Learning Malay Online At Tertiary Level

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Abstract

This is a discussion on technology assisted language learning at tertiary level that delimits blogging as a form of e-learning for enhancing foreign language acquisition. Examining the dynamics, rather than the outcomes, behind the integration of weblog as part of a Malay module puts the spotlight on the efficacy of blogging in developing Malay literacy. The reflections of the tertiary learner blogging Malay as a literacy development are presented for consideration towards practical internet-based pedagogy in line with Y generation's current social-interactive practice. One observation derivable from blogging Malay literacy, i.e. developing written Malay proficiency with online journaling, is that a foreign language learner may learn collaboratively by tapping on the overlapping techniques of decoding and encoding a target language online at the intersection of cognitive-digital interface. The interactivity suggests that diversified stimulation is required in e-learning pedagogy not least foreign language acquisition involves multi-faceted cognitive, verbal, and auditory coordination. It is observed that digitalized asynchronous interaction contains synchronous learning stimulations, especially from the repeated viewing of the digital social media incorporated into the blogging practice. Arguably, educational social technology, in the form of embedded *YouTube* video clips in the weblogs, offers a foreign language learner with an affordance to generate a simulated face-to-face interactivity serving as a useful scaffold to improve foreign language proficiency. Applying the weblog to learn Malay, in turn, amplifies the cognitive receptiveness on the learner's part, which is an advantage of introducing and maintaining a collective of diverse learning stimulation in accommodating foreign language learning.

Keywords: blogging Malay literacy, e-learning, educational social technology, new-age classroom, tertiary foreign language learning.

Introduction

Trailing the English learning practices in South Korea and Taiwan, learners and teachers in Southeast Asia are incorporating technology assisted learning in foreign language education. In recent years, e-learning has indeed become a trend in tertiary education. Decentralizing the classroom-based education to a more multimodal format, many universities are conducting e-learning paving the way for asynchronous learning as a significant component of foreign language syllabi. The participants of *Annual Faculty Teaching Workshop 2011* at the Faculty of Science at National University of Singapore

(NUS), for example, were organized into groups to produce digital footages collaboratively in order to better appreciate digital technology as a means of learning. *New Media, Old Skill* is the session facilitated by Will Rifkin at the Annual Faculty Teaching Workshop 2011, on 19 April at NUS. Prior to this, the Center for Language Studies' Third International Conference (CLaSIC 2008) at NUS explored various digital formats of pedagogy toward an enhanced experience of foreign language teaching and learning. Under the conference theme, *Media in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning* many presenters shared on different applications of digital media bringing language education to new levels of learning.

New literacies may be defined as a social cultural phenomenon of exploiting digital technologies, e.g. wired computer, hand-held digital gadgets, smart mobiles, iPads, transcontinental audio-visual technology, etc. as learning and socializing systems. Social media including *YouTube* and *facebook* as well as video games are exploited by the academics, educators, publishers, private tutors and public stake holders as learning and/or networking platforms to disseminate learning information and/or entertainment. Consistent with the emerging trend of new literacies, the ways in which social media, mobile and digital games are being transformed into virtual learning and teaching platforms multiply rapidly in terms of quality and quantity (cf. Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

At the turn of 21st century, new skills have emerged from managing new technology from a very young age with digital products becoming part and parcel of everyday living. The creative and intellectual implications arising from manipulating these digital products demand the attention of the stake holders:

> New technology is becoming a crucial part of many people's working lives, but it is doing so in very different ways for different groups of workers; and, in the process, new gaps of knowledge and skill may be opening up…this implies, policy-makers need to take much fuller account of the social contexts in which children encounter new media, and the kinds of support which are necessary in order to use them most effectively (Buckingham, 2002, p. 86).

The constant interactivity with information communication technology (ICT) has resulted in an exponential growth of asynchronous repertoire incorporated into daily activities. New literacies, mainly screen-based, is fast becoming a common learning phenomenon worldwide, generating an abundance of digital alternatives. In reciprocal to the flourishing ICT-related activities, language pedagogy is tasked to accommodate the online practices of a thriving digital generation. By creating technology assisted language learning, negotiating literacy in digital mode is becoming an integral subcomponent of foreign language education. In the digital era, language educators redesign their craft of delivery to harness the new learning behavior of young adults, whose characteristics of daily communication are underlined by a myriad of online exchanges.

A structural consequence of the current digital expansion in many Asian countries is that a slew of infrastructures are currently put in place to create the digital environment for commercial, educational and social purposes. Singapore, for example, has drawn up a

comprehensive broadband accessibility program as part of its Intelligent Nation 2015 (iN2015) master-plan. Riding on the digital harness, it is reasonable and practical for all areas and levels of formal education to maintain an asynchronous learner-oriented edutainment by exploiting an array of open-access digital platforms (cf. Sew, 2010a).

Digital literacy

In foreign language education, two kinds of basic language development are noticeable from the application of online tools as interactive devices. Firstly, there is observable improvement in language development through various digital language games (Holmes, 2011). We consider this digital intervention to be complementing face-to-face linguistic stimulation in non-formal setting towards progressive language acquisition. Within the digital intervention, explicit result-oriented evaluations are structured according to a set of learning paradigms in relation to specific learning objectives and outcomes. In the formal learning setting, however, academicians, who are concerned with the application of effective language pedagogy, identify with the best teaching practice norm.

Noteworthy, digital pedagogy ranging from computer-assisted language learning (CALL), language learning with ICT, digital journaling, online translation, among others, are not mutually exclusive learning tools if digital language learning is viewed in an *E-continuum* of language education development. Every online practice in language learning is invaluable as each digital instrument enhances and strengthens a particular aspect of linguistic intelligence in both formal and informal situations of language learning. An indirect consequence arising from the use of digital technology is a progressive transformation of beliefs, learning practices, perception and eventually learning efficacy on the user's part.

The transformation of negative attitude in blogging Malay to a positive one, for example, has increased the frequency of blogging and intensity of Malay learning. Significant changes in attitude are noticeable from the weblog of a medical student, who uses the blog as a socializing-cum-learning platform. The use of different identity tags for each individual blog posting among his commentators indicates that the netizens are role playing with different characterization in asynchronous interactivity (Azni Mohamed Zain & Koo, 2009). In this respect, asynchronous foreign language acquisition including the application of digital media requires an investigation of both the tangible and intangible aspects of e-learning to understand the strength and weakness generated from a particular digital pedagogy.

In the current digital age, the commonplace of technology assisted learning produces multimodal stimulations in education for socializing as well as information gathering and production (Stern, 2007; Noriah, 2007). The existing e-learning formats may vary from a one-to-one to a multiple-user reciprocal relationship (Anderson, 2008; Farmer, 2006). Interestingly, the many-to-many interaction online, for example, offers equal opportunity for learners to construct knowledge within the group keeping fleeting interruptions of the real world at bay (Warschauer, 2009). In short, the inclusion of web applications in pedagogy and recreation creates a digital window for the learners performing a series of roles while acquiring academic and social information in a community of practice (cf. Thorne & Black, 2007; Davies & Merchant, 2009; Sew, 2010a; Gee & Hayes, 2011).

Blogging literacy

This discussion examines blogging as a means of language learning at tertiary education. More specifically, we examine the underlying assumption that pedagogy via weblog is relevant for undergraduates to learn Malay as foreign language. While the quantitative outcomes could be measured with evaluative tools the qualitative aspects of online Malay language learning at tertiary level are lesser known. There are two questions guiding this study on learner efficacy in blogging literacy. Firstly, in what ways are weblog exploitable and exploited by tertiary learners to learn Malay language? Secondly, what are the academic benefits attainable by the Malay beginners in the course of blogging as a literacy practice to acquire Malay? The reflections of the end users are examined as actual e-learning experience. The findings are intended as points of contemplation for other e-learning practitioners to design attractive learning programs online hence optimizing the linguistic development of language learners.

The application of the weblog in tertiary Malay learning took place in 2008 at the Centre for Language Studies (CLS), NUS. Blogging has since been adopted in the secondary school education at *Madrasah Aljunied* receiving local media coverage in 2009. This is a small scale investigation on blogging as an avenue for online language learning. The focus is not about the outcomes but rather the learners' experience. Blogging for Malay literacy is a complimentary learning component carried out asynchronously by the learners on top of the compulsory five hours of contact time required in the module. The final outcomes are captured in the summative evaluation in the form of a 2-hour closed-book written examination. Please refer to the *Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills Project*, http://atc21s.org/ for a massive study on ICT literacy, particularly in the area of learning collaboratively in digital networks as part of the 21st skills involving student subjects from Australia, Finland, Singapore and the USA.

The discussion begins with a selection of related studies on language pedagogy and digitalized language interaction in both regional and global capacities. Accordingly, the section on methodology chronicles the implementation of the weblog as a learning practice and some background information on tertiary end users involved in literacy practice online. Acknowledging that there are ethical issues surrounding the use of internet material in academic reporting, sampling of data is presented anonymously as the basis to learner-centered language pedagogy in e-learning. Our intention is to facilitate an understanding through a combination of theoretical perspectives towards implementing asynchronous learning at the tertiary level not least such e-learning involves an intersection of the real and the virtual.

Literature Review

The literature review is limited to two areas, namely selected online studies on varsity learners as well as studies on behavioral changes among young adults using online platforms to acquire either a foreign, or a second language. These young adults are endowed with a first language proficiency that provides a L1 foundation to mediate and acquire another linguistic intelligence. Regardless of what their heritage language may

be, all the Malay learners have the proficiency of English equivalent to a good credit or better at the O-level of the Cambridge Examination Syndicate.

We begin with two studies of e-learning among undergraduates in the Malay world. These studies contain the initial advancement as well as challenges encountered by some Southeast Asian researchers incorporating digital technology in language learning. The second portion of the survey includes studies on the social psychology of Asian Americans coming to terms with English as the only medium of instruction by means of open-access digital platforms available in the internet. As a whole, the survey indicates that technology assisted language learning is a complicated enterprise beyond the description of a particular theoretical foundation.

An early study on learner's digital experience is based on an online writing course at a Malaysian varsity. The eleven undergraduate learners from the Faculty of Science of a Malaysian campus in the study have unanimously informed that their literacy learning experience in an online writing course is quite interactive contrary to the general concern that e-learning might promote learning in isolation. The researchers observe that questioning as a learning technique permeates throughout the learning domains offering a good reason for 'questioning' to be considered the leading technique to facilitate learning (Chan & Han, 2005). Based on the feedback ranging from a score of 1 to 5, two propensities, namely the capacity to be aware of the strategy used, and the ability to accommodate learning through cooperating with others are highlighted by the participants of the online writing course as two significant experiential improvements.

A second descriptive study involving the use of e-forum as part of a level one translation course at a second Malaysian campus, however, arrived at a somewhat different outcome. From the counting of postings online, the researchers inform that not all the students who had enrolled in the module subscribed to e-learning consistently. Despite that marks were rewarded to the learners for their participation in e-learning more than half had chosen to forsake their remaining e-learning activities after the initial attempt. The three topics of online discussion in the translation module involving a corpus, new words, phrases and expressions, as well as language errors showed declining responses of 50, 29 and 21 from 46 registered learners, respectively (see Norwati & Zaini, 2007, p. 84-85). The steady decrease in online postings on the learners' part suggests that extrinsic motivation alone is not quite sufficient to elicit responses online from the subjects. The dwindling responses is obvious with more than half of the total enrolment did not submit any responses to the third question posted online. Extrinsic motivation is not an independent factor in isolation. The cultural traits of the subjects play a significant role in determining the impact of a motivating element. In a globalist world, the culture of current young adults is dense with interactivity networked with contemporary digital devices. For many teenagers in the urban setting, *culture* is *digital*.

Contrasting the findings of Chan and Han (2005) with that of Norwati and Zaini (2007), we notice that merely creating questions in online environment may be inadequate to sustain full collaboration online. At this juncture, the concept of *producerly pleasures*, namely seeking and identification is a guiding principle for incorporating attractive

learning questions online. According to Meskill (2007), seeking and identification are the anatomy of pleasure experienced by the learners, who are engaged in screen activity, such as browsing the internet or performing online interactivity. *Producerly pleasures* in digital pedagogy foster better learning design consequently resulting in effective learning. In other words, it is critical for the learning stimulation built into e-learning to generate interest in sync with the learners' online experience.

In a third study conducted at NUS, a tertiary learner is observed to activate a wide-ranging learning repertoire, crosscutting online and offline activities to acquire Malay as a third language (Sew, 2009a). The top-down learning mediation began with the use of the weblog supported with electronic mails sent to the facilitator, which is followed by the bottom-up discussions on the fly as well as self-initiated dictionary checking on the learner's part. Various participatory roles involving digital, oral and print materials for improving Malay proficiency and procedural comprehension are initiated in the process of acquiring Malay as a foreign language. The shuttling of language learning practice to construct new knowledge between the real world classrooms and the virtual sites fleshes out the inadequacy of a single-world theory to account for the dynamics of e-learning. A combined perspective to explicate the learning mediation intersecting the actual and virtual is in order.

The studies reviewed, thus far, illustrate that e-learning practices are an overlap of the actual and virtual. Online interaction is the preoccupation of youngsters who make good, and not so good choices with digital media. Selected studies concerning online language practice of Asian Americans, for example, illustrate that both male and female teenagers gain an improved self-esteem from interacting with others online. Struggling in the American school system, teenage Almon, whose popular website hosted a Japanese pop singer, demonstrates better expressivity in English from communicating with online admirers (Lam, 2009). Almon's online preoccupation is a fine example of producerly pleasures at work. Popular culture is indeed an important ingredient to hold the attention of young learners. The definition of popular culture in this discussion includes the mass production of music or drama serials for extensive broadcast on television and internet (Chua, 2010). We cannot afford to ignore multimodal stimulation of popular culture as a digital format that is currently in sync with the interest of many young learners.

In a separate study, two teenage female Chinese immigrants developed a hybrid variety of English online, which they use as a marker for group identification in a chat room online. According to Lam (2004), the hybrid variety contained different degrees of code-switching (English to Cantonese) enabling fluency to develop along with an emerging new identity crosscutting the dominance of a monolithic English-speaking group and an idiosyncratic Cantonese-speaking group online. Lam (2004) explicates further that the collective identity has emboldened the behaviors of the female chat room users to reposition themselves as ESL learners in the American social context.

The initial observation is that digital social media seems to be a popular sanctuary for alienated teenagers to retreat from their awkward real world environs. The alienated users from the real word seem to be faring well in the virtual world because of the various

masking devices available online have allowed for a random projection of self-identity online (Chatzichristodoulou, 2009). Paralleling the findings in the online chat room, a similar hybrid variety of Malay-English code meshing is noticeable in the study of blog entries and comments recorded in by Azni Mohamed Zain and Koo (2009). On the other hand, a detailed survey on literacy development involving online interactivity in digital affinity spaces associated with the original development of modern scientific enquiry is examined in Gee and Hayes (2011).

In terms of pedagogy, Multiple Intelligences (MI) advocates differentiated teaching practices to exploit the varying modes of intelligence that are salient in learners (Gardner, 2006, Lazear, 1999, Sew, 2010b). Learners who are visual-spatially intelligent, for example, learn with preferences different from those who are kinesthetically inclined. Initially, e-learning is beyond the tenets of MI due to the asynchronous interaction between the various participants who engaged in digital interactivity not least the cognitive psychology framework of learning behaviors was initially developed from observing young children in an environment free from wired digital stimulations. To strengthen the foundation, the framework of Community of Inquiry (CoI) offering a theoretical underpinning for explaining the interplays of learning relations in blogging Malay literacy could be incorporated to gain a richer theoretical perspective because the learning framework of CoI operates with social constructivist concepts including cognitive, social and teaching presences.

The existing research thus far claims that collaboration among learners is confounded on social presence that may progress from group identification to trustworthy communication before attaining peer bonding online (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010). In turn, the social presence for educational purposes cannot be artificially separated from the purposeful nature of educational communication (see Garrison, 2007, p. 65). Cognitive presence is definable with the exploration, integration and application processes involved in solving learning problems online. Teaching presence refers to the design and organization, direct instruction and facilitating discourse towards a solution. We are now able to characterize the interfaces between learners and their interaction in e-learning by combining the conceptual structures. The survey, thus far, suggests that the boundary between online and on-site learning is blurred within an intertwining of real and virtual learning continuum. We are cognizant of the fact that e-learning requires a design that sustains the interest of most young learners, who seek and identify with recognizable common, e.g. popular culture and social practices available online.

Methodology

The e-learning of more than 100 tertiary Malay learners at NUS is used as the sample. In the course specification, the e-learning component is prescribed as a 20-mark portion for the level-one Malay module offered at CLS. The learners are affiliated with various faculties and schools including Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Business School, School of Computing, School of Design and Environment, Faculty of Engineering, and Faculty of Science. The materials of the module are made available to both students and

tutors via a log-in repository hosted by an integrated virtual learning website. Only the students enrolled in the module are provided with an access to the reference material from the website. *Power-point*, *Microsoft Word, MP3* and *JPEG* files are uploaded ahead of the designated contact time. These learning materials are classifiable as direct instruction of the teaching presence within the CoI framework (Swan, 2010).

Weblog is selected as the digital platform to conduct e-learning for three reasons. Firstly, weblog is a powerful *Web 2.0* tool available to the learners as an open access publishing. (In our case, the blogs are registered with *Wordpress.com*.) Secondly, weblog is a medium permeating with visually, auditory, rhythmically, kinesthetically intelligible learning contents. A variety of resources including static objects, animated digital pictures, and video clips are available readily for creative purposes. Thirdly, in terms of learning practice, blogging dovetails with the current practice of new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, Davies & Merchant, 2009). The topics for blogging Malay literacy range from traveling, birthday celebration, and merry occasions with friends or family to personal reflections on a particular event. In the learning instruction, the learners are requested to include two digital forms for the chosen topic. A digital form is spelled out as any non-linguistic digital format including digital photo, video clip, digitalized comic strip, symbols and icons both in the class blog. The assumption behind the application digital forms is that different semiotic modes are relevant to accommodate the modalities of a complex language learning behavior (Sew, 2009b). As a reminder, the coursework requirements including the e-learning component are revisited with the learners in the lectures periodically.

Completed blog entries by the previous cohorts of Beginner's Malay are displayed in the lecture as means to incite *producerly pleasures*. By appreciating familiar samples of blogging from the seniors, current learners are able to identify and relate learning task with their common experience. As mentioned, familiar samples of blog entries may include narratives about family members, friendships, fond memories of pets, personal collections of popular figurines, local tours, and favorite sports activities such as a soccer match or motorbike racing. In the next section, we examine how multimodal intelligent learning becomes the *modus operandi* of Malay literacy development among tertiary learners who straddle the real and virtual worlds in the language learning.

Findings

Prior to blogging proper, a lecture is delivered to ensure that the learners are procedurally prepared. It is made known formally to the language learners that their weblogs would be part of an open access system. This is necessary because young adult learners might be tempted to follow the digital styling of professional bloggers who, at times, are vocal and generous with profanity. The data cited in this discussion are hence digital records, i.e. the blog entries embedded with additional digital content, circulating in the public domain accessible to all users of *Web 2.0*. It is conceded that in making use of digital content even for academic reporting contains unresolved ethical matters (Anderson & Kanuka, 2009). As such, all the hypertext markup links of the weblogs have been

removed in cognizant of the need to protect the identities of end users, whose views on blogging Malay are mentioned below. In addition to this, direct quoting from the bloggers' postings is replaced with paraphrasing. The analysis of users' reflections on blogging Malay is carried out to arrive at a better understanding of learners' experience and techniques deployed by foreign language learners in acquiring Malay as a foreign language online via e-learning.

The sampling is not randomly selected as blogging Malay literacy is under the supervision of five tutors. A total of 16 blog entries (out of the entire 111 learner blogs) under the tutelage of the researcher are examined. Restricted sampling is the limitation of this project. The present number, though small, may be an indicator of the plausibility for the inclusion of weblog as an informed pedagogy of e-learning in technology assisted language learning. The learners' reflections from their experience of narrating in Malay with digital forms are considered as authentic descriptions from which information on e-learning behavior is gathered. The digital entries are personal records of tertiary learners expressing various qualitative learning experiences emerging from blogging Malay literacy.

Notably, a number of undergraduates learn Malay in a combination of techniques, and each weblog functions as a window of diverse learning opportunities to a particular learner. One learner discloses in his reflections that translation is a good learning method for creating Malay entries. Similar to the experience of another learner, this learner enjoys reading the blog posts and questions found in other Malay blogs. According to the learner in question, posting a question on the class blog is helpful to him for language learning. In yet another two separate reflections, one learner is appreciative of the fact that blogging becomes a means to express oneself. The other learner confides that blogging doubles as a revision tool. While one other learner opines that blogging is a refreshing and engaging means to learn another learner informs that blogging is a convenient way for him to interact with the language facilitator. The questions posted on the common class blog are attended by the language teacher within 4 hours as each submission generates an email prompting the facilitator. Mediating the language blogging with mobile learning, the facilitator uses an iPhone to push the email generated instantaneously from the weblog once a question is received.

Our study on blogging Malay literacy is concerned with the methods with which the learners acquire target linguistic intelligence. Listening to Malay words in the songs is one learning practice for a learner to remember ways with which the words are being expressed. Another two learners agree that listening to *Music Television Videos* (MTV) embedded in the blogs is instrumental for him to learn new Malay words. Listening to these Malay songs improves the Malay pronunciation of one learner. Similarly, singing along synchronously to the tune of Malay songs assists one learner to remember the Malay words. As a social media, MTVs are helpful to a learner in acquiring appropriate speech styles. Likewise, pop tunes are used as a means to teach Thai to students of a secondary school prior to their immersion program by a former student. The author's interpersonal communication with an alumna of the Thai program during the Q & A session of *CLS Alumni Talk Show*, 15 September 2011, NUS.

Along the same vein, viewing the MTV is a valuable means to acquire new words. This makes good sense as melodious words are soothing to the ears; hence the words in the target language become easier to comprehend for the learning blogger. One of the strength from using televised linguistic material is its ability to repeat exactly the same audio qualities. One learner informs that the digital formats included in the blog are enticing, especially watching the MTV as a means to learn Malay. In yet another reflection, a learner writes that his listening to the Malay songs is due to the pretty singer, whose voice is melodious.

The point on the attractiveness of a singer as a learning motivation is worth considering as it reminds us that although looks and smiles may be mundane semiotics these are some of the accompanying features relevant to holistic interpersonal language learning. In the perception of young adult learners, holistic learning involves teacher attractiveness. This is in line with the concept of viewing as pleasures the underpinning of digital media use. Learning sources including the teachers is a factor motivating language learning. We hasten to clarify that attractiveness as a quality to induce learning attention in this context refers to clarity of voice, comfortable audibility, interest level in topic, and the use of examples that are in sync with the interest of the learners. We may also consider the stance of the teacher as an index of motivation in maintaining a bond of teaching and learning. (It is a common knowledge that the counselors and school welfare masters are expected to speak with, but not speak to, their clients in sync).

Discussion

The use of weblog as an online literacy project creates a common digital practice among the Malay learners at tertiary level. Blogging as a means to foreign language acquisition engenders dynamic bottom-up digital interactivity anytime anywhere in accordance with the learner's pace of language acquisition. This form of e-learning complements a top-down linear transfer of the single-agent delivery, e.g., teacher-centric lessons at a preset location and time (Sew, 2010c). This form of language learning shifts the focus from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction in line with the constructivist tradition. The transition presupposes the teacher, who coordinates and facilitates the learning processes, shifting the role from a knowledge provider to a broker of knowledge (Davies & Merchant, 2009).

The epistemological transformation is possible with the organization of design transplanting learning from the real world classroom into the virtual space. Furthermore, the learner's blog entries are ready-made resources for fellow learners, who are always on a lookout for new engaging information to enhance one's proficiency of Malay. Many learners find that the materials posted by their peers to be enticing. Accordingly, seeking and identifying materials from the blogs generate learning acts, including memorizing, mimicking, and matching the exemplary digital Malay expressions broadcasted online. All the interactivity online becomes the pleasure of practice that accompanies the use of online materials in a foreign language education. In other words, the motivation for engaging language learning with popular Malay culture in digital format may be

considered as pleasurable online activities of seeking and identification. Otherwise, shifting learning from the real world to cyberspace would make little learning sense for the undergraduates as implied by the lack of full response in the subsequent e-learning component of a translation module reported in the survey of related studies.

Related to this discussion is the investigation on factors behind the learning of Korean as foreign language at CLS, NUS. Interest in Korean pop culture and media generated by the Korean Wave ranks as the top factor contributing to students' decision to learn Korean (Chan & Chi, 2010). Similar conclusion is made in a recent study on five preschoolers' discourses indicating that most of them have a good grasp of linguistic resources that are related to popular culture. Along the similar vein, the overall findings from the Tamil-English bilinguals aged between 5-6 years old compel the researchers to conclude that popular culture could bridge the learning gap in engaging textual creation towards literacy attainment (Shegar & Weninger, 2010).

From a different angle of learning interaction, the screen activity of sourcing, selecting, identifying, reading and learning from the blog posts beyond the designated contact hours characterizes a unique facilitating discourse of teaching presence. The other learning strategies include inter-linguistic transfer (translation), active and passive decoding (reading), and active expert consultation (posting queries). At the first inspection, social presence seems delimited due to the personal nature of posting individual voices online. Ironically, however, the asynchronous interaction could actually be more personal than the classroom discussion. Swan (2010) observes that e-learning actually makes time for all participating learners to make their contribution. It is simply difficult for anybody in a group to dominate the flow of learning made up of transcription, which functions as visible material of consultation prior to posting one's opinion online. In terms of social presence, the design in each weblog compensates the distant mode of expression with a facility for commenting made possible for each posting online.

An implicit social presence emerges with the participation inbuilt for an interactive capacity. *YouTube* as the common digital treasure trove from which many teenagers derive entertainment as well as disseminate their expressions is particularly relevant to language education online (Sew, 2011a). The improved interface in *Wordpress.com* enables the embedding of MTV as a social media for supplying melodies and visuals seamlessly in the foreign language blogs. Furthermore, a solely print-based material, e.g. a book, is unimodal in nature, whereas melodies and visuals may generate learning synaesthesia by stimulating audio, visual, and spatial intelligences when learners, for example, source, select, create and combine various formats for making digital stories (Nelson, 2006). Comprehension may intensify by interlinking several semiotic stimulations to construct a rich coherent knowledge representation. Learning synaesthesia emerges as new forms of meaning arising from shifting ideas across kinds of semiotic modes (Kress, 2003).

Interestingly, the weblog embedded with social media exemplifies an educational social technology (EST). EST refers to educational products of Type S technologies that make use of information processing, storage and retrieval capacity of Type 1 technologies, i.e. technologies with interactive communication capacity (Anderson, 2008). The audio and

visual contents of the embedded MTV become significant for reinforcing self-directed learning befitting the framework of CoI. Notwithstanding, learners bring along their real world human traits into cyberspace. As such, the varying learning preferences reported in e-learning render a one-size-fits-all language pedagogy suspect (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). In the quest for diversification in language education, weblog as a tool in the pedagogy of Malay language is capable of maintaining a teaching presence to cater for different learning intelligences. Listening, watching and singing along while journaling Malay online highlights the relevance of a learner-centered e-learning.

To attain a deeper analysis on blogging Malay literacy, coalescing MI and CoI provides a more perceptive foundation to account for progressive learning development by crisscrossing the separated learning zones of actual and virtual. The different learning styles of Malay learners are met with an enriched social-cognitive presence, namely the inclusion of EST in weblog for an enhanced experience of e-learning from exploiting cross modal representations of information. Managing Malay postings online amplifies the cognitive behavior of each learner as a varying entity. Our discussion suggests further that a singular approach for language learning is inadequate to accommodate a collective of diverse learning behavior currently located in between the real and virtual worlds of the language learners (and teachers).

Skeptics may caution that the significance of e-learning tends to be exaggerated beyond its small weighting (Archer, 2010). Using the small marks component as a reason against e-learning is to miss the point that the current young adult learners are a techno-savvy breed excitable to learn a language digitally. Moreover, some tertiary learners might not be too concerned with the marks as indicated in the findings reported in the literature review. This discussion offers an the insider's views on the participating tertiary learners' firsthand experience of learning Malay online by affirming that the chemistry for learning is achievable with the application of weblog that maintains a diverse range of pleasurable learning online. At the very least, the application of a weblog in a language module alters the stereotypical perception of language pedagogy as mainly an exclusively *native speaker-guided practice occurring in real time* (Sew, 2011b) Similar to the finding reported in the literature review blogging Malay literacy indicates that e-learning can never be learning in isolation.

Concluding Remarks

This discussion argues that weblog is a digital platform conducive for language acquisition providing a complementary channel to enhance procedural learning. E-learning practitioners intending to promote asynchronous learning may consider the application of weblog to motivate the acquisition of a foreign language not least language learning is as much a cognitive-interactive process in the virtual world as it is a print-based decoding practice in the real world. Tapping on the cognitive, social and design intricacies from blogging literacy enhance learning performance in a result-oriented globalist education. Tertiary learners using weblog to construct and create Malay learning repeatedly cater the practical use of digital learning forms to varying cohorts accordingly. As a learning medium, weblog is capable of offering digitalised cognitive support with

pronounced teaching presence with educational social technologies, such as *YouTube,* incorporated to augment synchronous Malay stimulations, enhancing a variety of learning propensities in an asynchronous learning environment. Blogging is a method of e-learning capable of rendering versatile language input to complement face-to-face interaction.

One obvious barrier noticeable from the digital interactivity among bloggers, however, is the concern that commenting on the other learner's blog might generate conflict. Safeguarding the blogger's *face* is still a much treasured cultural intelligence among Southeast Asians, especially if the peer bloggers are not closely associated. The conventional method of checking and commenting on the work of learners on the language facilitator's part remains instrumental to balance digital practice of blogging literacy in the collective experience of acquisition Malay as foreign language at tertiary level. Furthermore, the ability to shift e-learning practices according to the preferred semiotic modes of learning is consonant with the contemporary digital practices of new literacies. Weblog engenders collaboration for a collective of diverse learning practices to reinforce Malay proficiency acquired during contact times, including recognizing formulaic expression, grammatical construction and accurate selection of bound morphemes, and visually enhanced guided comprehension in the target language. In accordance to the epistemological views of the social constructivist tradition, blogging literacy provides a teaching presence including engagement and interaction with the facilitator, reading the peer digital entries, as well as listening and watching the content of educational social technology.

Acknowledgement

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