

# Using Internet Applications for English Learning of RUTS Students

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## ABSTRACT

*Applications on the Internet can be used for entertainment, business, study, etc. In terms of education, learners use more Internet applications, especially in the period of a deadly disease called Covid-19 changing face-to-face learning to be online-learning. This study aimed to investigate RUTS students' using Internet applications for English learning. The entire population was 175 students studying English for Work. The samples were 81 students which are from systematic sampling. The online-questionnaire was used to find out their using applications for English learning. Moreover, 5 out of the 81 samples, from purposive sampling, were interview. The results indicated that 65.4% of the samples was male, 63.0% of them was from Engineering, and 55.64% of them were in the 4th year of study. The top-five applications they used for English learning were YouTube (87.7%), Netflix (60.5%), English Listening ESL (14.8%), Learn English Podcasts (9.9%), and BBC Learning English (6.2%). The reasons for using those applications were that they were easy and convenient to use, suitable for all ages and enjoyable. Moreover, they contained various topics and levels, both visual and audio media, and they were free of charge. 35.4% of the samples used the Internet applications not over than 3 times/month, and 34.2% of them used those 1-2 times/week. Only 19.0% and 11.4% of the samples used the Internet applications 3-4 times/week and everyday respectively. Most of them believed on the applications effectiveness in English learning improvement. However, 6.2% of them did not think that the applications can be helpful. Some of them could not understand the lessons themselves and preferred to study from their teachers. These findings imply some teaching methodology which can be applied in English classes in order to support learners' successful learning.*

**Keywords:** Using applications, English learning, RUTS students

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this 21st century, the Internet has a great impact in changing our world. People are more familiar with applications on the Internet. Volpe (2021) showed that in January 2021, there were 4.66 billion active Internet users worldwide - 59.5 percent of the global population. Of this total, 92.6 percent (4.32 billion) accessed the Internet via mobile devices. It can be said that we are in the age of rapid technological and pedagogical development. Various Internet applications and media have been produced for entertainment, business, study, etc. In terms of pedagogy, the use of the Internet has become a vital part of students' lives and the Internet is considered as an effective learning tool that has changed the face of education (Yunus, Lupis, and Lin, 2009; Fuad, 2012 as cited in Chumpoonart, 2017). Furthermore, with the present situation of the disease Virus or Covid-19 epidemic, educational institutions had to adjust their online teaching. Learners can spend more time staying at home and that leads them to use the Internet more in their study.

The subject of English for Work is a subject which is being taught in Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Thailand (RUTS hereafter). The subject aims to provide learners a chance to be exposed to and equipped with English language used in working and with the attempt to improve their English skills, learners should learn more from any internet application they prefer. According to Chumponart (2017), there were some interesting results in her study--Thai University Students' Attitudes toward the Use of the Internet in Learning English. The students mentioned that 1) the Internet fits their learning styles and fits well with their learning goals; 2) the Internet has the potential to enhance their English language learning; 3) EFL students and teachers should be trained to use the Internet for English language learning. Therefore, at the beginning of the 1st semester, academic year 2021, the learners of English for Work subject were recommended to the advantages of Internet-based applications. Some videos from YouTube were introduced to the class for students' motivation, autonomous learning, and Internet-based applications recommendation. The students were expected to have experience in using Internet-based applications. They were also expected to have experience in using other applications for English Learning development. The study aimed to investigate the Internet-based applications students used for English learning. Consequently, teachers can integrate the students' using applications to their teaching methodology to make students' learning more successful.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Autonomous Learning and Motivation**

At a higher education level, learners need to have the ability to manage learning by themselves which is a part of autonomous learning. Scharle and Szabo (2000) as cited in Suwanpattama (2016) defined autonomy as the freedom and ability to manage one's own affairs, which entails the right to make a decision as well. Autonomous learning is a particular way of learning which is applied by an individual due to his ability to find out his own learning needs, set his own learning goals, set the most appropriate way for his own learning, and how to monitor and evaluate his own learning progress (Zulaihah and Harida, 2017).

Learners who can manage learning on their own are likely to be more satisfied and happier as they can choose what they like and at their own pace. However, Mccombs and Whisler (1989) stated that if learners are to apply processes necessary for autonomous learning, they must generate positive affect and motivation toward the learning task and toward applying the mental effort required. In turn, for positive affect and motivation to be generated, students must believe that their effort will lead to learning success and will contribute to meaningful personal goals.

Motivation which has a great impact on learning has been discussed widely especially in second language acquisition (SLA). However, Honarзад and Rassaei (2019) revealed that most of the motivation studies in the field have been carried out within the traditional educational context, that is, without the integration of technology. Only a few empirical studies have systematically explored the value of motivation in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) context (e.g., Ushida, 2005 and Warschauer, 1996). Song and Bonk (2016), suggested that informal learners take three impactful motivational and self-directed informal learning factors into consideration: (1) freedom and choice, (2) control, and (3) interest and engagement.

### **2.2 Use of the Internet in English Language Learning**

In the 21st century, English and technology plays a huge role in preparation for learning skills. Prayoonwong (2019) mentioned that at present, various technologies such as "Information and Communication Technology (ICT)", "Digital Media" and "Software" play a significant role in education. Information technology plays an important role in teaching and learning enabling teaching and learning to achieve educational goals effectively.

Ulla, Perales, and Tarrayo (2020) cited that using technology in the EFL classroom, especially mobile and Internet-based applications, may provide EFL students the opportunity to be exposed to different authentic activities where the target language is used. It can offer them opportunities in learning English at their own pace and in their own time. It can also provide them a safe space where they can practice using the language with classmates and friends. Learning by using technology integration in ELT classrooms has now become a technology integration in ELT classrooms. It has now become a new, upward trend in language education. Moreover, many researchers unanimously agreed that technology helps teachers improve their teaching methods and learners increase their knowledge (Frigaard, 2002; Schofield & Davidson, 2003; Timucin, 2006 as cited in Gilakjani 2017).

Zhang (2013 as cited in Chumponart 2017) investigated Internet use in EFL learning and teaching in universities in Northwest China. The results showed that teachers and students had a positive attitude toward the Internet in English teaching. Both teachers and students knew much about the use of blogs and email in information exchange. Zhang suggested that both teachers and students should be familiar with the abundant resources on the Internet and share them with each other.

Miangah and Nezarat (2012) pointed various use of Internet in English language learning as follows: 1) mobile applications provide a better access and integration into the educational process; 2) this underpins the use of comparatively inexpensive innovative technologies; 3) such technologies provide possibilities to learn the language by choosing their own learning rhythm, regardless of others' learning speed or preferences; 4) M-learning helps students acquire the basics of the language; 5) this kind of learning is capable of satisfying particular learning preferences through providing resources and materials beyond the curriculum, for instance, podcasts, video and audio materials, etc.; 6) some applications provide students with a brilliant opportunity of sharing instant feedback on the learning process; 7) mobile applications may also be a very convenient way of learning for students with disabilities or special needs; 8) additionally, mobile learning provides an advantage of possibility to adapt the educational process to learning needs, which are changing every day, influenced by new trends in mass media.

### **2.3 Internet Applications**

A web application is a web application written for the use of web pages that can be accessed with a web browsing program over a computer network. Internet web applications are popular because of their ability to maintain and update information without having to distribute or install software on a computer (Phimonwan, 2019). A study (Zhou, Fong, & Tan, 2014) investigated 2,400 respondents ages 14-60 in China found that the most common activity on the internet was "watching online videos", followed by accessing movies or songs via the internet, playing online games, communication via chat and IM services, email, gathering information, searching information via search engine, and business.

However, in terms of tools used for promoting learning English, there are many applications on the Internet such as English Listening ESL, Podcasts, TED, YouTube, Netflix, etc. Green-Eneix (2019) stated that due to growing access to audio-visual material through websites such as YouTube and Netflix, audiovisual material has received notable interest recently within the field of second language acquisition (SLA).

There were many studies investigating the effectiveness of Internet audio-visual media in language learning. Prayoonwong (2019) defined YouTube as a website that can develop learners' English skills especially listening and speaking skills. It offers free video sharing between users where members can view or upload videos and share them with others, but non-members cannot. Videos from YouTube channels are used in the EFL classroom to fulfill the educational needs of the younger generation. Although resources from textbooks 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 (Sakkir, Dollah, and Ahmad, 2020).

Boonbandol and Soontornwipat (2017) studied using English videos from YouTube to improve English speaking skills of the students in the Singburi Vocational College in Singburi Province, Thailand. The results showed that English videos from YouTube could improve their English-speaking skills. Almurashi (2016) investigated the effective use of Youtube videos for teaching English language in classrooms as supplementary Material at Taibah University in Alula, Saudi Arabia. It was found that the videos helped the students to understand English lessons and developed the students' English skills ability effectively. English videos from YouTube could be potential teaching materials for teachers. They helped learners to gain knowledge and understand the lesson well and effectively rather than teaching by using only books or textbooks. Furthermore, the students also had the attitude that watching English videos from YouTube in the classroom could help them to have fun in learning and have a fun atmosphere to study.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 The Population**

The population of this study were the 175 students who were studying the subject of English for Work in the first semester of the academic year 2021 of Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya in Songkhla area. They were from four different groups and were from all five faculties which were Architecture, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, and Liberal Arts.

The samples were the students who were the odd numbers according to their numbers on the students' name list in each group of the English for Work subject. Some students ignored responding to the online questionnaire. Therefore, there were only 81 samples for the questionnaire. Only 5 out of 81 students were selected later from purposive sampling for an interview for more information.

#### **3.2 Research Instrument**

The instruments in this study were an online questionnaire on Google Form and an online interview. The questionnaire was designed and then was assessed for the reliability from three experts to investigate the students' using applications for English learning. It was composed of two parts. Part one is about their general information. It required the students to put a tick (√) to choose out their gender, faculty, and year of study. Part two is about their use of applications. It required the students to put a tick (√) to mark their using application in three topics. They were 1) applications used for English skills improvement and reasons, 2) frequency of using applications, and 3) belief in the effectiveness of the applications. The applications selected to be choices in the questionnaire were from the researcher's observation and some discussion with the students in her English class. Nevertheless, there was an open-ended space for other Internet applications, which the students used and they might not be mentioned in the questionnaire. The students could add them in the questionnaire. For the interview, 5 students were interviewed for more information in order to clarify their belief on using the applications. The interview question was "Why didn't you believe in the application's effectiveness in improving English learning improvement?"

#### **3.3 Data Collection**

The data in this study were collected by online questionnaire, Google Form and by interview. For the online questionnaire, the questionnaire was distributed to the students of English for Work subject via their LINE group which had been created for class communication. It was done at the

end of the class, after the middle of the semester. Then, the data were collected automatically. For the online interview, it was done to find out the students' further opinions on using the applications. It was done individually by appointment, nearly the end of the semester.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

For the questionnaire, in Part one, only one answer for each item was required, but in Part two, more than one answer for each item could be accepted. Thus, each response was counted for frequency, and then was calculated into percentage. For the interview, the response of each sample was briefly descriptive.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The findings of this study were presented in two sections: Questionnaire and Interview.

### 4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was consisted of two parts: General Information and Using Applications

#### 4.1.1 General Information

##### 4.1.1.1 Genders

**Table 1** Gender

| Genders | %    |
|---------|------|
| Male    | 65.4 |
| Female  | 34.6 |

The percentage of the research subjects at 65.4 % was male. It was higher than the female subjects which was at 34.6%.

##### 4.1.1.2 Faculties

**Table 2** Faculties

| Faculties               | %    |
|-------------------------|------|
| Architecture            | 2.4  |
| Business Administration | 16.0 |
| Education               | 17.3 |
| Engineering             | 63.0 |
| Liberal Arts            | 1.2  |

Most subjects were from Faculty of Engineering. It was 63.0% which was the highest one while that of Liberal Arts was the lowest, 1.2%. The percentages of the subjects from Faculty of Education, Faculty of Business Administration and Faculty of Architecture were 17.3%, 16.0% and 2.4% respectively.

#### 4.1.1.3 Year of Study

**Table 3** Year of study

| Year of Study        | %    |
|----------------------|------|
| 4 <sup>th</sup> year | 55.6 |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> year | 22.2 |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> year | 14.8 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> year | 7.4  |

Most of the subjects were the 4th year students which was at 55.6 %. The percentage of the 1st year students was the lowest at 7.4%. Those of the 3rd and the 2nd year students were 22.2% and 14.8% respectively.

#### 4.1.2 Using Applications

##### 4.1.2.1 Applications Used for English Skills Improvement and Reasons

**Table 4** Applications used for English skills improvement and reasons

| Applications Used for English Skills Improvement | %     | Reasons   |
|--|-------|---|
| YouTube  | 87.7% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contains various topics and levels, both visual and audio media</li> <li>- Convenient and easy to find and use.</li> <li>- Many choices</li> <li>- A source of many clips.</li> <li>- A variety of languages that children can learn at any age.</li> <li>- Able to practice listening</li> <li>- Can be used to study English at anytime</li> <li>- Used to practice pronunciation or watch foreign movies to practice vocabulary along with</li> <li>- With sound and illustrations</li> <li>- Personally, I like to play games and read the story of the game. I will watch YouTube and turn on subtitles. Any word that I don't know, I will translate.</li> </ul> |
| Netflix  | 60.5% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easy to access</li> <li>- Likes to watch movies and listen to music, so can practiced the language by changing from Thai to English with Thai subtitles</li> <li>- Can relax by watching films</li> <li>- Can learn English by practicing English accent while watching film</li> <li>- Enjoyable</li> </ul>   |
| English Listening ESL                            | 14.8% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not difficult to find on the internet.</li> <li>- Can gain knowledge</li> </ul>  |
| Learn English Podcasts                           | 9.9%  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Used to study and feel like it because it makes learning interesting.</li> </ul>  |
| None   | 8.6%  | -   |

|                      |      |   |
|----------------------|------|---|
| BBC Learning English | 6.2% | - |
| Others               | 4.9% | - |
| TED                  | 3.7% | - |
| Audio Books          | 2.5% | - |
| VOA Learning English | 1.2% | - |

The applications they preferred to use for English learning were YouTube (87.7%), Netflix (60.5%), English Listening ESL (14.8%), Learn English Podcasts (9.9%), and BBC Learning English (6.2%). Application TED, Audio Books, and VOA Learning English are not popular among the students. The percentages of them were 4.9%, 3.7%, and 1.2% respectively.

The reasons for using those applications were that they contained various topics and levels, both visual and audio media. They were convenient and easy to find and use. Besides, there were some more reasons, for example, they can be used to practice listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary, etc.

#### 4.1.2.2 Frequency of Using Applications

**Table 5** Frequency of using applications

| Frequency of Using Applications | %     |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Everyday                        | 11.4% |
| 3-4 times/week                  | 19.0% |
| 1-2 times/week                  | 34.2% |
| Not over than 3 times/month     | 35.4% |

The percentages of the subjects who used applications not over than 3 times per month is at 35.4%, whereas that of the ones who used applications 1-2 times per week was at 34.2%. Those for using them 3-4 times per week, and everyday were at 19.0% and 11.4% respectively.

#### 4.1.2.3 Belief on the Effectiveness of the Applications

**Table 6** Belief on the effectiveness of the applications

| Belief on the Applications Effectiveness in English Learning Improvement | %     |
|--|-------|
| Yes  | 93.8% |
| No   | 6.2%  |

Almost students, 93.8%, believed that the applications can improve English learning. However, there were 6.2% of them (five students) thought that the applications cannot improve English learning.

## **4.2 Interview**

The interview part consisted of two parts: General information and Responses to the question.

#### 4.2.1 General Information

**Table 7** Faculties and genders

| Faculties               | Male | Female |
|-------------------------|------|--------|
| Architecture            | 2    | 0      |
| Business Administration | 0    | 1      |
| Education               | 0    | 0      |
| Engineering             | 1    | 1      |
| Liberal Arts            | 0    | 0      |

The five interviewees were from only three faculties. They were two male students from Architecture Faculty, one female from Business Administration Faculty, and one male and one female from Engineering Faculty.

#### 4.2.2 Responses to the Interview

The ones who did not believe that on the effectiveness of the applications in English learning improvement responded to the interview as follows:

Student#1: (Architecture male student)

*"I think the Internet application (YouTube) is just for entertainment. It cannot help us to understand English, like the teacher because the application is often in English which I do not understand."*

Student#2: (Architecture male student)

*"I mostly watch YouTube for entertainment. To practice English, I rarely watch it myself, but I only watch it when what the teacher assigns me to watch. Sometimes I don't understand and sometimes I don't watch it because I'm more interested in other things."*

Student#3: (Business Administration female student)

*"I think it's better to study with a teacher. Even though teachers use media applications or assign students to use media apps, the truth is if there's no teacher explains I don't understand."*

Student#4: (Engineering male student)

*"I rarely practice English on my own. Using the Internet application, I use it mainly to watch movies, listen to music or socialize. For me I don't understand English, if the teacher does not explain or teach me. I used to try learning from the applications, but it's harder than attending class."*

Student#5: (Engineering female student)

*"I used to try to practice English by watching YouTube. Sometimes I understand, but often I don't understand, especially YouTube in English. Although it has subtitles, it doesn't help much. I like to study with teachers on site. I love to use the applications for leisure or for entertainment, not for English improvement."*

## 5. DISCUSSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTION

According to the findings, the majority of the students were engineering students because they were dependent on their curriculum focusing on career opportunity especially in Asian situation. Hence, the English for Work subject was students' path and mostly in their final year of study before they entered to worker markets. The students mostly believed that internet application



could help them improve their English skills. However, the percentage of the students who used the applications every day or 3-4 times a week was low. That could be defined that they possibly might not pay enough attention to the improvement or might have some factors not allowing them to spend more time improving their English skills.

The applications the students enjoyed significantly most were YouTube, followed by Netflix. Both Internet applications contain various topics and levels, and include both visual and audio media which students be able to practice listening and pronunciation while watching movies. The students can relax and learn happily with the materials suitable for themselves without any expenditure or less payment.

There is a study supporting the idea of using YouTube to learn English process at English Education Department, Universitas Negeri Makassar Indonesia. Sakkir, et al (2020) stated the findings from this research that the majority of students showed a positive perception toward and a willingness to use YouTube in the EFL classroom. 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 level proficiency.

However, it was interesting that there were five students who did not believe on the effectiveness of the applications in English learning improvement. It was possibly that they were not autonomous or self-directed learners, or lacked of motivation. Loyens, Magda, and Rikers (2008 as cited in Song and Bonk, 2016) cited that self-directed learning emphasizes the choices in one's learning path; in effect, intrinsic motivation as critical to self-directed learning. Self-directed learning can be defined as "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help from others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating outcomes".

Consequently, teachers should realize that using the Internet applications, particularly YouTube and Netflix, can help students improve their English skills. However, there might be some students who might need to be trained (Chumponart, 2017) to use the applications and to be equipped the skills of autonomous learning. In addition, there is an interesting issue to be investigated further that RUTS students who use YouTube to improve their English skills can improve their English proficiency.

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