

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING HOSPITALITY RELATED ENGLISH VOCABULARY USING THE LINE SOCIAL NETWORKING APPLICATION ON MOBILE DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Thai graduates from hospitality and tourism programs need English vocabulary related to their industry in order to communicate with foreign visitors. Acquiring enough vocabulary to confidently converse in a foreign language though requires regular practice. Social networking applications are used by instructors to assist students in learning vocabulary for specific purposes. This study aimed to examine students' perceptions of using the Line social networking application for learning hospitality related English vocabulary as part of a classroom lesson. The mean averages gained from the 5 point Likert scale questionnaire showed significant differences from the neutral value of 3.40. Perception of learning was found to be 4.36, satisfaction was 4.31, ease of use was 4.51 and media quality was 4.50. This study found that students were satisfied when learning through the Line application in a university level course.

Keywords: English, vocabulary, hospitality, social networking application

1. INTRODUCTION

In Thailand many people are at risk of unemployment in the coming years with millions of workers possibly being replaced through automation and artificial intelligence. Stronger global competition from neighbouring countries will also add to this problem. Unfortunately, these job losses could affect nearly half of Thailand's workforce. Although the outlook appears alarming, opportunities will arise in other sectors. To meet the higher level of proficiency required a more flexible and creative approach to teaching and learning is required. Advances in technology have changed and are changing how people study and learn. The use of technology can assist in the training of Thai students in both classroom and online environments. Instructors and students of all ages and abilities must be able to adjust to teaching and learning through

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technology. Approaches to teaching must be developed that recognise the limitations of available resources such as time, money and skill levels in relation to technology. Social networking applications can be used by instructors as free, easily accessed and widely used tools to aid students in learning and reviewing course content. Content specific to a particular profession can be taught, practiced and regularly reviewed through a mobile device and a social networking application. For example, English vocabulary that is specific to the hospitality and tourism industry can be practiced on a regular basis using a social networking application on a student's own mobile device. Studies have shown that the use of technology can be motivating and more enjoyable than traditional classroom-based instruction (Choosri, 2014; Elgort, 2018; Thalheimer, 2006). This study aims to examine students' perceptions of using the Line social networking application as an educational tool in order to learn and regularly practice and review hospitality related English vocabulary.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

Learners of English should possess enough vocabulary to be able to engage in a conversation or be able to be understood by another English speaker. This is important when a learner relies on speaking English for business, work and career. Acquiring enough vocabulary to converse in English requires regular practice and time investment and, the acquisition of language needs an understanding of how to learn (Elgort, 2018).

Thai graduates face competition in the hospitality and tourism business from neighbouring countries such as Vietnam and Malaysia. To reflect the digital age, universities and colleges that offer hospitality and tourism programs need to adapt the way English instruction is delivered. From an early age, Thai students are required to take English classes but quite often the results are insufficient for the globalized workplace. Content is often learnt by rote memorization in a teacher centred environment. This leads to demotivation and low satisfaction and achievement levels when students study the subject. Although rote learning has been shown to be an inadequate instructional technique in many instances, regular exposure and practice of a language is important (Choosri, 2014; Khamkhien, 2010; Noom-Ura, 2013).

A single exposure to learning material during a classroom lesson is often inadequate for long-term memory retention. What is learnt in the classroom is often forgotten the following week due to a lack of practice or review. If content is not understood or remembered during the first exposure then students have a tendency to struggle in future lessons. At the end of the course, the content must either be re-learned through a process of cramming or through a process of rote memorisation in order to pass an exam. The content may then be remembered for a short period afterwards but not retained over a longer length of time. These approaches are far from suitable when English skills are needed in a future career. Studies have found that spaced learning over a period of time can help students to learn more quickly and remember information for longer periods of time. Long periods of review and revision during a lesson though can prove tedious for students. A more fun and interesting approach is therefore needed (Elgort, 2018; Suwantarathip & Orawiwatnakul, 2015; Thalheimer, 2006).

Instructors are influenced by the teaching methods that they were exposed to as students. It is easy for instructors to become comfortable with familiar teaching methods and develop a fear of change though the method is not delivering the higher levels of English proficiency required. Research has shown that a fear of change results in negative consequences for the instructor and students. Change though is not always good and using technology with little thought or planning can often result in wasted time and a lack of overall improvement. It is important that technology is correctly integrated within a course. This requires the collection of data and information, so the instructor is well informed when integrating technology. Results from collected data can help an instructor feel confident in their approach to teaching through technology (Baba, 2014; Ellis & Loveless, 2013). Educators are becoming more interested in the potential of social networking applications on mobile devices for language learning. Currently though, there is a lack of data on how social networking applications and mobile devices can be used for teaching and learning English, the research that is available suggests that these tools have the potential to aid language learning. Instructor must consider the usability of the tool before using it for teaching purposes. Social networking applications should be familiar, easy to use and intuitive (Liu et al., 2015).

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What are students' level of satisfaction when studying English vocabulary using Line on a mobile device?
- 2) What are students' perceptions of learning when studying English vocabulary using Line on a mobile device?
- 3) What are students' perceptions of ease of use when studying English vocabulary using Line on a mobile device?
- 4) What are students' perceptions of media quality when studying English vocabulary using Line on a mobile device?

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, mobile devices and applications in education have attracted the attention of educators and researchers. Various studies have shown the use of mobile devices and related applications to be an engaging, motivating, informal and authentic method to increase students' satisfaction levels. Satisfaction with a program can in turn help increase knowledge and attainment levels among students (Martin & Ertzberger, 2013).

Currently, there is a shift from desktop and laptop computers to mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. The majority of students now own a mobile device that can be connected to the World Wide Web. Students are therefore well equipped for learning and studying through mobile devices. Research has shown that the use of smartphones and appropriate mobile applications can produce positive effects and results when learning English as a foreign language. The educational use of mobile devices and applications is beneficial in the development of learners' vocabulary levels (Klímová, 2017). As students have their own mobile devices it is no surprise that educational institutions across

the globe are taking advantage of this situation. Many educational institutions are now adopting a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy. The (BYOD) policy has advantages for educational institutions. Students owning mobile devices can connect to the World Wide Web and use these devices for studying, so no expensive hardware or software is required to be purchased by the school, college or university. The use of smartphones and related applications for learning languages is an area that requires further research to ensure students are satisfied with learning through this medium. Instructors need to ensure that applications are easy to use and the media quality is acceptable (Afreen, 2014).

Although research has shown the use of mobile devices has educational benefits, instructors in colleges and universities have been slow to adopt and use them. Instructional methodologies have generally not kept pace with the needs of the students and the modern-day world. When used as educational tools and managed and integrated correctly into a program, mobile devices have significantly improved students' English language skills. Hwang, Chen, Shadiev, Huang, and Chen's (2014) study revealed that English as a foreign language (EFL) students' English language abilities showed a significant level of improvement when mobile devices were used for learning and studying. Students in the experimental group that learnt through mobile devices showed higher learning achievement levels than those in the traditional classroom control group. Students in the experimental group commented that the activities were fun and therefore they were more inclined to maintain interest and motivation in their learning (Hwang et al., 2014).

Mobile devices and applications have been shown to be popular for learning and studying English. A study of higher education students in China conducted by Li, Li, and Li (2016) found that the use of mobile devices for learning was welcomed by most learners. Students mentioned that they enjoyed using new and multiple applications for learning purposes. They were willing to experiment and try new applications if they believed they would be of some educational use. The researchers noted though that students required guidance in their choice of application. The use of applications by students was sometimes disorganized with no learning goal in mind. Li, Li and Li (2016) recommend that instructors should guide students in their choice of mobile applications.

The practise of studying English through social networking applications is a relatively recent idea. However, the data from previous studies is encouraging. A study by Fattah (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of using the WhatsApp social networking application as an instructional tool for improving English language skills. The participants were thirty students from the department of English language of a Saudi Arabian university, split into 2 groups. The experimental group used WhatsApp while the control group was taught using a textbook. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group (Fattah, 2015). A study in Turkey examined the use of smartphones and social networking applications for learning English. Again, the results of the study revealed that the participants in the experimental group performed significantly better than the traditionally taught control group (Basal, Yilmaz, Tanriverdi, & Sari, 2016). Hayati, Jalilifar and Mashhadi (2013) examined the use of an instant messaging application for learning English idioms. The study used a spaced repetition system to push English idioms to the learners. This approach encouraged regular practice and aided acquisition and

retention of the content. The results showed students that received the lessons through the messaging service were more enthusiastic learners and gained higher levels of achievement (Hayati, Jalilifar, & Mashhadi, 2013). The results of these studies demonstrate the effectiveness of using a mobile device and social networking application to learn English.

Vocabulary is a crucial part of being able to communicate in any language. Specialist vocabulary is an important aspect of the hospitality and tourism industry. Mobile devices can provide a great number of advantages in the learning process and various applications are now successfully being used to learn English language vocabulary. Suwantarathip and Orawiwatnakul (2015) studied the effects of in-class paper-based vocabulary exercises with those to students learning outside the classroom. The six week study showed that the participants in the experimental group, learning outside of the classroom, outperformed those in the control group. The technology lead approach was deemed more effective than the traditional classroom approach to learning (Suwantarathip & Orawiwatnakul, 2015).

Cavus and Ibrahim (2009) examined the potential of learning technical English language vocabulary through push messages. The study focused on the achievement levels of 45, 1st year undergraduate students. Before the study, a pre-test was administered to the students to assess their knowledge. The tests required the students to provide a meaning for each word. Over a nine day period, sixteen different short messages were sent to the participants. During the process the same messages were repeated at multiple intervals. After nine days a post-test was given to the study participants. The students' level of knowledge showed a significant increase between the pre and post-tests. The process of spaced repetition was seen as an important factor in the increase in achievement levels (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009).

Lawrence (2014) used the WhatsApp social networking application for teaching Afrikaans vocabulary to undergraduate university students. During the 7 week-long study, the researcher used visual imagery and text to teach vocabulary. The results of the study found that the WhatsApp application was an effective tool for practicing a foreign language and was well received by students (Lawrence, 2014).

Lai (2014) examined the use of the WhatsApp messaging application over a three month period for learning a vocabulary list of 200 high-frequency English verbs. The study was conducted with an experimental and control group. The net gain in vocabulary scores between the pre-test and post-test was used to measure the level of vocabulary acquired over the period of the study. The results of the study were shown to be positive and data from the experimental group showed a significant correlation between application usage frequency and vocabulary acquisition (Lai, 2014).

Basoglu and Akdemir (2010) used smartphone applications and a visual flash card format to improve students' English vocabulary acquisition levels. The participants were sixty students studying in an English program at a Turkish university. Data were collected through multiple choice pre and post-tests. The differences from the pre-test to post-tests scores of the experimental group were found to be statistically higher than the control group. The results showed that using smartphone applications for learning vocabulary was more effective (Basoglu & Akdemir, 2010).

Students have been shown to require interaction and an interpersonal learning environment when studying using technology. Many vocabulary learning applications do not meet these requirements. Data collected in China and Hong Kong regarding perceptions and experiences of using applications for learning vocabulary items showed that students value the ability to interact with each other. The findings suggest that interpersonal learning is essential to learner engagement and learning effectiveness. (Zou, Wang, Xie, & Kohnke, 2018).

Instructors should teach in an effective, efficient, and enjoyable manner. Research has shown that the use of technology for instruction has benefits. The use of technology can remove the usual restrictions of class-based learning and provide the instructor with opportunities to teach in a more novel manner. In addition, technology can help motivate students and encourage learning through increased participation (Andersson, Reimers, & Maxwell, 2013; Siegle, 2014). To remain relevant in the 21st century, instructors need to constantly evaluate, develop and adapt their approach to teaching. This should include the use of the most up-to-date and popular technology available. Technology that is familiar, freely available and can be accessed anytime and anywhere there is an Internet connection (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012; Prensky, 2001).

This study aims to determine students' perceptions of learning, satisfaction levels and gain data on media quality and ease of use when using social networking applications for learning English vocabulary as part of a taught lesson. The results gained from this research project provides useful data, information and guidance for researchers and instructors of the English language. The findings can be used as a source of reference when conducting further research on the use of social networking applications and mobile devices for learning foreign languages.

5. METHOD

A sample of 44, 2nd year hospitality students participated in this study. The students were chosen as they possessed the characteristics necessary for this study, requiring specialist English vocabulary in their future careers. Also, the sample group was taught by one of the researchers and was thus conveniently available for this study. During the semester, hospitality related English vocabulary was practiced on a weekly basis through the Line social networking application. The tasks involved answering a question based on a visual clue. The media was carefully chosen for viewing on smartphones. The data were collected through a 5 point Likert scale questionnaire that measured levels of agreement. The questions were in both Thai and English to help ensure there was no language barrier for the students. The questionnaire was based on previous studies and checked for reliability through Cronbach's alpha and checked for validity by 4 suitably qualified lecturers working at a Thai public university in Bangkok. The validity of the items was computed as 1.00. Polit and Beck (2006) state that a rating of 1.00 is acceptable when there are fewer than 5 reviewers. The questionnaire was checked for reliability and all Alphas were found to be above .70 which is seen as reliable for final data collection purposes (DeVellis, 2003) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Results for the questionnaire Cronbach's Alpha reliability test.

Variable	Alpha
1) Perception of Learning	.72
2) Satisfaction	.83
3) Ease of Use	.85
4) Media Quality	.76

The questionnaire data were analysed using a one sample t-test that measured a mean value for each variable against a perceived upper neutral value of 3.40. The neutral value was taken from the following interpretation: 1.00-1.80=Strongly Disagree, 1.81-2.60=Disagree, 2.61-3.40=Neutral, 3.41-4.20=Agree and 4.21-5.00=Strongly Agree. This scale has been used to analyse data in social science studies (Ozyurt, 2015). In this study, a higher mean value is a positive endorsement of the media and the use of the Line application for learning English vocabulary.

6. RESULTS

The results of the study found the use of social networking technology for learning hospitality English vocabulary to be well received by most of the students (see Table 2). The mean averages for perception of learning, satisfaction, ease of use and media quality were all above 4.21. According to the scale used in this study, a mean average over 4.21 suggests a very high level of agreement and a positive endorsement of the Line social networking application as a learning tool.

Table 2. The results of the questionnaire data analysis showing the mean and standard deviation.

Variable	Mean	SD
1) Perception of Learning	4.36	.34
2) Satisfaction	4.31	.38
3) Ease of Use	4.51	.40
4) Media Quality	4.50	.41

The data was then analysed to establish whether the mean averages were significantly above a neutral value of 3.40. T-tests showed the data to be statistically significant for perception of learning ($t=18.62$, $df=43$, $p=.00$), satisfaction ($t=15.74$, $df=43$, $p=.00$), perceived ease of use ($t=18.53$, $df=43$, $p=.00$), and media quality ($t=17.78$, $df=43$, $p=.00$). The results from the data show very high levels for all 4 variables and thus the study produced a positive outcome (see Table 3).

Table 3. The results of the t-test showing mean difference and significance from the questionnaire data.

Variable	M.D	Sig.
1) Perception of Learning	.96	.00
2) Satisfaction	.91	.00
3) Ease of Use	1.11	.00
4) Media Quality	1.10	.00

7. DISCUSSION

The importance of the English language for Thai hospitality graduates cannot be underestimated. Many of today's students connect through mobile devices and social networking applications such as Line. Previous research has shown that the use of social networking applications in an educational context can be beneficial for learning (Lai, 2014; McCarty, Sato, & Obari, 2016). The participants in this study reported strong agreement ($\bar{x}=4.36$) in regard to perception of learning. Rott (1999) suggests that six encounters with a word may be enough for recall. In this study, continual review over the length of the course strengthened students' full recall of the taught vocabulary. Previous research has shown that spaced review and practice of vocabulary aids longer term memory retention when compared to mass practice. The ability to recognise words can explain the high values related to perception of learning. Researcher observations revealed strong recall of the taught vocabulary. Regular, weekly practice of vocabulary items aids longer term retention when compared to mass practice before an examination or test. The results gained from this study are similar to those in comparable studies on vocabulary acquisition (Bloom & Shuell, 1981; Rott, 1999).

This research found the Line application to be engaging and effective for learning the English language. Students have positive attitudes and participate more actively when learning English through the Line application, in a traditional Thai classroom, students are often too shy to actively participate. The Line application allows students to participate during an activity without the embarrassment of making an error in front of the class. Furthermore, the familiarity of social networking applications can explain the results for ease of use. A learning tool that is easy to use is more likely be adopted by the students. Media was chosen for small screen devices and explains the high values for media quality. The high values for perception of learning, ease of use and media quality would also help to explain students' high satisfaction levels (Dehghan, Rezvani, & Fazeli, 2017; Khamkhien, 2010; Liao & Lin, 2016; McCarty, Sato & Obari, 2016; Noom-Ura, 2013).

8. CONCLUSION

Overall, the students were satisfied with the experience and believed it helped them to learn. In the future, technology will become ever more common within education. Instructors should therefore consider integrating technology and social networking applications into their courses. Policymakers and administrators should ensure that instructors have adequate support and the skills to use and integrate technology into their teaching practices. The findings from this study will be useful for instructors that want to use social networking applications in language learning classes. Further research is required with a larger sample size that employs control and experimental groups. Pre and post-tests could then be used to determine the effectiveness of the Line application as a tool for learning vocabulary. The use of the Line application provides a free and relatively straightforward method for improving teaching and learning in a foreign language based subject. The methods and ideas outlined in this study can be adapted and used as necessary in future courses and programs.

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