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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i1/3826>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i1/3826

**Received:** 20 Dec 2017, **Revised:** 16 Jan 2018, **Accepted:** 17 Jan 2018

**Published Online:** 05 Feb 2018

**In-Text Citation:** (Zaidi et al., 2018)

**To Cite this Article:** Zaidi, A., Awaludin, F. A., Karim, R. A., Ghani, N. F. C., Rani, M. S. A., & Ibrahim, N. (2018). University Students' Perceptions of YouTube Usage in (ESL) Classrooms. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(1), 534–545.

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**Vol. 8, No.1, January 2018, Pg. 534 - 545**

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## University Students' Perceptions of YouTube Usage in (ESL) Classrooms

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### Abstract

Persistent use of internet specifically social networking has provided vast opportunities to enhance the quality of teaching and learning of university students. The usage of YouTube videos in the classroom is imperative to meet the educational needs of the younger generation. While text-based resources have remained the standard for centuries, currently, with the fast pace of the development of technology, the usage of YouTube videos in teaching and learning has become a trend. There are a few studies conducted on students' perceptions of using YouTube to learn the English language. Research suggests that this generation of individuals have different styles of learning due to their familiarity with technology. How students learn and gain information from watching YouTube videos in learning the English language is very important in teaching setting. Other studies that were conducted also explored students' perceptions of YouTube as an effective tool to learn English among ESL learners. Hence, the purpose of this study was to investigate (RQ1) the students' interests and (RQ2) the students' perceptions on the use of YouTube in learning English. The results of this study revealed that students are highly interested to use YouTube in learning English. It was also discovered that the students have used YouTube to help them completed their course assignments and study tasks. Hence, it can be concluded that the students preferred to use English YouTube videos to help them enhance their English language proficiency.

**Keywords:** YouTube, Perceptions, Interest, Learning Style, ESL Learners.

### Introduction

The arrival of digital technologies such as the internet has resulted in a new generation of individually literate called the Net Generation (Prensky, 2001). Due to the emergence of this technical literacy people, their learning styles is differing from the previous generations. Thus, this led to an integrated approach and a paradigm shift in teaching which have witnessed an

adoption of a new method of teaching using YouTube videos in the classroom. This approach has brought new insights to pedagogy in higher institution and it is believed that the use of YouTube as a teaching tool could have an effect on the level of student engagement. The use of YouTube and other Web 2.0 technologies in education has been proposed as a tool to engage new generation students (Duffy, 2008, Roodt & De (Duffy, 2008, Roodt & De Villiers, 2011 in Roodt & Peier, 2013) Villiers, 2011 in Roodt & Peier, 2013). YouTube has become an important tool in many universities and colleges around the world. According to Web Analytics Association (2006), MySpace, Facebook and YouTube are the top three favorable websites for university students. Therefore, the emergence of digital technologies such as internet and the worldwide web has made the use of YouTube in classroom a possibility. Today, the new technology has provided a lot of opportunities to enhance the quality of teaching and learning such as the use of internet and YouTube videos. Many Malaysian university students use these technologies to help them do their assignments and other language learning tasks. This technology also helped them to learn the English language as well as enhance their proficiency level. YouTube is featured as something very authentic and able to help the students because it has been reported that the lack of English language proficiency has often been mentioned as one of the major factors contributing to graduate unemployment (Sharif, 2005). How students learn and gain information from YouTube in learning the English language is very important because it will help the educators to identify the students' preference, interest and types of material that they use to enhance learning. Therefore, by using a variety of instructional methods and learning activities in the classroom or via online education can help enrich the learning environment of the students (Fill & Ottewill, 2006).

Since the use of YouTube videos to learn English language is still a new idea, how it can be used in facilitating language learning in class effectively is still unclear. Snelson (2011) state that a study on the perception of the usage of YouTube in ESL classroom for undergraduate students is a relatively new field of study and not much literature has been published regarding the subject especially in the Malaysian context. Despite the importance of using YouTube in engaging students in the classroom, little research has been conducted to investigate the perceptions of Malaysia undergraduate in using YouTube in ESL classroom. This study therefore, is intended to fill in the gap. The purpose of the study is to explore the use of YouTube in the ESL classroom by surveying students' perceptions towards using YouTube to learn English. In particular, it seeks to look at the students' perceptions of using YouTube as a supplement to other learning materials with regard to making classes more interesting and motivating for students to use materials to learn English outside of the class (Kelsen 2009). The study also aims to investigate their interest in using YouTube in ESL classroom. In short, the research questions were as follows:

1. What are the interests of the students in the usage of YouTube in learning English?
2. What are the students' perceptions of using YouTube in the ESL classroom?

### **Literature Review**

YouTube with its official address [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), is a well-known video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips (Duffy, 2008; Roodt & Peier, 2013). Based on the statistical report on its official website, it has more than one billion visitors every month and thousands of videos on thousands of topics in many languages are available on

YouTube. Generally, with these videos, creative teachers can choose from and expose students to meaningful activities involving the four English language skills namely speaking, listening, writing and reading. Examples of activities may range from conversational activities, 'movie trailer', 'voiceover' to 'famous movie screen re-enactments' which can be used for listening and speaking activities (Watkins and Wilkins, 2011). In addition, Kreisen (2009) viewed that YouTube has helped all students to learn more about other cultures since the videos is uploaded by people all around the world. It also allowed students to do video sharing which can give positive output for learning (Snelson, 2009). Stempleski et. al, (2001) agreed that YouTube videos can attract the students' interest to pay attention better due to the audio and visual aids provided.

### **YouTube and other ICT tools in ESL classrooms**

Research into the use of You Tube in the classroom is a relatively new area of study. However, the use of YouTube and other ICT tools in language learning has become a popular discussion all over the world. Several scholars from different countries suggested that using ICT in the classroom is becoming more prevalent in coming years (Brunner, 2013; Chhabra, 2012; Klimova & Poullova; 2014, Nguyen & Tri, 2014 & Teo, Chai, Hung & Lee, 2008). In Malaysia, the trend of using ICT, especially YouTube, enables students to learn actively and interactively in classrooms and is acknowledged and considered as one of the most significant changes in ESL classroom. The youth today use technology like the internet more than any other methods as a medium of communication and socialization (Mishna et al, 2009). Therefore, due to this reality, educators bring in YouTube into the classroom to suit with the students' preferences and interest thus will make learning more interesting (Gunadevi, Pathma & Safinas, 2013).

### **YouTube, students' motivation and learning styles**

The use of YouTube has given positive impacts to the students' motivation. As stated by Berk (2009), videos can have a strong effect on their minds and senses. He also suggested that the use of video clips need to be inserted in multimedia presentation to improve learning in higher educational institutions. These included using videos to grab students' attention, improve students' concentration, generate interests in the lesson, improve attitudes towards content, draw on students' imagination and make learning fun and meaningful. Berk (2009) also claimed that YouTube videos are not only able to attract the students' attention, but can cater different learning styles namely verbal, visual, musical, and emotional intelligences. Watching videos also allowed the brain to react actively to both side of the brain which helps to increase and enhance students' understanding (Berk, 2009). Students' motivation to learn is much relies on their learning styles. According to Romanelli, Bird and Ryan (2009) have proposed that the definition of 'learning styles' is characteristic cognitive, effective and psychosocial behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment. Many scholars have introduced different models of learning styles. Walter Burke Barbe which proposed three learning modalities known as VAK a) visual, b) auditory and kinesthetic learning and this model is a mixture of preferences, strengths and personality which is a mixture in each individual. This model was later refined by Flemming and Mills (1992) by introducing Neil Fleming's VARK model. Neil Fleming's VARK model which has been expanded upon earlier notions of sensory modalities such as the VAK MODEL OF Barbe and colleagues and the representational systems (VAKOG) in neurolinguistic programming. The four sensory modals

in Fleming's model are;1) Visual learning, 2) Auditory learning, 3) Read/write learning and 4) Kinesthetic learning.

Fleming and Mills (1992) claimed that visual learners have a preference of seeing visual aids that represented ideas using methods other than words, such as graphs, chart, diagrams, symbols and others. Auditory learners learn better through lectures, discussions and using tapes whereas tactile or kinesthetic learners prefer to learn via experience such as moving, touching example through science projects and experiments. The selection of YouTube among students is very much influenced by their learning styles preferences and interest. Duffy (2008) suggested several specific examples on how YouTube could be integrated and embedded into teaching and learning in ESL classroom. Some of the activities suggested are asking the students to create a video as a part of an assessment, record a video of a guest presenter and upload it on YouTube and use the comments functionality as a platform for discussion. Besides that, he also suggested that the students can search for videos that are related to questions posted at the end of lectures and educators can show students the real-world examples of material and theory covered in class as well as ask students to post video vignettes (Duffy, 2008). Another research was conducted by Roodt and De Villiers (2011) which was a study on using YouTube as a tool to support collaborative learning. The study was conducted on a first year of IS course at the University of Pretoria. The course included a group project in which students used YouTube to create a video on how businesses can use Web 2.0 technologies amongst other tasks. It was reported that from a sample of 185 students, it was found that YouTube was perceived as an innovative learning technology by the majority of the students (Roodt and De Villiers, 2011). Tan and Pearce (2012) agreed that the use of YouTube videos helped students to explain key ideas in a sociology course. They used these videos in an introductory sociology course at the Foundation Centre at Durham University. Tan and Pearce (2012) used these videos to illustrate important topics by giving explanation and discussion in the class and in smaller group environments. Tan and Pearce (2012) further explained that the use of YouTube videos helped students and was seen as an effective way to support their learning. In conclusion, as educators consider the use of YouTube video as important, thus, they must strongly consider what students' think and feel about these tools in their courses. Frey and Birnbaum (2002) discovered that the students considered their teacher as a proficient and organized person if they use the technology in their teaching. Therefore, using YouTube videos as one and readily available source of authentic material will encourage the students to interact actively in class and further develop their language skills as they are eager to gain deeper understanding of the subject matter.

To the researcher's knowledge, there is one study on students' perceptions of YouTube usage in the English oral communication classroom by Gunadevi, Fathimah Pathma and Raja Nor Safinas (2013) and to date research were carried out in relation to students' interest and perception of using YouTube in ESL classroom in Malaysia. The research can provide information on the levels of exposure of undergraduate students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of YouTube in the classroom as a teaching tool. Furthermore, this study would be beneficial for educators to find out their students' preferences in using YouTube to engage learners in reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Besides that, this study can also help educators to adopt new technology by using YouTube in the classroom to enhance students' proficiency and students' engagement in the class. Moreover, it sheds light on a new method of integrating technology on teaching English. The researcher noticed that there is a scarcity in studies, which

studied the effect of YouTube in English language and little empirical research existed that demonstrated how web-based applications can be integrated into language learning in Malaysia.

## Methodology

### Instrument and Sampling

This study is descriptive and use a quantitative method consisted of a questionnaire-based survey which is administered to undergraduate students. The questionnaire was adopted and adapted from Kelsen (2009). The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire included demographic information of the respondent including gender, age, levels of language proficiency and year of study. The second part consisted of ten questions using Likert-scale which related to the students' interest on their usage of YouTube. The final ten questions focus on their perceptions of using YouTube in ESL class. Questionnaire was constructed to answer the two research questions which are the perceptions of YouTube and the interest of using YouTube in the classroom. The sample of the study ( $n = 159$ ) is diploma students from Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak. The questionnaires made use of the Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaire was piloted and the data was analyzed using SPSS 20.0 and resulted in a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.915, which is a satisfactory score for reliability. These students are registered ELC 150 (Integrated Language Skills: Reading) and ELC 230 (Integrated Language Skills: Writing) course. These courses are the university's requirement for all diploma level students in semester two and three respectively.

### Procedure and Data Collection

Students were selected randomly as participants in the survey. The questionnaire was distributed and the students were given a brief instruction and assurance that their data would be kept confidential. The researcher made the students understand that their answers should reflect on their beliefs, thoughts and feelings. Students were informed that the participation was voluntary and anonymous. Since participation was voluntary, the students were given the option to not participate if they chose to.

### Findings and Data Analysis

From the findings, the data was analyzed, the responses from the question were tabulated and discussed in later chapters. The results show that out of 170 samples, a total of 159 completed the survey (93.5% response rate). Seventy one percent ( $n = 113$ ) of the respondents were female and 28.9% ( $n = 46$ ) male. Females were the majority of the samples. The students' age ranged from 18–24 years of age with the majority of respondents being 18-20 (84.9%), 21-23 (11.9%) and 24 above only (3%) years of age. The majority of the population (65%,  $n = 103$ ) were semester 3 students and 35.2% ( $n=56$ ) were semester 2 students. The data also revealed that most of the Accountancy students from Semester 2 and Semester 3 rated themselves as possessing an intermediate level of English proficiency level with ( $n=115$ ) 72.3%, (**refer to Chart 1**) whereas the advanced students comprise of 22.6% ( $n=36$ ) and the beginners proficiency levels were only 5% ( $n=8$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that most of the respondents possessed basic English proficiency levels.

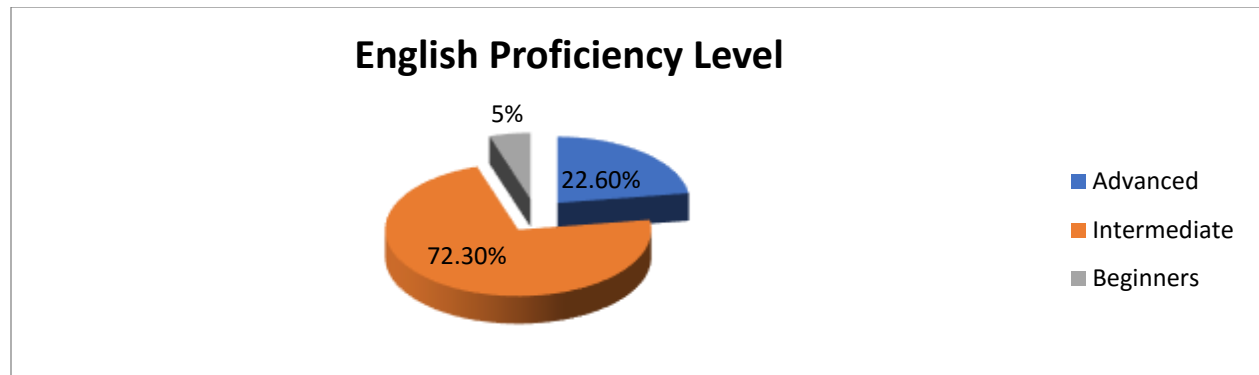


Chart 1. English Proficiency Level

Table 1: The use of YouTube videos

	Q6. Makes learning English interesting		Q7. Makes it easier to learn English in the class		Q8. Enables me to understand English better	
	Resp.	%	Resp.	%	Resp.	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Disagree	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	3	1.88%
Undecided	5	3.14%	4	2.52%	22	13.84%
Agree	117	73.58%	125	78.62%	98	61.64%
Strongly Agree	37	23.28%	30	18.86%	36	22.64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Almost 74% of respondents said that they agreed that the use of YouTube videos in class made learning English interesting while 23% of the respondents strongly agreed that using YouTube videos made it interesting to learn English. Almost 79% respondents agreed that using YouTube made it easier to learn English in the classroom. Whereas only 2.52% were undecided whether using YouTube videos did made it easier for them to learn English. Question 8 revealed that about 62% of the respondents agreed that using YouTube videos in class enabled them to understand English better.

Table 2: Students interest in using YouTube videos

	Q10. Motivate me to study English when I am outside of class		Q11. Often look for English YouTube to learn English		Q12. Learn pronunciation of English words from YouTube videos	
	Resp.	%	Resp.	%	Resp.	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Disagree	6	3.78%	15	9.43%	13	8.18%
Undecided	36	22.64%	54	33.96%	40	25.16%
Agree	93	58.49%	70	44.02%	74	46.54%
Strongly Agree	24	15.09%	20	12.59%	32	20.12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Over 58% respondents agreed that using YouTube videos motivated them to study English outside of the class. However, only 15% of the samples claimed that they strongly agreed that YouTube did motivate them to study English outside of the class. Whereas another 23% of the respondents were still undecided whether watching YouTube in the class motivated them to study English when being outside of the classroom. There were only 4% of the remaining respondents who thought that using YouTube in class motivated them to study English when they were outside of the class setting. Furthermore, Question 11 disclosed that slightly more than 44% of the students agreed to some extent that they often looked for English YouTube to watch YouTube in English. However, slightly more than 33% of the students were unable to decide whether they preferred to look for English YouTube to learn English. Approximately 9% of the students disagreed that they will look for English YouTube to learn English.

**Table 3: Students' perceptions in using YouTube videos**

	Q16.YouTube captures my attention better		Q18.YouTube is convenient, affordable and accessible		Q19. Helps to accomplish study tasks quicker	
	Resp.	%	Resp.	%	Resp.	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Disagree	6	3.77%	14	8.80%	46	28.93%
Undecided	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Agree	88	55.35%	106	66.76%	97	61.00%
Strongly Agree	65	40.88%	39	24.52%	16	10.07%
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Students found that YouTube did helped them captured their attention better with approximately 55% of the respondents agreeing and over 40% of the students were strongly agreed while just fewer than 4% were disagreed that YouTube captured their attention better in learning. Almost 67% of the sample agreed that using YouTube was convenient, affordable and accessible and 25% strongly agreed. Whereas only 8.8% of the students think that YouTube is not very convenient, less affordable and difficult to access. It was also found that about 61% of the respondents occasionally agreed that YouTube helped them to accomplish their study task faster whereas 29% of the respondents thought YouTube did not helped them to complete their study tasks.



**Table 4: Students' perceptions in using YouTube videos**

	Q20.Exposed students to what happened in the outside world		Q22. Improves the quality of assignments that students produce		Q23. YouTube enables students to control their own learning	
	Resp.	%	Resp.	%	Resp.	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Disagree	7	4.40%	51	32.07%	42	26.42%
Undecided	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Agree	90	56.60%	91	57.23%	99	62.26%
Strongly Agree	62	39.00%	17	10.70%	18	11.32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Approximately 50% of respondents said that use of YouTube videos exposed them to global issues around the world. Slightly less than 40% were strongly agreed and less than 5% disagreed to some extent. Furthermore, slightly more than 57% of students agreed that YouTube improved the quality of the assignments they produced and approximately 32% of the students disagreed with the statement. Students found that the use of YouTube enables them to control their own learning whereas slightly more than 26% of the students think that YouTube did not help them to control their own learning.

## Discussion

The literature that was reviewed helped highlight the importance of YouTube as a tool to engage web generation students (Duffy, 2008, Roodt & De Villiers, 2011 in Roodt & Peier, 2013). Thus, looking at the findings, it showed that all respondents were using YouTube to help them learn English and other subjects. With regards to being digitally literate, all the respondents are connected to technological network and have used YouTube for learning and leisure.

To answer the first research question which was to find the level of interest of students in using YouTube videos in ESL classroom learning English, the research has found that the students were interested to look for English YouTube videos to learn English. Nearly 57% said they often look for English YouTube videos to learn English and only 9.4% did not search for English YouTube. The students were visual learners and this new generation of students developed their learning style through watching YouTube videos. This proved a claimed made by Fleming and Mills (1992) that visual learners have a preference of seeing visual aids that represented ideas using methods other than words, such as graphs, chart, diagrams, symbols and others Furthermore, from the analysis, 58% agreed and 15% strongly agreed that watching YouTube videos did motivate them to study English when they were outside of the classroom. This proved that the use of YouTube videos has a strong effect on the students' mind and senses as supported by Berk (2009) who claimed that using YouTube videos can grab students' attention, improve concentration, generate interests in the lessons and improve attitudes towards content (Berk, 2009).

Respondents were asked whether they were able to understand English lessons easier after engaging with YouTube videos and it can have been seen that 61% of the students agreed

and 22% strongly agreed that watching YouTube videos did help them to understand English better. Thus, watching YouTube that use English as a medium of instruction, could enhance or support the students understanding of the lesson (Green & Tanner, 2005).

The second research question of this research paper was to examine the students' perceptions in using YouTube and whether the use of YouTube had an effect on their English learning process especially in the classroom. Based on the results, 56% of the respondents' agreed and 39% strongly agreed that YouTube exposed them to what happened in the outside world. This was proven by Kreisen (2009) who claimed that YouTube helped all students to learn more about other cultures since the videos are uploaded by people all around the world. Besides that, almost 57% of the respondents agreed that watching YouTube videos helped them to improve the quality of their assignments produced. This proved a claimed by Tan and Pearce (2012) that the use of YouTube videos helped students and was an effective way to support their learning.

According to the results, the findings also showed that 66% of the students agreed and 24% strongly agreed that surfing the YouTube was very convenient, affordable and easy to access. It was relatively easy to gain access to YouTube because it is a well-known video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips (Duffy, 2008 in Roodt & Peier, 2013). According to Duffy (2008) in Roodt & Peier (2013) this was also due to the statistical reports on official website that more than one billion visitors every month and thousands of videos and topics in many languages are shared and are available on YouTube.

The students were asked if YouTube improved the quality of the assignments they produced and the finding showed that 57% of the respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed whereas 32% disagreed with the statement. Even though YouTube is seen as a purposeful media in the classroom and could enhance and support students' understanding as well as assist students' tasks, how far YouTube content can help students produce quality assignments still require further research.

## **Conclusion**

This study looked at the students' interests and preferences of using YouTube in learning English in the ESL classroom. This initial study showed that YouTube may be a viable, innovative and authentic teaching resource. The results of this study revealed that students were using YouTube at a high rate. They found that YouTube was easy and convenient to use and they used it to assist them in their studies and learning English. The research found that the students often used YouTube to help them learn English. As a result, it is suggested that both teachers and students can incorporate YouTube in a variety of classroom activities to enhance the learning outcome and provide an interesting and authentic learning. However, using YouTube in class to enhance their pronunciation and motivate them to study English outside of class as well as develop some degree of learner autonomy remains unclear. Lastly, the researcher found that as a result of the use of YouTube has helped the students to enhance their English lesson and tasks assigned to them.

## **Limitations and Future Study**

Some of the limitations of this study were that the sample size was relatively small and it did not represent the whole faculty of Accountancy especially male students. Thus, it is difficult

to make gender comparisons. Finally, the fact that all the participants came from the same faculty means the results cannot be extrapolated to the general student population. Furthermore, the self-reported nature of the survey may have led to students overstating their answers as the course teacher administered the questionnaires. To counter this, the questionnaires were anonymous and the students' result did not affect their final grades. Regarding future research, it is recommended that studies using larger sample size and students from various faculties will be invited to participate in this study. For future studies, the study intends to make comparisons between lesson in classroom with and without YouTube used as supplementary material and student's engagement in the classroom. Thus, this will help the teacher to examine the impact of such technology on students' proficiency and assist educators in developing ESL teaching strategies.

### Acknowledgement

I would like to express my appreciation to my mentor Mrs. Nora Harun for her guidance and encouragement. A special note of thanks to my colleagues of the Academy of Language Studies, especially Mr. Muhd Syahir Abdul Rani for his valuable assistance during the process of conducting the research. I am also indebted to the students of University Technology MARA for their support and cooperation.

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