyakan penentu, penemuan menunjukkan bahawa penyertaan dalam Amalan Komuniti Maya lebih menonjol untuk pelajar lelaki, berasaskan pengajian Bahasa Inggeris untuk Komunikasi Perniagaan, dan pelajar bebas (contohnya tahap menengah dan menengah atas). Hasil kualitatif didapati sejajar dengan penemuan yang dihasilkan dari analisis kuantitatif. Akhirnya, kajian empirikal ini telah menjadi garis ukur baharu terutamanya kepada pengamal ESP dan pembuat dasar dimana model kajian dan penemuan kajian semasa dapat bertindak sebagai kerangka rujukan untuk penyelidikan dan pedagogi masa depan.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ESP LEARNERS' BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION TOWARDS THE USE OF *EDMODO* AT A MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Edmodo, a social learning network site has been acknowledged for its potential in enhancing learners' language skills and online discussions. Nevertheless, studies on the intention to use *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community among ESP learners are still in dearth. The concept of a virtual learning community has emerged as an avenue to unite learners through an online learning platform although they are separated by physical distance. In the field of technology acceptance in education, studies have measured the acceptance of *Edmodo* through technology acceptance factors but have neglected the educational factors. Therefore, the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) that consists of technology acceptance factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating condition was expanded by incorporating an educational factor, namely virtual community of practice (VCoP) to determine factors influencing ESP learners' behavioural intention in using *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community. In addition, ESP learners' individual differences such as gender, fields of study, and proficiency level were integrated as the moderating effects. The study was carried out by disseminating a questionnaire survey to 200 ESP learners and conducting focus group interviews with 16 learners. The findings of this study disclosed that the participation in a VCoP had higher predictive power than the UTAUT factors, with standardised beta coefficient of 0.47. This explains that the higher ESP learners' participation in a VCoP, the higher their behavioural intention to

use *Edmodo*. The results have caught the attention of stakeholders that the expectation to develop autonomous and higher-order thinking skills are known as the fundamental causes for ESP learners' acceptance of *Edmodo*. Although the moderating effects appeared to be nonsignificant to most of the determinants, the findings revealed that participation in a VCoP was more salient for male, Business and Communication English, and independent learners (e.g. intermediate and upper-intermediate). The qualitative results seemed to align with the findings generated from the quantitative analysis. Finally, this empirical study has drawn a new direction, particularly to ESP practitioners and policymakers that the research model and findings of the current study can act as a frame of reference for future research and pedagogy.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint or better known as MEB (HE) 2015-2025 was developed in October 2011 to achieve an outstanding level of higher education (MEB (HE) 2015-2025).

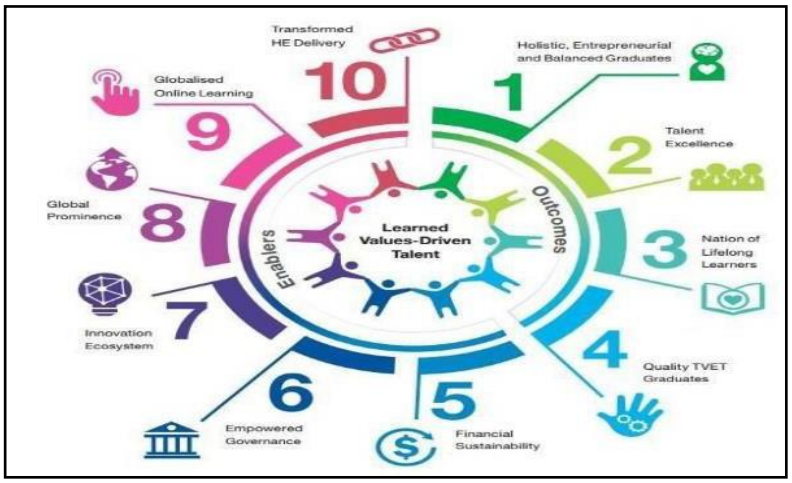

Figure 1.1 Shifts of Malaysian Education Blueprint (HE) 2015-2025
Source: Malaysian Education Blueprint (HE) 2015-2025 Report

Figure 1.1 shows a wheel of 10 Shifts within the MEB (HE) 2015-2025. The first four Shifts describe the outcome of the stakeholders including, Malaysians as lifelong learners, which has become an essential key to the implementation of online learning.

The ninth Shift, known as globalised online learning, aims to achieve the desired outcome described in the National e-learning policy. This Shift facilitates a technology-based delivery mode that could produce more personalised learning for all students by providing comprehensive content, high quality of teaching and learning, and a low cost of delivery (MEB (HE) 2015-2025).

Today, with the covid-19 outbreak, many educational institutions have gravitated from the blended learning approach to a completely online learning environment, which has become the backbone to form an essential way for continuous learning (Banoo, 2020). This new norm of the teaching and learning process requires both educators and learners' cooperation in shaping successful virtual learning.

In a recent news report, it is noted that the Malaysian Ministry of Education has suggested that educators use social media platforms in online teaching and learning when the country has been under the strict restrictions of the Movement Control Order (MCO) because of the Covid-19 outbreak (Mokhtar, 2020).

Studies show the capabilities of social media, especially in terms of collaboration, interaction, and accessibility (Al-Rahmi et al., 2015; Kabilan et al., 2010), have attracted most educators from higher education institutions. However, the issues of privacy and safety have always become a major concern among educators and learners (Durak, 2017; Rambe, 2013). Durak (2017) explains further that social network sites (SNS) are not equipped with essential educational tools such as quizzes, assignments, library, grading, and evaluation features like the ones in the learning management system.

Consequently, social learning network (SLN), namely *Edmodo*, which shares the strength of both the social network sites and learning management systems, has been developed to be used in the educational environment. Some scholars believe that *Edmodo*, an open-source learning platform, has given way to the success of virtual learning (Enriquez, 2014; Dowling, 2011) for several reasons. First, it is safe, user-friendly, and easy to access through a web browser and mobile application (Jarc, 2010; Kongchan, 2012). Second, it comes with some educational tools that are beneficial for

both educators and learners such as storage of resources (e.g. backpack and folder), learners' progress report (e.g. grades and scores), expansion of knowledge (e.g. discovery, in-built application, posts, attachment, main class, and small-group discussion), assessments (e.g. assignments and quizzes) and notifications (Alqahtani, 2019). Third, *Edmodo* is also suitable for gamification, such as badges, emoticons, and digital games to stimulate learners' interest and engagement in the learning process (Lam et al., 2018; Mokhtar, 2018).

Khan (2019) claims that *Edmodo* is the best innovation in the teaching and learning of ESP courses as it encourages fun learning and knowledge contribution through interaction and collaboration. However, only a few researchers have investigated ESP learners' perception of the use of *Edmodo* (Andrienko, 2017; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; Warawudhi, 2017). Furthermore, the above-mentioned studies concentrate more on the contribution of *Edmodo* towards learners' performance in the academic rather than as a platform for knowledge or the edification of the learning community. Hence, this study investigates the factors that influence ESP learners' behavioural intention in using *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

The research on *Edmodo* in language learning is a growing phenomenon. Previous scholars have investigated the usability of *Edmodo* in ESP mainly on learners' academic achievement (Ngo & Ngadiman, 2019; Pop, 2018) and enhancement of language skills (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; Sofia, 2018; Warawudhi, 2017). However, others have pointed out the possible limitations of using *Edmodo* as an educational tool, such as poor accessibility (Mali, 2015; Mokhtar, 2016), incompatibility of using *Edmodo* in certain technological devices (Okumura, 2016),

and lack of feature for live streaming lesson and interactivity (Mokhtar, 2016; Simon, 2016).

Hence, it is worth discussing the factors that affect ESP learners' behavioural intention of using *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community. According to some scholars, the investigation of behavioural intention is necessary because it reflects the individual's acceptance of the technology and measures the success of the technology in creating meaningful learning in the virtual classroom (Ajzen, 1991; Tan, 2013; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

In this study, ESP learners have become a central focus because the demand for ESP in today's world has been increasing significantly in line with the growth of industries and business organisations (Jendrych, 2013).

Besides, English courses at the tertiary level have become a medium for achieving the vision of MEB (HE) 2015-2025, which is to equip learners with skills pertaining to higher-order thinking skills, good communication skills, efficient problem-solving skills, and teamwork (Too, 2017). He explains further that sitting for an English proficiency test alone is not sufficient to get into or secure a job (Too, 2017). Therefore, almost all public universities and colleges offer at least one ESP course related to the learners' major fields of study (Too, 2017; Yong, 2014).

Despite having a clear blueprint and vision from the MoHE, it is reported that fresh graduates are still unable to master generic skills such as communication and interpersonal skills that are needed for the fourth industrial revolution (Too, 2017). Many scholars have found out that Malaysian undergraduates still struggle with writing reports and emails (Kaur & Clarke, 2009) and speaking skills (Too, 2017) in an authentic situation.

Kaur and Khan (2010) posit that it is essential for ESP practitioners to be aware of the learners' needs so that they can use or tailor appropriate content and approaches to prepare the learners for a real workforce. Since most of the undergraduates are from generation Z, Alizadeh (2018) states that integrating technology in the ESP course will significantly impact the learners, especially in preparing them with 21st-century skills. Educators are encouraged to examine their current teaching practices because an ESP course is not about receiving information alone but more about applying knowledge and communication (Alizadeh, 2018; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

Finally, the quality of an ESP course could be developed when in-depth investigations such as observational research or experimental research are conducted on the ESP practitioners' new practices towards teaching approaches and learning materials; it is important to gauge as to whether they are aligned with the learners' needs and learning outcome (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Javid, 2015; Whyte & Sarré, 2017). One of the innovative trends in ESP research is integrating educational technology in the teaching and learning of an ESP course (Chirimbu & Tafazoli, 2014; Khan, 2019).

In this study, *Edmodo* is mainly used as a platform for a virtual learning community, which emphasises regular interaction, construction and sharing of knowledge, collaboration, and building a social identity throughout the teaching and learning processes of the ESP courses. Thus, the unified theory of acceptance and use technology (UTAUT) and community of practice (CoP) are used as the fundamental framework to determine the factors that influence ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* in the virtual environment.

The UTAUT was developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003) based on eight prominent technology acceptance and use theories. It comprises performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions as the key determinants that influence users' behavioural intention and use behaviour. The UTAUT also consists of four moderator variables such as gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use that determine the relationship between the key determinants and users' behavioural intention to use a technology or an information system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). To date, the UTAUT is the most prevalent and reliable model for testing users' behavioural intention and use behaviour in technology (Asare et al., 2016; Ashari et al., 2018; Decman, 2015).

The CoP has been developed based on the situated and experiential learning theory (Wenger et al., 2002). In the online learning environment, the term CoP is known as a virtual community of practice (VCoP) because the interaction among a group of people is developed through the integration of technology (Fisher et al., 2014). According to Soto and Waigandt (2017), CoP is known as a suitable approach to achieving the learning outcome of ESP courses because it allows learners' self-direction, sharing of authentic materials, and development of skills and expertise through regular communication (Soto & Waigandt, 2017).

Since there is a lack of educational-related factors in the UTAUT, the researcher proposes a research model incorporating UTAUT and CoP to explain factors determining ESP learners' behavioural intention to use *Edmodo*. The use behaviour from the UTAUT is not included in this study.

According to Venkatesh et al. (2003), use behaviour refers to the actual behaviour of an individual in using a certain technology, and it is determined directly

by the individual's behavioural intention. Ajzen (2020) states that the desire to perform certain behaviour is strongly influenced by the individual's behavioural intention. Many studies related to the acceptance of educational technology mainly focus on the users' attitude or intention on the use of technology rather than their actual use (Asare, 2016; Zainol et al. (2017). The omission of use behaviour is also supported by Larissa and Indrawati (2017), who investigated learners' sustained intention towards *Edmodo*.

The current study also eliminates moderator variables such as age, experience, and voluntariness of use as they are not pertinent to the objective of this study. Therefore, they have been replaced with ESP learners' individual differences such as gender, fields of study, and proficiency level as the moderators because they have more relevancy in the ESP context as described by the ESP scholars (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Javid, 2015; Whyte & Sarré, 2017).

The literature review shows that VCoP encapsulates social interaction and teamwork, autonomous learning, and knowledge acquisition and contribution (Al-ghamdi & Al-ghamdi, 2015; Nistor et al., 2013). Therefore, learners' participation in VCoP has been added as one of the key determinants in the proposed research framework to explain ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community. This additional key construct is necessary as it describes users' role in the community through the means of technology (Fisher, et al., 2014).

Ware and Warschauer (2006) point out that any new or growing system or technology must be justified through empirical research that goes along with specific use and context before implementing it in an organisation or institution. According to Selevičienė and Burkšsaitienenė (2015), the success of technology can only be

determined when it has been used and accepted by a group of people. Hence, this study becomes significant because it investigates learners' behavioural intention towards *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community before the tool is recognised and infused in the ESP courses.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The lack of comprehensive research regarding the factors that influence ESP learners' behavioural intention toward *Edmodo* (Djamal, 2018; Dogoriti & Pange, 2014; Warawudhi, 2017) has resulted in a negligible understanding of learners' behavioural intention toward this technology, particularly as a platform for a virtual learning community. Hence, further research on the factors that influence ESP learners' behavioural intention to use an educational technology tool is necessary to assist ESP practitioners in improving the quality of the teaching and learning process.

Choosing a suitable online learning platform to increase learners' interaction and engagement is still a struggle among many English language educators (Purnawarman et al., 2016). Although Purnawarman et al. (2016) tag *Edmodo* as an assistant for language teachers, the potential impact of its use for providing access to opportunities pertaining to the virtual learning community is still unclear and evolving (Annamalai et al., 2018; Ekici, 2017; Khan, 2019).

Ekici (2017) states that the interface of *Edmodo* encourages a virtual learning community, and according to Mokhtar and Dzakiria (2015), there is every possibility that *Edmodo* will be seen as a preferred online learning platform for students' engagement in the near future. However, the efforts of including technology acceptance frameworks to elucidate ESP learners' intention to use *Edmodo* are still

scarce, and there is a need for an empirical study to identify whether these frameworks require amendments to address learners' behavioural intention of using *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

It is also crucial to note that an inconsistent result has been found between the UTAUT's key determinants and users' intention to use *Edmodo* (Kapti, 2017; Kurniabudi & Assegaff, 2016). Hence, the factors that influence learners' intention towards *Edmodo* have remained nebulous. The literature reveals that learners and educational technology have significant characteristics in which the existing determinants and moderators in the technology acceptance frameworks may not adequately explain learners' behavioural intention towards the use of an online learning platform (Nordin et al., 2015; Taqwatika et al., 2019), particularly as a virtual learning community. The neglect of learners' participation and individual differences in determining the learners' behavioural intention towards an online learning platform have always remained a gap in technology acceptance research within the field of education.

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned gaps, investigating the factors that influence learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* is important to get an in-depth understanding of learners' acceptance of the use of the online learning platform and to measure the success of the tool in creating meaningful learning.

Since studies in this area are scarce, it is worthwhile examining factors that influence ESP learners' behavioural intention towards using Edmodo through reliable technology acceptance and learning theories. Therefore, this study does not pay attention to the effectiveness of *Edmodo* on learners' language skills or to the utilisation of the platform to teach a targeted skill.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to factors influencing ESP learners' behavioural intention towards using *Edmodo* in learning ESP courses, particularly Scientific and Medical English (SME) and Business and Communication English (BCE) as a platform for a virtual learning community. Therefore, this study does not look at whether *Edmodo* enhances ESP learners' specific language skills.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the current study:

1. To investigate factors influencing ESP learners' behavioural intention in using *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.
2. To examine the ESP learners' individual differences in the relationship between the influential factors and their behavioural intention to use *Edmodo* as a virtual learning community platform.
3. To analyse the perceived factors that influence ESP learners' behavioural intention to use *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

1.5 Research Questions

The following are the study's research questions:

1. What factors influence ESP learners' behavioural intention in using *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community?
2. How do ESP learners' individual differences impact the relationship between the influential factors and their behavioural intention to use *Edmodo* as a virtual learning community platform?
3. Why do the perceived factors influence ESP learners' behavioural intention in using *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community?

1.6 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study were drawn from the first and second research questions as follow:

1.6.1 Key Construct Hypotheses

H_1 = Performance expectancy is a statistically significant predictor of the ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_2 = Effort expectancy is a statistically significant predictor of the ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_3 = Social influence is a statistically significant predictor of the ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_4 = Facilitating conditions are statistically significant predictors of the ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_5 = Participation in virtual communities of practice is a statistically significant predictor of the ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

1.6.2 Moderating Hypotheses

H_{1a} = Gender is a statistically significant moderator between performance expectancy and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_{2a} = Gender is a statistically significant moderator between effort expectancy and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_{3a} = Gender is a statistically significant moderator between social influence and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_{4a} = Gender is a statistically significant moderator between facilitating conditions and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_{5a} = Gender is a statistically significant moderator between participation in virtual communities of practice and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_1b = ESP learners' fields of study is a statistically significant moderator between performance expectancy and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_2b = ESP learners' fields of study is a statistically significant moderator between effort expectancy and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_3b = ESP learners' fields of study is a statistically significant moderator between social influence and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_4b = ESP learners' fields of study is a statistically significant moderator between facilitating conditions and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_5b = ESP learners' fields of study is a statistically significant moderator between participation in virtual communities of practice and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_1c = ESP learners' level of proficiency is a statistically significant moderator between performance expectancy and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_2c = ESP learners' level of proficiency is a statistically significant moderator between effort expectancy and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_3c = ESP learners' level of proficiency is a statistically significant moderator between social influence and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_4c = ESP learners' level of proficiency is a statistically significant moderator between facilitating conditions and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

H_5c = ESP learners' level of proficiency is a statistically significant moderator between participation in virtual communities of practice and behavioural intention in the use of *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of the current study is categorised into three aspects: educational institutions, curriculum, and theoretical contributions.

1.7.1 Educational Institutions

The findings of this study are meaningful for stakeholders such as policymakers, course designers, administrators, and other related parties. It may provide new insights and guidelines for planning, constructing, and developing a

successful and meaningful virtual learning community for ESP learners and practitioners using an SLN like *Edmodo*.

Besides, choosing a suitable online learning tool for language learners has become the greatest challenge among many educators (Purnawarman et al., 2016). It is believed that the comprehensive structural model of this study can help stakeholders in the preparation of constructive plans in identifying a suitable online learning platform and designing effective teaching and learning approaches in the ESP courses, especially amid the covid-19 pandemic.

The researcher hopes that the result of this study will assist the management of tertiary institutions in helping strengthen their respective educational goals and the development of teaching and learning of ESP courses.

1.7.2 Curriculum

This study will give a measure of understanding to the ESP practitioners as to why they ought to choose an appropriate educational tool that is in line with the three core characteristics of an ESP course: authentic materials, purpose-related orientation, and self-direction (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Javid, 2015) to achieve the course learning outcome.

This study also gives some ideas to the ESP practitioners who use or intend to use *Edmodo* to measure its suitability in the aspects of content quality, ease of using the online learning platform, societal influence, facilitating conditions, and learning theory before recommending it to other ESP practitioners, especially those who are accustomed to the face-to-face classroom or synchronous learning alone.

The researcher hopes that the results of this study will entice ESP practitioners who are teachers, collaborators, course designers or materials providers, researchers, and evaluators (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), to use *Edmodo* as a platform for a virtual learning community in the ESP courses incorporating the learners' focus on the efficacy of such a system. In addition, it is believed that this move will allow learners to communicate, collaborate, and participate in the ongoing discussion and other online activities.

Rudduck and Fielding (2006) have highlighted that the voice of learners is significant as they influence teachers' teaching approach, lesson plan, and course design. Their voices also allow active participation in the teaching and learning process and develop a good rapport between teacher and students.

Besides, according to Selevičienė and Burkšaitienė (2015), most ESP learners show a wide range of behaviours from complete rejection to genuine acceptance when they are introduced to unfamiliar or new online learning platforms to improve the teaching and learning activities. Therefore, it is important to identify ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of *Edmodo* before it is incorporated into the curriculum or pedagogy.

Zain et al. (2019) also have similar perceptions on the need to investigate factors that could influence learners' behavioural intention toward using an educational technology tool. In fact, Yeou (2016) highlights that learners are known to be the main key players in creating a successful online learning platform.

1.7.3 Theoretical Development

The present study has developed a revised framework to measure behavioural intention. The researcher hopes that the proposed research framework can act as a reference to measure the behavioural intention of higher education learners towards the use of an educational technology tool in the context of ESP. This is because the proposed framework integrates VCoP, which is considered an important element in predicting learners' behavioural intention toward an educational technology tool and is also known as a suitable learning approach for creating concrete learning experiences among ESP learners. Besides, the researcher also includes moderator variables that depict the individual differences of ESP learners in determining the relationship between key constructs and behavioural intention.

Another significance of this study is the amendment of the items in the UTAUT instrument that have been designed based on the use of social learning networks (e.g., *Edmodo*) in the teaching and learning of ESP courses. The researcher believes that these changes will give better results on the determining factors that influence ESP learners' behavioural intention towards the use of certain educational technology.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The present study has a few limitations that may affect the generalisation of the results:

1. The findings of the present study may or may not be generalisable to other higher education institutions as this study was carried out among ESP learners from one tertiary institution.

2. Since ESP courses are offered to various groups of learners based on their specific fields of study, the present study only focused on learners who took Business and Communication English (BCE) and Science and Medical English (SME). Hence, the results of the current study may not necessarily reflect the condition of learners who take other types of ESP courses.
3. The current research findings may have some consequences since the present study was carried out during the movement control order (MCO) due to the Covid-19 outbreak, where the teaching and learning were forced to be online.

1.9 Operational Definitions

The following terms were used throughout the present study:

1. **Behavioural intention** - a degree where an ESP learner has conscious plans whether to perform or not to perform a behaviour continuously (adapted from Venkatesh et al., 2003).
2. ***Edmodo*** – is a social learning network that was designed by O'Hara and Borg in 2008. The features in this platform are quite similar to Facebook's, but *Edmodo* is meant for educational purposes (Kongchan, 2012).
3. **Virtual Learning Community** - is an interaction, collaboration, sharing, and trust in achieving common goals with the members of the community either synchronously or asynchronously (Andreatos, 2009; Garrison, 2014; Wenger, 1998).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 An Overview of Literature Review

This chapter introduces the two main dimensions of this study: the virtual learning community among the ESP learners and behavioural intention towards *Edmodo*. This chapter begins with what has led to the emergence of these two dimensions and then discusses in detail related theories, namely the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) and the virtual communities of practice (VCoP) learning theory upon which the two elements are grounded. The conceptual framework and the proposed research model based on these dimensions are then presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary that highlights the research gaps.

2.2 Introduction

Recently, there has been extensive research and news on distance and remote learning due to the Covid-19 outbreak. In the field of ESP, it has become a great challenge for ESP practitioners to prepare ESP learners for an authentic situation through a virtual environment. Therefore, a suitable online learning approach and tool are needed to achieve the learning outcome and to create an engaging learning community.

In this study, *Edmodo* is chosen as the platform for a virtual learning community among ESP learners. Earlier studies have shown the potential of *Edmodo* in second language acquisition (Mokhtar, 2018; Thongmak, 2013), writing skills (Ali, 2018; Purnawarman et al., 2016), speaking skills (Sofia, 2018), reading skills (Warawudhi, 2017) and a few on generic skills, namely collaborative skills (Abidin et al., 2018; Thongmak, 2013) and autonomous skills (Ali, 2015). However, to date, research on learners' behavioural intention to use *Edmodo* as a platform for the virtual learning community is still lacking in this language field, particularly in the ESP classroom.

Looking into the potential of *Edmodo* in academic performance alone is not sufficient to determine whether learners intend to use or reject the online learning platform. In ESP, getting good grades is not the primary objective of an ESP course, but it aims to prepare effective learners that can perform well in both language skills and subject matter in their specific profession (Richard & Rodgers, 2001; Robinson, 1991). Therefore, the investigation of ESP learners' behavioural intention towards *Edmodo* should be extended to other possible factors. For this reason, the present study integrates two theories, the UTAUT and VCoP, to investigate ESP learners' behavioural intention toward using *Edmodo* as a virtual learning community platform.

Before looking into the theoretical background of this study, the following section of this chapter provides thorough information on the two main dimensions of the present study - the virtual learning community among ESP learners and behavioural intention towards *Edmodo*.

2.3 ESP Learning Community

The ESP programme is a part-and-parcel of a country's economic boost in this globalised world. According to Wilson (2005, as cited in Kaur & Clarke, 2009), the growth of the science, technology, commerce, tourism, and entertainment industries has led to the use of work-related English in dealing with people from diverse fields. It is believed that learners with good English language competency are capable of increasing the profit of a company or a business, international investment, and the economy of a country (Kaur & Clarke, 2009). Thus, the demand for ESP courses is rising in many higher education institutions to meet learners' specific needs from specific professions (Too, 2017).

2.3.1 Definition of ESP

This section begins with the definition of ESP and its characteristics and ends with the concept of a virtual learning community among ESP learners.

Ever since ESP was developed in the 1960s, several definitions have been generated by experts in the field (Javid, 2015). However, the crux of all these definitions is that teaching English is based on learners' specific needs for a utilitarian purpose (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Javid, 2015). Therefore, ESP is viewed as teaching English to a group of students who have specific objectives or reasons (Javid, 2015).

Therefore, the main aim of an ESP practitioner is to equip ESP learners with specific content knowledge and language skills in order to perform well in a real-life situation rather than merely demonstrating their abilities in the examination

(Robinson, 1991). She further highlights that ESP is goal-oriented rather than product-oriented language learning, so ESP is closely associated with the specific needs of learners who come from different fields of study such as computer science, marketing, medicine, or even engineering. Robinson (1991) also perceives ESP as an umbrella of education, training, and practice that draws closer to three core elements of knowledge: language, pedagogy, and learners' interest in achieving the ESP goals.

Anthony (1997) categorises ESP into two groups: teaching English for whichever purposes that might be specified and teaching English for academic or professional purposes. Strevens (1988) gives distinguishable descriptions of ESP from General English by dividing it into absolute and variable characteristics (see Table 2.1).

Strevens (1988) describes the teaching of ESP in terms of sentence structure, vocabulary, and meaning based on a specific field or profession. This gives room for the ESP practitioners to think that ESP is always linked to register-analysis (Javid, 2015). Thus, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) amend Strevens' explanation of ESP, as presented in Table 2.1, by justifying that although the goal of ESP is to fulfil learners' expectations, teaching English based on a specific profession or discipline is not a prerequisite in ESP, but it is preferred.

Table 2.1 The Absolute and Variable Characteristics of ESP Courses

ESP Characteristics	Strevens (1988, as cited in Javid, 2015)	Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998)
Absolute Characteristics (the core elements of ESP)	i. The ultimate goal is to meet learners' specific needs. ii. Associates with specific content based on specific fields, professions, and activities. iii. Emphasises suitable language use in activities that involve grammar, lexis, meaning, discourse, and many others. iv. Different from the General English.	i. The ultimate goal is to meet learners' specific needs. ii. Utilises the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines that it serves. iii. Emphasises suitable language use in activities that involve grammar, lexis, meaning, discourse, and many others.
Variable Characteristics (the trivial elements of ESP)	i. May emphasise language skills such as reading only. ii. May focus on predetermined approaches.	i. It can be associated with specific fields or disciplines. ii. It can be taught in a specific teaching environment with a distinctive approach between ESP and General English. iii. The target group of ESP learners is likely for adult learners, either from tertiary institutions or occupational situations. ESP also can be catered to students from secondary schools. iv. The ESP course is generally meant for intermediate to proficient learners.

According to Dudley-Evans and St. John's (1998), an ESP course is designed to meet learners' needs and interests without being restricted to any specific disciplines or professions and specific skills. Nevertheless, it can be taught to a group of learners from specific areas such as business, engineering, and tourism to prepare them in such a way that they are able to use the language in an occupational setting.

In short, ESP is viewed as an initiative to assist learners from various disciplines by equipping them with adequate language skills so that they are able to use the language to carry out their specific duties (i.e. engineers and nurses) in their

workplaces (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Richards and Rodgers (2001) emphasise that applying specific content and language skills in the real world is more important than simply acquiring the language.

In a different study, Smoak (2003) has shared a similar view as Richard and Rodgers' (2001). She points out that the measure of the success of an ESP programme comes when the learners can perform successfully in their real-life tasks rather than merely passing an English exam. She further elaborates that ESP focuses on learners' needs and is task oriented.

According to the aforementioned definitions, it can be summarised that ESP focuses on preparing learners based on an authentic context with specific knowledge and language skills, which is pertinent to learners who come from different fields of studies so that they can apply their competencies and abilities in a real workplace.

2.3.2 Characteristics of ESP

It is important to understand the characteristics of an ESP course before we comprehend the differences between General English and the types of ESP. An ESP course is classified into three common categories: authentic materials, purpose-related orientation, and self-direction. (Bojović, 2006; Carter, 1983, as cited in Dudley-Evans, 1998; Gatehouse, 2001; Javid, 2013; Soto & Waigandt, 2017).

Authentic materials refer to altered and fixed materials such as books, charts, forms, and other sources, including the ones from the Internet that are relevant to the objectives of the ESP course (Javid, 2015). It is claimed that using authentic materials is an ideal choice to cater to those engaged in self-directed studies and research