The Use of 1Malaysia Netbook in English Language Learning

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Abstract

Realizing the immense importance of ICT literacy in this information age, Ministry of Education has initiated 1Malaysia Netbook programme in 2010 as to encourage ownership of computers among low-income families as well as to enhance ICT awareness and digital literacy among marginalized society. Thus, this paper discusses the findings of a study that examines the use of 1Malaysia Netbook among secondary school students. It focuses on a group of students who were involved in 1Malaysia Netbook programme. This paper specifically explores the students’ attitudes and acceptance towards the usage of netbook, especially in the English language learning. It also identifies the impact of netbook usage towards the development of students’ digital literacy. Data were collected using a set of questionnaire and one hundred and twenty students from four selected secondary schools in Terengganu were involved in this study. The findings of the study indicate that students have a positive attitude towards 1Malaysia Netbook as they are trying to adapt themselves in using it for English language learning. The findings also show that the use of netbook assist in the development of digital literacy among students. However, there are also some difficulties and barriers revealed from the findings that limit the usage of netbook among students. This paper proposes that in order to ensure wider usage of Netbook 1Malaysia for language learning, there is a need for a complete strategic plan in terms of technical support, teacher’s support and training, learning environment and availability of wireless internet connection in school surrounding.

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1. Introduction

Aiming to turn Malaysia into a fully developed country, the vision 2020 also recognizes the impact and role technology plays in enriching the lives of its people and the importance of establishing a foundation of technology literacy. Realizing the immense importance of ICT literacy in this information age, Ministry of Education has recently initiated the Netbook 1Malaysia programme in 2010. Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) through the Universal Service Provision (USP) programme have allocated the total of one million of 1Malaysia netbooks to be distributed amongst eligible recipients. Eligible recipients here represent the students who come from low-income families, with a prior given to the secondary school students under government funded. The purpose of this programme is to encourage ownership of computers among low-income families as well as to enhance ICT awareness and digital literacy in the society.

1.1 Statement of Problem

However, after three years since this programme had been launched and implemented at the schools, there were some issues that have been reported regarding the Netbook 1Malaysia. Borneo Post (2010) reported that the students did not fully-utilized the Netbook as they were using it for playing games and entertainment purposes instead of using it for academic learning. The study done by Norizan (2012) also found out that there were a few cases where the students sold the Netbook to the computer shop. This could happen when there was a lack of awareness among the students to use Netbook 1Malaysia in learning language, especially English language. Regarding to that matter, it is important to have a study conducted focusing on this area in order to know the attitudes, usage, challenges and impact of Netbook 1Malaysia from the perspectives of students themselves. Hence, the focal point of this study is to examine the use of 1Malaysia netbook among students for English language learning and its impact towards development of digital literacy. The findings could make available to the authorities, education policy makers, curriculum planners a more comprehensive understanding on the effectiveness of using Netbook 1Malaysia so that they could implement better approaches for the students to better acquire Netbook 1Malaysia across English language learning. In addition, this study will provide some useful insights for teachers who seek to integrate the use of 1Malaysia netbook in their language learning.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:
1. To explore the students’ attitudes towards the use of Netbook 1Malaysia for English language learning.
2. To identify the purposes of the students utilize Netbook Malaysia.
3. To investigate the challenges that limit the usage of Netbook 1Malaysia for language learning.
4. To examine the the impact of netbook usage towards the development of students’ digital literacy

1.3 Research Questions

This study is seeks to obtain answers for the following questions:
1. What are the students’ attitudes towards the use of Netbook 1Malaysia for English language learning?
2. For what purposes do the students utilize Netbook 1Malaysia?
3. What are the challenges that limit the usage of Netbook 1Malaysia for language learning?
4. To what extent do the impact of Netbook 1Malaysia for students’ development of digital literacy?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theoretical framework pioneered by Davis (1989), which is Technology Acceptance Model. Technology acceptance model (TAM) is generally considered as the most influential and common theory
in information systems field and it is the most widely employed model of information technologies adoption and use (Venkatesh and Bala, 2008). The reason why this framework was chosen as a guide for this study is to give better understanding on the implementation of 1Malaysia netbook programme experienced by the students, in terms of their attitude, usage, the factors that limit the usage as well as the development of digital literacy among them. TAM involved the two core predictors, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use and the dependent variable, which is the behavior intention. Perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which a person believes that using a particular system or technology would enhance their job performance. A system high in perceived usefulness, in turn, is one for which a user believes in the existence of a positive use-performance relationship. Masrom (2007) claimed that perceived usefulness is more important in determining intention to use than attitude toward using. On the other hand, perceived ease of use is defined as the extent to which a person believes that using the particular system or technology would be free from effort. These two factors are crucial factors that affect students’ willingness to accept and adapt Netbook as a part of language learning tool.

2.2 Previous Studies

It is important to identify the acceptance of the students towards the usage of computer in the language learning through their positive or negative attitude on computer usage. Individuals’ attitudes toward ICT have been recognized as an important factor for the success of technology integration in education. Noor Zainab and Jeyavany (2010) in their study proved that both teachers and students have a positive attitude towards learning English through the use of computer in classrooms. They believe that the use of computer in an ESL classroom makes the lesson interesting, exciting and effective. Sumaya (2010) discovered that students felt that leaning language using technology helps them make progress in different language skills and provides them with access to a variety of learning materials.

Despite of the various benefits gained from the use of computer especially in language learning, there are still some barriers or drawback of using it that need to be taken into consideration. Researchers discern more barriers than just overcoming the problem of computer or internet access, such as a lack of elementary digital experience, digital skills and usage opportunities (Van Dijk and Hacker, 2003). Nadzrah (2007) provide a few factors that influence the effective use of computer, with focusing on it usage in the classroom. The findings illustrated that the students considered their own computer skills level to be another factor that contributed to their use of computers. They stressed that being competent with computer increased their confidence when using computers, while students with limited computer skills gave negative comments on working with computers. The students also pointed out that searching for information took a longer time because of their limited internet searching skills and because of this they depended on their peers to help them.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

The population of the study comprised of one hundred and twenty students from four selected secondary school in Kuala Terengganu area. The students were in Form Two and Form Four classes, which their ages were 14 and 16 years old. There were 40 male students and 80 female students involved in this study. The type of sampling is the purposeful sampling, where the researcher intentionally selects the respondents in order to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005), in this context is the students who own the 1Malaysia netbook.

3.2 Pilot Study

The pilot study is conducted by the researcher in order to get the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The construct validity measures the level to which a scale measures what it intends to measure. The sample for
the pilot study is thirty students from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Tanjung Sepat, Banting, Selangor. The reliability of the questionnaire is tested using Cronbach’s alpha value and the value gathered is 0.9746. An alpha value of 0.70 or greater indicates high reliability and good internal consistency (Field, 2005).

3.3 Questionnaire
This research employed survey design using quantitative approach to gather the data. The instrument used in this research is the questionnaire which contains four sections. The questionnaire is adapted from the study by Norizan (2012). The first section of the questionnaire is meant to gauge the respondents’ background, followed by next sections about students’ attitude towards Netbook 1Malaysia; the pattern of Netbook usage and application, the challenges that limits Netbook 1Malaysia usage for English language learning as well as its impact towards development of digital literacy.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1 Background of the Respondents

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<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ownership of computer</td>
<td>97 (80.8)</td>
<td>23 (19.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet access at home</td>
<td>81 (67.5)</td>
<td>39 (32.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Know how to use Netbook</td>
<td>108 (90.0)</td>
<td>12 (10.0)</td>
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Analysis of the background of the respondents revealed that almost all of the respondents have been exposed to the technology and the use of computer before they received Netbook 1Malaysia. 97 of the respondents admitted they have personal computer, 81 of them have an internet access at home and 108 of them know how to use netbook. This result indicated that they know the basic steps of using computer before they received Netbook 1Malaysia.

4.2 Students’ Attitudes

In general, the results of the study indicated that students have a positive attitude and acceptance towards Netbook 1Malaysia as they are trying to adapt themselves in using it for English language learning. The students found the Netbook is easy to use, and hence, always use it after school session. This is in line with what Salih (2004) claimed in the study that students had positive tendency the useful and easy reflections of computers when it was examined the results of research and questionnaire. The findings also supported the two core predictors on TAM model (Davis, 1989) which the students perceived the usefulness of Netbook when they agreed that the Netbook is beneficial for English language learning and they perceived the ease of use of Netbook 1Malaysia. They also have the behavioral intention, where the students realized the advantage of Netbook in language learning, so they have an intention to utilize it to learn English in the future. The analysis further revealed the students agreed if they were allowed to bring Netbook to school and use it inside classroom, which explained that they might need guidance from teacher in order to fully utilize the netbook usage for the learning purposes. Even though some of the students were seldom use Netbook for learning, but they were aware the advantages of having Netbook which they can use it as a medium to look for information related to academic in the internet.

4.3 Netbook Usage and Application

In terms of Netbook usage and application, surprisingly the students were preferred to use it for entertainment and social networking purposes instead of leaning purposes. The frequency of the students to surf social networking websites such as Facebook is higher than the English learning websites. Some of them pointed out the reason why they misused the Netbook usage were because they did not used to learn English using computer and did not know how to search information related to education on the internet properly. Their rationale towards those reasons was influenced by their learning environment and social background. Family is one of the factors that contribute to the students’ perception of using Netbook for language learning. Nevertheless, the students admitted that in the future, they would like to use Netbook properly to learn English because they were aware that Netbook can be one of the interactive technology tools for learning. What the students need was support, encouragement and exposure on how to make a proper use of Netbook 1Malaysia for learning purposes in schools as well as at home. This is to ensure that they have a conducive learning environment and positive acceptance towards Netbook 1Malaysia. Garcia, (2001) determining that computer enriched environment and multimedia-enhanced learning settings are positively correlated with students’ attitudes towards computers in general and they can foster positive attitudes toward the use of computers in education.

4.4 Challenges

After a thorough analysis of data, it is apparent that there were several challenges and barriers which limit the use of Netbook among students especially for English language learning, including the internet coverage and access. Second is the quality of Netbook performance. Lee (2000) agreed that computer hardware and software compatibility goes on to be a significant problem. Computer technology use that does not support a learner-centered approach may be perceived as less effective to the learner (Lowerison et al, 2006). Besides, there was
also a lack of guidance from parents and teachers, which contribute to misused of Netbook whereby there was discovered a higher percentage of Netbook usage for other purposes instead of for language learning. In fact, motivation to learn and language barriers also could be influential factors which limit the students’ use of Netbook for language learning. If the Netbook is in good condition and there is strong connection of internet coverage, but the students have low motivation to use it to learn English, then they would never interested to do so. Plus, for those who have low proficiency in English also would refuse to take initiative to learn English using Netbook because they could have a problem in understanding English terms in the internet. Other challenges that influences the use of Netbook among students are lack of computer skill, no experience of learning using computer, no knowledge of browsing English and the factor of technophobia, which can be referred as the fear or disliked of advanced technology or complex devices, especially computer

4.5 Impact of Netbook 1Malaysia

The findings discovered that most of the students had a huge agreement that Netbook 1Malaysia assisted in the development of digital literacy. They were positive to go with a stand that the more they use Netbook frequently, they more they can polish their technology skills in using computer. In contrast, there were also a few students claimed that their level of digital literacy had not improved before and after they use the Netbook. This showed that different technology exposure among the students might produce different outcome. For those students whom their family did not afford to buy computer would have experienced more benefits on having Netbook compared to the students who already owned a computer at home. However, the fact that the Netbook bring a good impact towards the development of students’ digital literacy was undeniable. As what Norizan Abdul Razak et al. (2010) said, the adoption of ICT will help the development of information society, which is in line with the nation’s ICT agenda. According to Noor-Ul-Amin, ICT are also transformational tools which, when used appropriately, can promote the shift to a learner-centered environment. ICT, especially computers and Internet technologies, enable new ways of teaching and learning rather than simply allow teachers and students to do what they have done before in a better way. ICT has an impact not only on what students should learn, but it also plays a major role on how the students should learn.

5. Conclusion

The study suggested that in order to ensure the Netbook 1Malaysia programme to be successful and a wider usage of Netbook 1Malaysia for language learning, there is a need for a complete strategic plan in terms of technical support, teacher’s support and training, learning environment and availability of wireless internet connection in school surrounding. The findings of the study bear implications for five groups of people including the authorities, schools and teachers, parents, students and IT experts and academicians.

The result of the study highlights the fact that Netbook that had been given to the students was not in a good condition for a long-time usage. If this problem continues with no action have been taken by the authorities, this Netbook 1Malaysia programme would not bring any long-term positive outcome and benefits for the students. Regarding to the matter, there should be an initiative to refine the quality of Netbook, for example in terms of its hardware system in order to improve their performance before it is given to the students. The authorities are also encouraged to liaise with schools by sending an IT trainers or experts to schools to give explanation on how to maintain a good use of Netbook to the students. They also could have a monthly check-up routine on students’ netbook in order to ensure the Netbook were always in a good condition. Besides, the government should improve on the internet coverage especially in the sub-urban area so that the students in that area can enjoy the privileges by having an internet access using their Netbook. This may need a lot financial budget to provide all those suggestion. But somehow, authorities should make considerable investment in educational computing. Any effort will not however, be successful without proper training (Seyal et al., 2000).
The authorities should make an effort to find out the weaknesses and improve on that in order to make this Netbook 1Malaysia programme successful and beneficial for the students.

School and teachers also have a vital role by providing a close guidance on students’ use of Netbook even though most of the schools were not allowed the students to bring the Netbook to school. The school could organize the seminar or workshop in promoting educational technology, which is to expose the students and teachers on the advantages of learning using Netbook and computers. The teachers also should give motivation for the students to learn English and make use of Netbook as a medium to learn it on the internet. They could guide the students how to search information and suitable websites related to English subjects on the internet.

In conjunction to that, parents also should give full support and guidance to their children on how to make use of Netbook wisely. For the parents who are affordable, they could provide internet connection at home to make their children easier to have an access to the internet using Netbook. However, they should supervise and control the use of internet by their children in order to ensure that they did not misused it for other purposes instead of learning. Students themselves need to have strong motivation and intention to learn English using Netbook. They should have awareness towards advantages of having Netbook which they can use it to do homework, to search for extra notes or exercises and to do interactive activities related to English subjects. They should have a focus on academic and appreciate the Netbook that were given to them by the government. Furthermore, IT experts and academicians also have a role to support this Netbook 1Malaysia programme by cooperating with government to improve the performance of Netbook so that the students can fully utilize it for learning purposes. The academicians could do further research and study to find out the pattern of Netbook usage and application among students.

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