FACTORS DETERMINING THE BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO USE ONLINE LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANX	Online learning anxiety
ATT	Attitude
BI	Behavioral intention
BSL	Beliefs about second language learning
CONF	Confidence in learning English language
ERT	Emergency remote teaching
ESL	English as second language
PBC	Perceived behaviour control
PEOU	Perceived ease of use
POST	Familiarity with learning technology post covid-19
PRE	Familiarity with learning technology pre covid-19
PU	Perceived usefulness
TAM	Technology acceptance model
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour

LIST OF APPENDICES

FAKTOR-FAKTOR PENENTUAN HASRAT TINGKAHLAKU BAGI PENGGUNAAN PEMBELAJARAN SECARA DALAM TALIAN UNTUK PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA INGGERIS DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR POLITEKNIK

ABSTRAK

Penularan wabak covid-19 telah menyebabkan pelaksanaan pengajaran jarak jauh (ERT) diwajibkan di kalangan insitusi-institusi pengajian di Malaysia bagi membendung penyebaran wabak tersebut di kalangan rakyat Malaysia. Pelaksanaan pengajian secara dalam talian dianggap penting untuk pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sewaktu penularan ini kerana ianya dapat memberi peluang kepada para pelajar untuk mengawal pembelajaran mereka menerusi penggunaan peralatan digital. Peralihan ini juga turut melibatkan politeknik-politeknik Malaysia dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris secara dalam talian. Walaubagaimanapun, kajian dalam konteks ini masih lagi berkurangan begitu juga dengan bagaimana peralihan mengejut kepada pembelajaran secara dalam talian ini telah mempengaruhi 'tanggapan' serta 'niat tingkahlaku untuk menggunakan pembelajaran secara dalam talian' khususnya untuk Bahasa Inggeris. Oleh itu, untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang mungkin mempengaruhi tanggapan pelajar terhadap sikap dan niat tingkahlaku mereka dalam penggunaan pembelajaran secara dalam talian untuk Bahasa Inggeris, maka satu model baharu telah diperkenalkan di dalam kajian ini. Gabungan *technology acceptance model* dan *theory of planned behaviour* (C-TAM-TPB) yang merupakan model dasar bagi kajian ini, telah diubahsuai dengan mengambil kira 'pengalaman pelajar dalam penggunaan teknologi pembelajaran dalam talian' dan juga 'keresahan terhadap pembelajaran secara dalam talian'. Sebagai tambahan, faktor-faktor seperti 'keyakinan diri' serta

'kepercayaan terhadap diri sendiri' dalam mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris turut dipertimbangkan sebagai 'tanggapan tingkahlaku' terhadap 'niat penggunaan pembelajaran secara dalam talian' khususnya untuk Bahasa Inggeris. Justeru, kajian ini menggunakan analisa explanatory sequential mixed method menerusi kajian tinjauan sebagai kaedah utama pengumpulan data. Manakala kaedah purposive sampling digunapakai bagi mendapat data secara mendalam, menerusi sesi temubual bersama beberapa orang responden. Kaedah partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) menggunakan SmartPLS 3 digunakan bagi menganalisa data terkumpul dan mengkaji kerangka konseptual yang telah dicadangkan. Berdasarkan tinjauan yang dibuat ke atas 548 orang responden, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa model yang dicadangkan berhasil untuk membuktikan sebanyak 81.7% daripada responden, niat tingkahlaku mereka adalah untuk mengguna pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris secara dalam talian dan sebanyak 73.8% mempunyai sikap positif terhadap penggunaannya. Ini membuktikan kekuatan model yang dicadangkan di dalam kajian ini. Faktor-faktor seperti 'tanggapan ianya mudah digunakan' dan 'tanggapan ianya berguna' didapati telah mempengaruhi sikap dan niat. Manakala 'tanggapan keyakinan dengan bahasa Inggeris' tidak memberi kesan terhadap kedua-dua faktor ini. Walaubagaimanapun, kepercayaan tentang pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris didapati mempengaruhi niat tingkahlaku untuk menggunakan pembelajaran secara dalam talian untuk mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris. Tambahan lagi, sebelum penularan wabak COVID-19, keresahan terhadap pembelajaran secara dalam talian memediatasikan tanggapan ianya mudah digunakan dan tanggapan ianya berguna. Walaubagaimanapun, keresahan terhadap pembelajaran secara dalam talian pasca pandemik didapati tidak memediatasikan kedua-dua faktor tersebut. Temubual yang dibuat bersama sepuluh orang responden menerangkan bahawa mereka yakin bahawa

pembelajaran secara dalam talian bermanfaat kerana mereka dapat mengakses bahan bantuan bahasa Inggeris secara online bagi membantu pembelajaran mereka. Malahan pembelajaran secara dalam talian membantu mereka lebih berkeyakinan untuk melibatkan diri serta berinteraksi sewaktu kelas. Malahan kebolehan untuk mengakses maklumat di dalam talian dan akses segera membantu pembelajaran sepertimana yang telah diterangkan oleh responden, meletakkan tanggapan penggunaan yang mudah sebagai faktor paling penting yang mempengaruhi sikap serta niat tingkahlaku.

FACTORS DETERMINING THE BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO USE ONLINE LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) was enforced on learning institutions in Malaysia as a compulsory measure. Online learning approaches have been perceived as valuable for English for Second Language learning during the pandemic due to providing opportunities for students to continue their learning using digital tools. Similarly, the shift to fully online learning for teaching the English Language was also done in all Malaysian Polytechnics. However, there are insufficient studies in this context and how the sudden shift to online learning during the pandemic has influenced students' attitude and intentions to use online learning specifically learning the English language. Therefore, to investigate factors that may influence students' perception on their attitude and behavioral intention towards the use of online English language learning, a new model was proposed. The base-line model of the combined technology acceptance model and theory of planned behaviour (C-TAM-TPB) was revised by considering online technology use experience pre and post pandemic and online leaning anxiety. In addition, factors such as confidence in English and beliefs about second language learning were also considered as perceived behavioral control toward intention to use online learning specifically for the English Language. This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed method analysis with survey as the primary method to collect data which was followed by an explanatory in-depth follow up interview. The partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique using

SmartPLS 3 was adopted to analyse the collected data and to examine the proposed conceptual framework. Based on the survey on 548 respondents, it was found that the proposed model was able to explain 81.7% of behavioral intention to use online learning for learning the English language and 73.8% of attitude which describes a strong model. While, factors such as perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were found to influence attitude and intention, perceived confidence in English was found not to influence both these factors. However, beliefs about English language learning was found to influence behavioral intention to use online learning for learning the English language. Furthermore, it was found that, prior to the pandemic, online learning anxiety mediated perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, however, post pandemic online learning anxiety was found not to mediate both these factors. The interview conducted on ten respondents explained that students were confident that online learning was beneficial in complimenting learning due to easy access to online language tools as a support to language learning. Moreover, the online nature helped them to be more confident in participating and communicating orally during virtual classes. In addition, the affordance of online resources and instant access complimented their learning as described by the respondents were found to explain the positioning of perceived ease of use as the most important factor influencing both attitude and behavioral intention.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Overview

This study aims to investigate the acceptance of online learning tool after the onset of the Emergency remote teaching (ERT) for learning the English language. The factors explored in this study are dependent on the adaptation of a modified Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which is called the C-TAM-TPB. This model is a combination of Theory of Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) that considers exogenous factors relating to educational technology tools commonly used pre and post Covid-19 and perceived behavioral controllers related to language learning. This chapter will discuss Malaysia's direction on online learning that focuses upon issues of language learning in Malaysia Polytechnics followed by research objectives, questions and hypotheses. Subsequently, the conceptual and theoretical framework will be discussed followed by the significance, limitation and operational definition of terms applied throughout this study.

1.2   Background of the Study

English language has become a fundamental aspect of Malaysia education system (Mohamad, 2020). According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025) (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2015b), enhancing students' skills in English language is most important. Therefore, learning of a language particularly a second language, comprises skills and knowledge related to grammar, vocabulary and

pronunciation especially for the four skills namely reading, writing speaking and listening (Wong, 2021). Tati et al. (2016) explained that English is considered as a second language (L2) in Malaysia where it is fundamental to learn the language for 11 years prior to tertiary education. Furthermore, the teaching and learning of science and mathematics have been encouraged to be conducted in English.

Nevertheless, Zakaria and Shah (2019) explained that globalization has also shifted the teaching of English in Malaysian Higher Education towards a communicative approach. Malaysia polytechnics as one of the public tertiary education institutions in Malaysia has taken up these challenge by also implementing Outcome Based Education (OBE) in its effort to improve the quality of graduates particularly in communication skills (Md Shaari & Jusoh, 2012). The implementation of this approach combined with the integration of ICT are among the efforts put to enhance students' learning. At the polytechnics, English courses are compulsory for semester 1, 3 and 5 students. The English courses offered are Communicative English 1 (DUE10012), English for Digital Technology (MPU22053), Communicative English 2 (DUE30022) and Communicative English 3 (DUE50032). These courses render all the four skills in language learning namely reading, speaking, writing as well as listening skills. (Polytechnics MOHE, 2018). Polytechnic have always maintained the main purpose of language education, which is to ensure competent English communication skills (Mohamad, 2020; Rashid & Alias, 2018). These English courses taught in Malaysian Polytechnic are categorised as Communicative English (CE) (Radzi & Embi, 2018) courses and are used to complement the technical courses (Ahmad Zainuddin & Kamin, 2020).

Suitable with their names, these courses are aimed to enable students to communicate effectively socially and professionally at their future workplace. These courses focus on students' speaking skills, designed to develop students' ability to communicate effectively and confidently in group discussions, social interactions as well as presentations. Similar to the other Communicative English courses, the English for Digital Technology course also focuses on the four skills. This course however is offered to semester one students of Information Technology and Communication Department (ITCD) students only, embedding language skills related to the field of digital technology products, services, processes and procedures. Apart from oral communication skills, these courses namely the Communicative English courses and English for Digital Technology course also offer appropriate reading skills to enable students to comprehend and respond to variety of texts (Polytechnics MOHE, 2018). The topics introduced in all the four courses require interactions, therefore the activities given to them are designed to suit this requirement, providing a platform for them to practice the skills thus enhancing good communication skills.

However, to use a language which is not the mother tongue of an individual during activities, make the students have negative feelings and worries, as well as fear-related emotion that is associated to learning and using the language. This feeling which is known as 'Language Anxiety' (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012) becomes a hindrance which limits involvement to interact and speak with peers (Bakar et al., 2015). Moreover, anxiety also exhausts students' concentration and disperse their attention (Otaif, 2021) resulting in less involvement and interactions. According to Sayuti et. al (2020); as cited in Karuppannan & Mohammed, 2020) students who have language anxiety feel uncomfortable to speak up in normal face to face class, what's more in a virtual language class. Language learning that is done online or virtually that is beyond

students' ability or capacity will cause stress and lack of motivation for them to learn, thus hampering interactions (Karuppannan & Mohammed, 2020). Understanding this, in the recent years, technology is used in the classroom to create an environment for students to acquire abilities which cannot be taught and used to enhance language acquisition, facilitating foreign language learning and teaching (Chapelle, 2009). The integration of technology in teaching and learning activities in the classroom is now common. Students use technology devices to connect to the internet in order to gain and update knowledge, exercise their brain and even learn a language (Kim, 2015). Technology is a norm among students and it provides great opportunities for them to develop communication and interaction (Aydin, 2018). Furthermore, according to Hashim et al. (2016), ESL learning environment should be focused on real world application with authentic task and audience where learners' autonomy is supported with limited stress and anxiety.

Therefore, for this reason and to cater to the millennia fundamental needs to digitalize learning, educators are encouraged to apply technologies to assist language learning throughout these years (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Conversely, the integration of Information Technology (ICT) especially in higher education has been competitive in Malaysia (Haleman & Yamat, 2021). According to Hashim et al. (2016), the ICT integration was also implemented in Malaysia polytechnics and community colleges especially for learning English. They added that introducing education technologies to digitalize language learning was imperative to enhance the National e-Learning Policy and Shift 4 of Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025) to produce competent graduates. Imperatively, Shuhaimi and Awaludin (2018) indicated that to cater to the Industrial Revolution 4.0 for skilled workers with effective communication skills, polytechnic and community college institutes have redesigned their curriculum to

focus on English communication skills and not linguistic skills.

In addition, technology advancement has brought new lights into education and has made learning more interesting, challenging and engaging (Firat & Bozkurt, 2020). In fact, technology-integrated-learning which supports face-to-face learning activities allows students to be creative, critical in thinking and improve social interaction as they are able to interact with other students (Hsiao et al., 2014). With this technology, students are now provided with opportunities to get involved in activities and externalize their ideas (Martinez et al., 2011). Students were also found to be more observant towards information and knowledge shared and are prepared to collaborate with their own peers (Karuppannan & Mohammed, 2020).

Undoubtedly, these new technologies introduced have profoundly changed language learning in the classroom, where the Emergency remote teaching (ERT) due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has forced classrooms to go online either as hybrid or fully online as a compulsory measure. These online learning approaches have been perceived as valuable for learning during the pandemic in Malaysia due to providing opportunities for students to control their learning, use digital tools such as Google Classroom, WhatsApp and YouTube that simultaneously provide a compensation to face to face interaction through online interaction (Haleman & Yamat, 2021; Rahman, 2020). Furthermore, Alfadda and Mahdi (2021) described this switch as having a profound positive perception for L2 learners as online learning has a tendency to increase flexibility and technology use due to high computer self- efficacy.

Furthermore, in a study conducted in Malaysia, Krishan et al. (2020) found ESL learners using online resources during the pandemic were more favourable as it has

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possibilities to enhance learning skills and interaction among their online learning community. Chew and Ng (2021) claimed significant benefits for ESL learners especially for less proficient students when the teaching and learning platform is online as they are able to use other online learning resources such as Google translate and dictionary for assessment and discussion through forums. Nevertheless, the shift has also highlighted challenges for ESL learners during the pandemic period, such as psychological factors relating to stress and motivation that reflects their learned language skills and proficiency level (Karuppannan & Mohammed, 2020). Empirical studies such as by Patterson (2009); Shao et al., (2013) and Totura et al., (2014) have claimed that interaction for ESL language learning are usually determined by social and emotional aspects.

As in the situation at Malaysia polytechnics, students of English courses are not streamed according to proficiency level. This situation creates emotional resistance which according to Krashen (1981) will lead to students' anxiety towards the language to be used in the classroom. In the current situation however, as the classroom has gone fully online or hybrid, and there has been a shift of teaching and learning method to using education technology, therefore individual difference when learning especially for ESL (Chew & Ng, 2021) and when using technology (Lazar et al., 2020) should be considered to lessen the social and emotional resistance. Henceforth, an implicit theories referring to students' beliefs if their intelligence is fixed or malleable especially for second language acquisition (SLA), has to be considered for the change of mind-set about language learning through online platforms (Lou & Noels, 2016). Mind-sets for language learning are essential, pre-determined traits that defines learners' beliefs on their intelligence, confidence, personality and language aptitude for SLA and language learners' motivation (Lou & Noels, 2019).

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1.3 Problem Statement

While it is important in any language learning classroom to get the students to verbally interact using the targeted language, in this case L2, students are reluctant to speak up, even when they are working in a small group of friends (Livingston, 2002). Although collaborative learning is known for its features to promote interactions and enhance communication among students, but the effect may differ from one student to another, which is due to their individual difference (Arham & Akrab, 2018). According to Uztosun (2020a), this is imperative due to learning ESL requires numerous skills that are discrete which is challenging when performed online.

Furthermore, the sudden shift to online learning during the pandemic has raised issues concerning barriers faced by students related to technology use and internet skills (Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021). Zaidan et al. (2021) indicated there are limited studies in Malaysia on behavioral intention to use online learning strategies during the pandemic, where it has been made mandatory for HEIs to conduct all classes online. This is supported by Mohtar and Yunus (2022) who claimed that due to the shift, there is a need to explore students' perception towards online learning.

According to Haleman and Yamat (2021) there has also been scarce research on ESL learners' adoption of online learning and acceptance during the pandemic especially in Malaysia. Ying et al. (2021) added that ESL learners in Malaysia are having significant difficulties in learning the English language due to the shift and the use of online learning which has affected their self-confidence and motivation. Furthermore, Krishan et al. (2020) found that ESL students are reluctant to use certain ESL online learning materials on their own accord due to challenges pertaining to technology

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application. This was supported by Suharyanti et al. (2021), indicating ESL students as not equipped to operate the numerous applications needed to shift the classroom teaching and learning to fully online. Nevertheless, Haleman and Yamat (2021) claimed that while majority of ESL learners are competent in operating online tools during the pandemic, the researcher observed that the most in focus online tool is Google Classroom.

Moreover, according to Rahman (2020), as teaching and learning has predominantly gone online, there is a need to investigate students' perception and acceptance of ESL online learning during the pandemic due to its implications and revolution. It was also suggested by Hasnan and Mohin (2021) to fully understand the use and intention of polytechnic students for learning English, a framework should be introduced to explore factors that could determine the digital learning attributes. Haleman and Yamat (2021) have suggested the need to apply models such as extended technology acceptance model referring to general extended technology acceptance model for e-learning (GETAMEL) to explore factors influencing the acceptance of online learning due to Emergency remote teaching (ERT). GETAMEL while preserving the basic TAM variables such as perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), attitude (ATT) and behavioral intention (BI) has additional external factors such as perceived experience, computer anxiety and self-efficacy taken into consideration.

Lazar et al. (2020) claims that it is fundamental to consider computer anxiety when the platform of education is based on computer usage. This claim is supported by a more recent study by Wang and Zhang (2021), who claimed that online learning anxiety should be considered when the teaching and learning involves computer usage.

Wang and Zhang (2021) also claimed that due to the digital age and online innovative teaching post pandemic, online learning anxiety plays an important role in influencing language learning when there is a need to collaborate and communicate. Abdous (2019) added online learning anxiety can often be attributed towards negative past experiences and it is vital to investigate how to help students successfully transit to online learning to improve performances. Binyamin (2019) added that perceived experience with using a learning system has a significant impact on the use where anxiety is often associated with efficacy. Lazar et al. (2020) deemed this as familiarizing with a digital tool for online learning and in higher education where traditional and modern educational technology tools shape the intention to use a system, these factors are warranted in future studies.

Nevertheless, acceptance of learning via technology is different from acceptance of technology as an information system (Kumar et al., 2020). As explained by them, acceptance of learning via technology refers to technology as means for T&L activities, while acceptance of technology refers to acceptance of the technology based on its functionality. By so, modern language learning has called for the consideration of learning mind-set (Lou & Noels, 2017). Lou and Noels (2016, 2019) described scarce research on beliefs about language ability particularly to second language aptitude beliefs by considering mind-set that motivates SLA. The need to assess beliefs were also highlighted by Mohamed Khatib et al. (2021) for learning the English language as it reflects polytechnic students learning goal for achieving language skills that will be beneficial when they graduate. Similarly, they also suggested investigating confidence in English as it reflects on learning participation (Ramsa & Mohd Rawian, 2019) and counters learning anxiety (Abdous, 2019).

Nevertheless, it must also be highlighted that, studies on ESL students in Malaysia polytechnics have highlighted learning anxiety as a main concern of SLA. According to Mohamad (2020) and Tati et al. (2016), as these students are required to speak English extensively for learning, it necessitates proficiency which in turn reflects language anxiety. Aarif et al. (2019) added that polytechnic students often show anxiety in English oral communication while Mohamad (2020) stipulated more research on the relationship between polytechnics ESL learners' anxiety and willingness to communicate; Mohd Nasir et al. (2019) claims that language anxiety can be hypothesised due to the various reasons but does not require specific intervention but should be explored based on attitude to effectively understand how it affects learning. By so, learning anxiety strategies should be implemented through understanding the source of the anxiety which can be related to learning confidence (Côté & Gaffney, 2021; Hashim et al., 2016; Najmee et al., 2017; Yim & Yu, 2011) which could also be related to their self-belief and confidence in learning English (Lou & Noels, 2019).

Therefore, due to the onset of the pandemic and the limited research in ESL online learning in Malaysian polytechnics as highlighted, a need was discovered to investigate the behavioral intention to speak English language during online learning, which is also reflected as acceptance of online learning by considering online learning anxiety referring to experience pre and post pandemic and also psychological aspects of ESL language learning which are beliefs and confidence as behavioral controllers.

1.4 Research Objectives

Language is acquired through interactions (Krashen, 1981). Thus, a person who learns

a language needs to practice it by interacting with others. The pandemic has changed teaching and learning activities from face to face and blended learning towards fully online. Therefore, would the students who were all this while familiar and used to face to face learning, accept and have adapted to the new teaching and learning method is still unknown. Based on the problems discussed previously, especially relating to the context of SLA among ESL students in Malaysia polytechnics the objectives of this study are as below:

i.   To identify factors influencing the behavioral intention to use online learning technologies for learning the English language using technology acceptance model (TAM) and theory of planned behaviours (TPB) as a combined TAM and TPB (C-TAM-TPB) model.

ii.   To investigate the acceptance of online learning among Malaysia polytechnic students for learning the English language during the onset of the ERT.

iii. To employ and validate the C-TAM-TPB model with modifications reflecting mediating factor of online learning anxiety towards perceive ease of use and perceived usefulness.

iv.   To employ and validate the C-TAM-TPB model with modifications reflecting confidence in English and beliefs of language learning as perceived behavioral controllers towards attitude and behavioral intention.

v.   To explain the relationships between factors that facilitate and hinder behavioral intention of using online learning for learning the English language.

1.5 Research Questions

To fill this research gap, this study aims to answer the main research question which is:

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What are the factors that determine ESL students' behavioral intention to use online learning after the onset of the pandemic? Henceforth the following research questions were derived:

i. What are the factors that have significant effects on attitude and behavioral intention to use online learning for learning the English language?

ii. Does online learning anxiety mediate perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use to use online learning for learning the English language when pre and post pandemic learning-technology experience is considered?

iii. To what extend does factors namely learning beliefs about second language learning and confidence in English language, influence the attitude towards use and behavioral intention to use online learning for learning the English language?

iv. How does the relationship between factors facilitate and hinder the behavioral intention of using online learning for learning the English language and how does it influence the acceptance?

1.6 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1.1) of this study was derived based on three models that reflect technology acceptance and use of online learning systems and language learning. Firstly, the extended technology acceptance model was developed based on technology acceptance model (Davis, 1985) by considering exogenous and endogenous factors towards the use of and intent to use technology. These factors are perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), attitude (ATT) and behavioral intention (BI). The external variables and hypothesized relationships were

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identified based on the combination of exogenous variables as identified through the general extended technology acceptance model for e-learning (GETAMEL) (Abdullah & Ward, 2016) and digital technology adoption scale for blended learning in higher education (Lazar et al., 2020) that also used the extended TAM as a baseline model.

Figure 1.1

Proposed Simplified Conceptual Framework
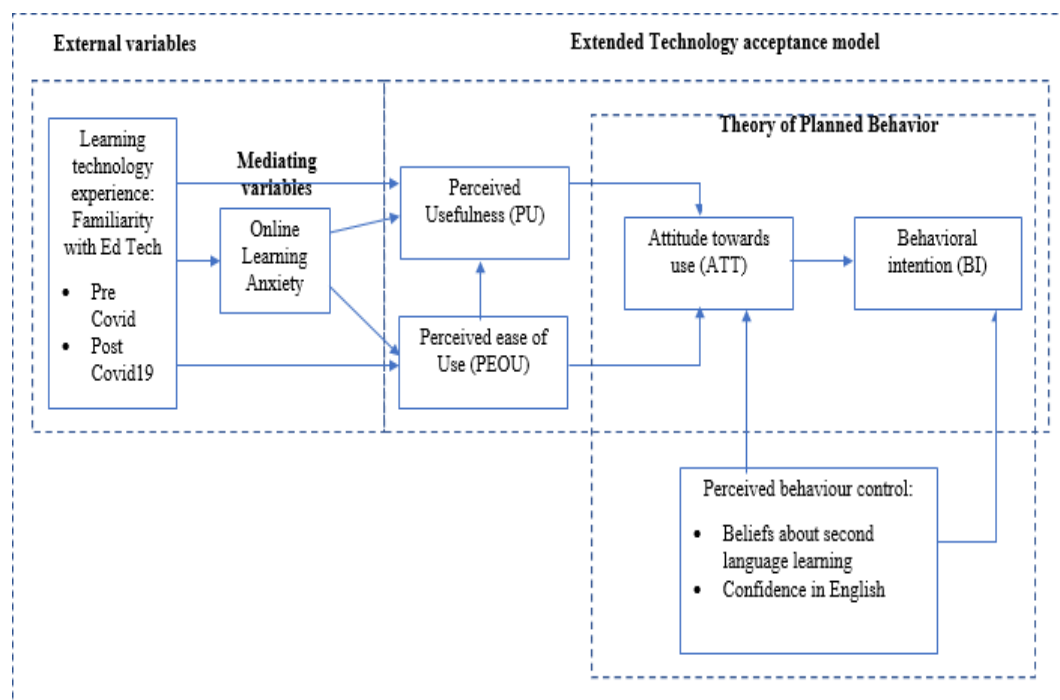
Conversely, the variables included to accommodate the objectives of the study are familiarity of education technology (pre and post Covid-19) as technology experience, online learning anxiety and beliefs about second language learning. As confidence and beliefs about second language learning are perceived behaviours controllers, based on the theory of planned behaviours (Ajzen, 1991), these variables were directly linked to ATT and BI as recommended by Kumar et al. (2020). The combination of TAM and TPB is also known as Combined TAM and TPB (C-TAM-TPB) (Taylor & Todd,

1995) and has been used in numerous study to explain online learning (Yang & Su, 2017).

1.7 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.2. It has three main categories that covers the theoretical foundations of acceptance of online learning, computer experience and language learning theories. A number of different theories were used in this study to justify main areas of this study and are described as below:

Figure 1.2

Theoretical Framework
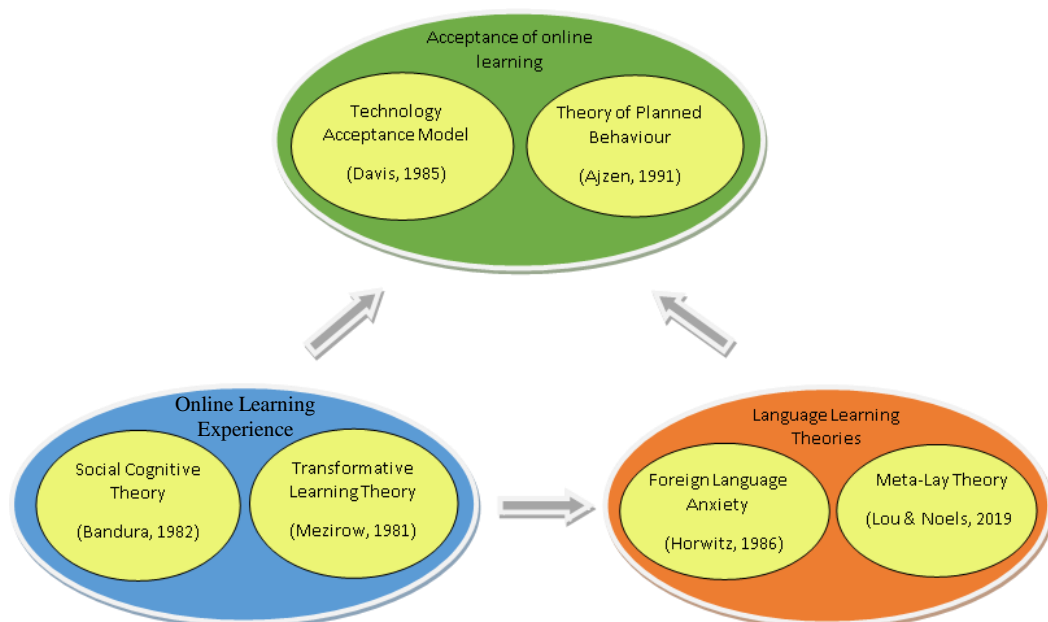
1.7.1 Acceptance of information technologies

This study is pinned by Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1985) which emphasizes on individual's attitude towards information technology (Almekhlafi & Almeqdadi, 2010). In regards to adapting TAM, specifically for online learning, the General Extended Technology Acceptance Model for E-learning (GETAMEL) which is an extension of TAM was incorporated in this study. Hence, this study shall look at 'familiarity of ed-tech tools' and 'online learning anxiety' as external factors that may influence perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) on attitude towards use (ATT) and behavioral intention (BI) to use online learning for learning English language.

Another external factors which are also the contributing factors to BI are 'beliefs about second language learning' and 'confidence', which are the attributes of perceived behaviours control (PBC). Together, the two elements – ATT and PBC makes up the theory of planned behaviours. These two factors, ATT and PBC along with 'learning technology experience' and 'online learning anxiety' are the four factors that will be considered in this study.

1.7.2 Online learning experience

According to Bandura (1982), self-efficacy influences ones thought patterns, actions and emotional arousal. It influences ones' choice of activities and environment setting, the amount of effort to put and the length of time to persist when facing obstacles, as well as preparatory and performance effort. According to Bailey (1999, as cited in

Marwan, 2007) avoidance behaviours is common among teenagers or adult foreign language learners in a language learning classroom. They opt to remain passive when they feel uncomfortable. During the ERT where educators use video conference such as zoom meeting or GoogleMeet etc., this situation occur where students who have low proficiency level are reluctant to speak up (Karuppannan & Mohammed, 2020).

The sense of familiarity is important in a teaching and learning environment as it will promote students' acceptance of the teaching and learning means employed (Cheung & Vogel, 2013). This unpleasant experience with the new teaching and learning environment is what has been highlighted by Mezirow in his *Transformative Learning Theory* (Mezirow, 1981). According to this theory, learning starts with an experience that leads to conflict namely the cognitive difference. When one realizes that his current understanding of the world is not the same as the current evidence, this situation will lead to a feeling of discomfort. The current online learning experienced by students all around the world due to ERT is an example of how the theory is applied – a new teaching and learning method that leads to students' anxiety and discomfort. Students are put into a situation where they need to learn independently. This has caused them to face with difficulties in understanding as well as doing their work by themselves (Rahman, 2020), a situation which most of them are not used to.

1.7.3   Language learning theories

This study uses two language learning theories as its basis namely foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) and meta-lay theory (Lou & Noels, 2019).

i.   Foreign Language Anxiety

English language has become a predominant foreign language to speakers who speak different languages and it is taught as one of the primary subjects in the world's educational systems (Tepeh, 2016). Whether it is taught as second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) learning the language can be stressful (Horwitz et al., 1986). Difficulty in speaking in class is the most frequently cited concern of the anxious English language students. The types as well as level of anxiety are tested using Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Mohamad, 2020).

Individuals with high language *anxiety* tend to avoid from doing difficult tasks in L2, especially listening and speaking tasks. *Anxiety* as defined by Horwitz et al. (1986), is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry due to the stimulation of autonomic nervous system. Three types of Language Anxiety: (i) Communicative apprehension, (ii) Test anxiety and (iii) Fear of negative Evaluation were proposed by them. This anxiety would affect a person's willingness to participate in an interaction. Language anxiety causes ones to have an uncomfortable experience in language learning thus leading to lack of confidence and beliefs about second language learning.

Students who wish to speak accurately without grammatical errors or phonological errors might get communicative apprehension or fear of negative evaluation as they are scared of making mistakes and what people might say about them. These feelings of anxiety cause them to remain silent of be passive in language classroom (Aslan &

Thompson, 2021).

ii.   Meta-lay theory

According to meta-lay theory, the mind-sets place people's beliefs about whether human attributes such as intelligence and language aptitude, are important, pre-determined or malleable propensities that can be cultivated (growth mind-set) (Lou & Noels, 2019). Growth mind-set is the beliefs that ability can be improved, and this belief is important to help a person sustains his motivation and resilience from failure (Lou & Noels, 2020). Thus, strategies for supporting learners' growth mind-sets and need satisfaction are imperative for instructional design and teaching practice to support learners' engagement and successful learning.

Furthermore, the feedback given by others to the students have influence on their motivation. An improving oriented feedback will lead to positive effects where the receiver would get the impression that the feedback provider believes in his potential (Lou & Noels, 2020). Hence, giving him a positive mind-set. These language theories are used in supporting the study on influence of 'beliefs about second language learning' and 'confidence' on attitude and behavioral intention to use online learning for English language learning.

1.8 Significance of the study

Given its novelty in the second language acquisition (SLA) field and in dialogue with other disciplines, a consideration of mind-sets in SLA offers an opportunity to develop evidence-based practices to enhance learners' motivation and development of

language proficiency in and outside the classroom. The feedback given by lecturers to students has its effect on students' motivation by way of giving impression of their potential to improve (Uztosun, 2020).

This study will benefit L2 learners particularly tertiary students in Malaysia polytechnics where it will reduce their language anxiety, improve motivation and enhance interactions hence improve their participation and interactions in online language learning. It will not only promote more interactions to take place among students but also boost their confidence level to speak to others. With good communication skills these graduates will perform better in job interviews, secure themselves a job and maintain good relationships with colleagues as well as their employer at workplace in the future (Husain et al., 2013).

Furthermore, by understanding the influence of the external factors identified in this study, namely *learning technology experience, e-learning anxiety, beliefs about L2 learning* and *confidence in English*, lecturers of English language at polytechnics would be able to use online learning more efficiently, leading to effective online English language learning. The findings of this study shall open up opportunities for a bigger scale research where the findings can be applied to other tertiary levels as a whole, not limited to Malaysia polytechnics only.

The findings of this study shall also help Malaysia polytechnic's lecturers to fulfil the e-learning policy as stipulated in the *Dasar dan Prinsip e-Pembelajaran Politeknik* (Jabatan Pengajian Politeknik, 2012) whereby its use is to support, facilitate and enhance students' teaching and learning experience. Moreover, the Malaysia Polytechnic Assessments policy no 2.9 (Jabatan Pengajian Politeknik, 2011) also

emphasizes the use of various methods of assessments in order to produce effective teaching and learning activities as well as appropriate assessments. With the knowledge about the factors that influence students' attitude towards the use and behavioral intention to use online learning for English language, the effectiveness of online teaching and learning activities can be enhanced.

In addition, the findings of this study shall assist the policy-maker to assess the feasibility and benefits of the use of technology for language learning specifically online learning. It will also assist them to see the problems and difficulties faced by the lecturers in using online learning to supplement the teaching of English language and help them to find solutions and overcome the problem.

Furthermore, the findings of this study do not only benefit the parties mentioned above during ERT, but beyond ERT. Online learning is still applicable even after the pandemic such as in blended learning environment and distance learning. As a whole, the findings of this study will not only benefit the students, but also the lecturers, polytechnics and the policy makers during as well as beyond the pandemic.

1.9   Limitation of the study

In educational studies, a number of typical higher institutional policies need to be adhered before data collection is permitted. This has limited the study to only focus to students of Malaysia polytechnics only. The findings of the study shall not be generalized to all tertiary education's institutions in Malaysia. Furthermore, Malaysia

polytechnic is a higher learning institution that provides Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the students involve in this study are undergraduate students with TVET background age between 18 to 21 years old. Moreover, the use of online learning for TVET undergraduate students may vary from social science undergraduate students (Kumar et al., 2020).

This study shall explore only four external attributes of TAM which are all individual differences, not considering other external influences such as organizational factors or technologies difference (Lee et al., 2003). Although there are many other external individual factors such as self-efficacy, subjective norms, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, perceived language learning potential, learning preference and self-management of learning (Hashim et al., 2016), this study shall only examine the influence of learning technology experience, online learning anxiety, beliefs about second language learning and confidence in English language as its individual external factors. Furthermore, only the moderating effect of online learning anxiety is evaluated in this study and no other moderating relationships. Due to the current pandemic situation, the study shall employ convenient sampling, using questionnaire as research instruments. The Movement Control Order (MCO) given out by the Government has restricted the data collection to online only.

1.10 Operational definition

The operational definitions of the terms in the study are:

Attitude (ATT)

Attitudes are taken to consist of motivation to use devices, satisfaction and experience of benefits with the device (Davis et al., 1989). In this study, ATT refers to the attitude

of students towards learning English using online learning during the ERT.

Behavioral intention (BI)

Behavioral intention is the predictor of behaviours and actual use (Ovchinnikova, 2021). In this study, the BI is used to predict students' likely behaviours to use online learning as a platform to learn English language during ERT.

Beliefs about second language learning (BSL)

Beliefs about second language learning refers to growth mind-set such as the belief on their ability to improve, which is important aspect to help a person sustains his motivation and resilience from failure (Lou & Noels, 2020). In this study, BLS is one of the attributes examined as a perceived behaviour control that influences ATT and BI. BSL was measured based on adapted instrument by Lou and Noels (2017)

English as Second Language (ESL)

In Malaysia English is taught as second language (ESL) (Tati et al., 2016). ESL refers to an environment where non-native speakers are in an English speaking environment. In the case of this country, Bahasa Melayu is the national language, while English is the second language, thus the use of English language for education syllabi has been long practiced (Yaacob et al., 2016).

Language Learning Anxiety

Anxiety is defined by Horwitz et al. (1986) as the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry that associate with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system that can affect students' communication strategies. Students who have positive feelings towards the

language learning will participate more actively and more willingly to engage in learning activities (Darmi & Albion, 2014) The positive feelings can help reduce students' anxiety as well as boost their confidence to learn the language (Aslan & Thompson, 2021). In this study language learning anxiety is considered in determining students' beliefs about online language learning and their willingness to participate.

Confidence in learning English language (CONF)

According to Krashen (1981) self-confidence is one of the elements that influence language acquisition as confidence influences students' motivation to learn the language. In this study the confidence in learning English refers to students' confidence to learn English language using online learning platforms. CONF was measured based on an adapted version of instrument from Yim and Yu (2011).

Familiarity with Learning-technology tools (PRE) & (POST)

Prior to the outbreak of covid-19 (pre-covid) which called for emergency remote teaching, most students in Malaysia have been exposed to at least a little of online learning. However, the online learning that was implemented then was not fully online, but rather blended or hybrid (Lee & Bailey, 2020). In other word, the lessons were carried out with a combination of face-to-face and online learning. The term 'learning–technology experience' used in this study refers to both the pre-covid and post-covid. The earlier term refers to students' experience with online learning before the impose of ERT, while the latter refers to their experience with online learning after the impose of ERT (post-covid). The instrument used to evaluate this constructs were adapted from Lazar et al. (2020).

Online learning

Online learning uses the internet and offers good learning experience that is borderless (Rahman, 2020). Online learning involves instructions which are delivered on digital devices that is intended to support learning (Ferri et al., 2020). In this study online learning refers to online classroom teaching and learning activities that uses internet, conducted in replacement of face-to-face classroom, during the pandemic. It includes discussions, sharing of materials and use of various online tools.

Online learning anxiety (ANX)

Online learning anxiety as defined by Jon-Chao et. al. (2012) is the negative emotional response such as fear or uneasiness that people experience when they think about using or actually using online technology for learning. In this study online learning anxiety refers to students' feeling when using online learning such as nervousness, unpleasantness and uncomfortable feeling. The instrument used to evaluate online learning anxiety was adapted from Lazar et al. (2020).

Perceived behaviours control (PBC)

Perceived behaviours control (PBC) refers to people's perception of their ability and the availability to support and achieve necessary behaviours (Lai, 2013). In this study PBC refers to students' perceptions of their beliefs and confidence in learning the English language learning using online learning.

Perceived ease of use (PEOU)

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system is free of physical and mental effort (Davis et al., 1989).