Using Wiki to Teach Part-Time Adult Learners in a Blended learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigated the perceptions of 31 part-time adult learners who participated in an online collaborative writing experience. Situated in the context of a blended learning environment of an advanced English learning course, this study looked into learners' perceptions with respect to the benefits of collaborative writing using Wiki in five aspects: motivation, group interaction, knowledge sharing, confidence in writing, and improvement in language skills. The relationships between each of these five aspects and learners' participation in Wiki were also investigated. An online questionnaire was used to obtain feedback from respondents. The findings showed that, in general, learners positively perceived Wiki as beneficial for online collaborative writing in all areas measured. The results also indicated a positive relationship between learners' contributions in Wiki and their perceptions regarding the benefits of online collaborative writing in terms of motivation, confidence in writing, and improvement in language skills. However, there was no significant relationship between learners' contributions in Wiki and their perception regarding the benefits of online collaborative writing in terms of group interaction and knowledge sharing. Implications of the findings on adult learning were also discussed.

Keywords: *wiki; adult learning; collaborative learning; improving classroom teaching; higher education; teaching/learning strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

Web-based collaborative tools are able to provide an interesting and innovative learning environment that expands the potential for interaction, knowledge sharing, and facilitation of learning activities. The availability of Web 2.0 provides users with the potential of rich collaborative experiences. Anderson (2007) refers to Web 2.0 as "a group of technologies which facilitate a more socially-connected Web where everyone is able to add to and edit the information space" (p.5). The core characteristic of Web 2.0, as highlighted by O'Reilly (2007), was "trusting users as co-developers and harnessing collective intelligence" (p. 37). This shows that the presence of Web 2.0 technology such as Wiki can be utilized to accommodate and enhance the learning experience, through the flexibility, adaptability, and potential of interactivity as well as to support learner-instructor collaboration.

Currently, previous studies on Wiki were focused on full-time undergraduates (Elgort, Smith & Toland, 2008; Hughes & Narayan, 2009; Judd, Kennedy & Cropper, 2010; Zorko, 2009). In this study, full-time undergraduates were defined as a group of learners undertaking a bachelor's degree program and enrolled for a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester. Full-timers are usually characterized as young (i.e., between 20 and 29 years old), and not engaged in a profession or other

career while studying, except for part-time jobs during semester breaks. Full-time students are assumed to have more time devoted to their course workloads as compared to part-time students. Their full-time status may also make them eligible to receive financial aid in the form of scholarships and government-based educational loans. They are also assumed to have limited financial resources in terms of buying equipment and gadgets such as smart phone, tablets, and Internet access.

On the other hand, part-timers in general are students who undertake a bachelor's degree program with less credit hours per semester, usually less than 12 credit hours. Most of the part-timers are working people and their time is focused on their career, making them fall onto the adult learner category. Their decisions to enroll in academic programs are most often considered to be based on self and intrinsically motivated attitudes. Unlike full-timers, adult learners often have good access to the latest equipment and gadgets, typically using them to communicate and support their career activities.

It is important to look at students' perceptions towards the benefits of Wiki for collaborating tasks because if students feel that online collaboration does not help them in their learning progress, they may feel burdened when given a task related to it and may not participate in the activities. Given the differing characteristics between full-time and part-time students, this paper argues that research on part-time adult learners' perceptions and participation in Wiki is crucial since these characteristics may differ significantly from those of full-time learners. It is assumed in this paper that adult learners are more mature and self-motivated learners with lower levels of commitment toward coursework due to their need to balance study with work, and who usually have better access to learning facilities, especially computers and the Internet.

This study is intended to contribute toward filling a current gap in the literature through the development of understanding the perceptions of part-time adult learners in a blended learning setting when collaborating with one another in writing tasks using Wiki in an English course.

This study was guided by two research questions:

1. How do part-time adult learners perceive the benefits of using Wiki for collaborative writing experiences in terms of:
   a. motivation?
   b. group interaction?
   c. knowledge sharing?
   d. confidence in writing?
   e. improvement in language skills?

2. What are the relationships between part-time adult learners' engagement in Wiki and their perceptions of the benefits of using Wiki for collaborative writing experiences in terms of:
   a. motivation?
   b. group interaction?
   c. knowledge sharing?
   d. confidence in writing?
   e. improvement in language skills?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Wiki as a mean to support collaborative learning

Wiki is a web-based collaborative authoring tool created by Howard Cunningham in 1995 as a means for developing private and public knowledge bases (Lund, 2008). Wiki enables users to create a new page, and add, edit, or delete any content in an existing Wiki. In short, a Wiki is a simplified version of web pages that enables user to create and edit contents as well to link pages.

One of the most well-known forms of Wiki is Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), a free, multilingual online encyclopedia which allows registered members to edit and add information to its pages. Wiki does not require its users to have extensive technological skills to write or edit the contents, thus making it fairly easy for anyone with basic computer literacy to contribute. Another advantage of Wiki is that it is accessed through the World Wide Web and therefore can be supported by various computer platforms. This means that there is no need for a user to install any special software, thus increasing the ease of access and usability.

Although Wiki was not specifically created for academic purposes, its functions can accommodate and advance the learning process if used wisely (Kirschner, Strijbos, Kerijns & Beers, 2004). Course instructors should keep in mind that by simply incorporating Wiki into traditionally-designed content and expecting students to automatically participate is not enough; they must explicitly redesign the lesson content around Wiki use (Cole, 2008, p. 144). Lund (2008) explained that Wiki is a collaborative tool that could support collective language skills, so instead of individually trying to make sense of their learning tasks, learners can engage in an activity that produces collective knowledge construction among a group of students. Such collective knowledge is created when learners are actively involved in the processes of interaction, sharing, and collaboration. In Wiki, learners act together as equal entities complementing each other's expertise and weaknesses rather than competing among themselves. Therefore, it is important for course instructors to design learning activities and tasks which could help promote student interaction and collaboration instead of encouraging individual works (Blatchford, Kutnick, Baines & Galton, 2003).

The pedagogical aspect of web-based learning differs slightly from the traditional face-to-face methods. Students in an online environment are usually given access to necessary resources before the actual teaching and learning activity takes place. Class lectures, notes, assignment deadlines, and readings are all placed at the students' fingertips, so they are expected to be more self-directed compared to the traditional face-to-face students. To ensure that online students will benefit from classroom discussions as much as those in face-to-face classrooms, the online learning platforms used should provide media for online discourse (Lou & MacGregor, 2004).

Online learners also are expected to collaborate with each other. The term collaborative learning here refers to an instructional method in which students at various levels of performance and ability work together in small groups toward achieving a common goal (Gokhale, 1995), related to understanding, solutions, meanings, or product creation (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). Collaborative learning approaches enhance learners' critical thinking skills and encourage them to actively participate in the learning process. When learners with different skills and ideas interact and collaborate with one another, they can share various ideas and perspectives, which later enable them to arrive at a shared understanding with respect to a specific field or goal. This implies that learners are responsible not only for their own learning, but for one another's learning as well. The impact of social constructivism theory has resulted in recognition by the educational community of the power of peer-to-peer interaction in learning (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002), and has resulted in a shift by course designers and instructors from traditional methods of teaching toward a more active learning community in which learners actively collaborate with one another to construct meaning. Through such interaction, students are able to gradually form a social learning group to

support each other's learning development and be responsible for assisting one another by sharing the knowledge gained. A teacher's roles are switched from knowledge transmitter to facilitator, who assists students in building a knowledge base instead of directly providing them with such knowledge.

Benefits of Wiki in collaborative writing

Previous literature has suggested that positive responses were obtained from students who used Wiki not only for language learning but for other educational purposes as well. The literature has reported that collaborative learning via Wiki facilitated motivation to learn (Notari, 2006; Franco, 2008; Zorko, 2009; Li, Chu, Ki & Woo, 2010); heightened group interaction (Franco, 2008; Woo, Chu, Ho & Li, 2011; Li et al., 2010; Chong, Tan & Abdullah, 2011); facilitated knowledge-sharing (Biasutti & El-Deghaidy, 2012; Chong et al., 2011; Elgort, 2008; Li et al., 2010; Woo et al., 2009; Zorko, 2009); increased learners' confidence in writing (Franco, 2008; Li et al., 2010; Zorko, 2009), and increased learners' improvement in language skills (Franco, 2008; Li et al., 2010; Lund, 2008; Woo et al., 2009; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2009 & Chong et al., 2011; Zorko, 2009).

Motivation

Previous studies have suggested that using Wiki can help facilitate students' motivation in language-course writing. A study by Li et al. (2010) found that a majority of students became more interested in writing and showed improvement in their writing attitudes after engaging in collaborative writing via Wiki. Students' motivational factors also affect their involvement in web-based collaboration; if they are not motivated or do not feel their involvement is appreciated, they are less likely to participate in the discussion

In Wiki, students not only can collaborate with their fellow group members, but they are also able to view the work of others and discuss it in the form of comments transmitted though the Wiki commenting feature. The visibility of group Wikis where everyone may be able to view the work of others is a factor that could encourage learners to be more active in their writing tasks. If the learner can see that fellow course members are producing better work than their own, they are more likely to be motivated to improve their work quality (Notari, 2006).

The ability to compare and comment on one another's work also can affect one's self-evaluation. First, this may help students determine whether they are moving in the required direction. Second, they could learn to improve their own work by learning from the more advanced groups and finally, they might learn from the mistakes of others and thereby avoid making such mistakes themselves (Zorko, 2009).

Group interaction

The technological characteristics of Wiki enable it to serve as a platform for collaborative work in an asynchronous way. Studies have found that Wiki can help in enhancing group interaction and can be beneficial in providing opportunities for student-instructor interaction. (Kim, Liu, & Bonk, 2005; Li et al., 2010; Woo et al., 2011; Zorko, 2009). Li et al. (2010) explored students' perception towards collaborative writing using Wiki in a Chinese writing class and they reported that students found Wiki to be beneficial in heightening group interaction. It was found that students can learn a great deal by interacting with their peers and such interaction can improve their collective writing ability. Apart from that, it can also help foster teamwork among students (Woo et al., 2011). This finding is consistent with the study by Lund (2008) which found that Wiki can support collective language skills. Instead of individual attempts to make sense of the required material, collective

activity produces collective knowledge construction among students.

Students' collaboration in Wiki not only enables them to develop their writing skills but also their social skills in the sense that they no longer felt the need to compete with their peers, but learned how to cooperate with others instead and in turn increased their progress in language acquisition (Franco, 2008). Zorko (2009) found that Wiki promotes collaborative behavior among students, including learning from each other and communicating with the teacher. This shows that Wiki can encourage communication among learners as well as with the instructor. Interaction is important in collaborative work because it could act as a source of learner motivation (Franco, 2008). The study also found that students developed both writing skills and social skills in the sense that they no longer felt a need to compete with their peers, but instead learned how to cooperate (Franco, 2008).

Wikis can be easily integrated into teaching and learning activities and with appropriate scaffolding, are able to guide students in posting constructive comments, as well as giving feedback (Woo et al., 2011). This applies not only to students but also to instructors who can virtually interact with students and provide feedback to increase their motivation. Kim et al. (2005) found that students perceived online learning as beneficial because it allows closer interaction with their instructors than they could achieve in a traditional classroom environment. They also agreed that, by interacting with both their peers and an instructor, a more meaningful learning experience could be achieved.

Knowledge sharing

Previous studies have suggested that Wikis are useful in supporting collaborative efforts among students who can work together to gather data and share information as well as ideas (Elgort et al., 2008; Hughes & Narayan, 2009). Students can learn to write better through such sharing and by studying examples from other groups' Wikis (Woo et al., 2011). However, the study by Hughes and Narayan (2009) recommended that in order to understand the nature of the pedagogy, future research should include observation of the courses in which Wikis are used in both online and face-to-face settings. This suggestion was made because the study did not include the effect of face-to-face pedagogy with respect to how effective Wiki may or may not be in supporting collaboration. Therefore, this study will also take into account the pedagogy involved in face-to-face lessons. Online collaboration will not occur through an independent set of lessons but will rather serve to help in scaffolding students during their writing tasks and thereby extend face-to-face lessons.

Confidence in writing

According to Woo et al. (2011), reviewing the work and receiving comment from peers as well as teachers may help students in their writing activities. This is because the sharing of ideas together with giving and receiving critical feedback from peers and teachers could enhance their writing confidence. The instructor could also use the commenting feature available to provide feedback to the students. Regular feedbacks from instructor could increase students' motivation and confidence in writing. A study by Cubric (2007) found that students value continuous feedback from a tutor and he or she can increase students' engagement by taking the role of an active reviewer, for example by actively reviewing and providing feedback to the students. A study by Mak and Coniam (2008) also found that students produced substantially more text than required when involved in group Wikis, showing that students' writing confidence was increased. This shows that Wiki has the ability to provide students with an environment which is capable of increasing their confidence.

Improvement in writing skills

Another potential benefit to be examined in this study is students' perceptions of improvement in their writing skills when collaborating using Wiki. Wiki as an online writing tool in an English context has demonstrated a positive effect on students' language learning processes and proved to be an effective tool for language teaching (Li et al., 2010). Woo et al. (2011) studied the potential of using Wiki for primary-school students in an English language class. The result showed that students enjoyed using Wiki for their collaborative work and it helped foster teamwork as well improvement in writing skills. Lund (2008) showed that Wiki holds the potential for collective knowledge development which in turn can enhance language-learning development. This shows a shift from individual learning to collective-knowledge construction and language skills. The result is also supported by Miyazoe and Anderson (2009) who observed general success in improving students' writing abilities using Wiki for language learning. A study by Chong et al. (2011) also found that learners' command of English has improved after their class project and that they were more sensitive to language and spelling accuracy during the project. These findings reflect the benefits of Wiki in language learning and how it could help learners acquire the skills needed in mastering a language.

METHODOLOGY

This study incorporated a quantitative approach in its research design, data collection, and data analysis methods. The sampling design used in this study was non-probability sampling, using a convenience-sampling technique. In convenience sampling, a researcher selects participants who are willing and available to be studied and who can provide useful information in answering questions and responding to the hypotheses of the study (Creswell, 2008). In this study, the statistical samples consisted of thirty students enrolled in an Advanced English for Academic Communication course at a public university in Malaysia.

Participants

The respondents consisted of 17 (54.8%) female and 14 (45.2%) male part-time adult learners in a southern Malaysian public university. A majority of students (51.6%) were aged between 30 and 39 years old, followed by 26 to 29 years old (41.9%). Only two (6.5%) were between 40 and 49 years old. 28 (90.3%) of them were Malays and 3 (9.7%) were Indians. All participants were non-native English speakers who self-claimed that their level of English language proficiency ranged from a lower intermediate to an intermediate level.

Some 90.3% of the respondents stated that their level of computer expertise was intermediate, 2 (6.5%) indicated expert status and only 1 (3.2%) claimed to be a novice. This shows that nearly all respondents were familiar with the basic use of technology. A majority of respondents, 30 (96.8%) students, stated that they had Internet access when not on campus. Only one respondent (3.2%) had no Internet access outside of campus. This is an important factor that needs to be considered since students need to have access to the Internet in order to get into the Wiki to participate in the course tasks conducted online.

Instructional context

This research was conducted in the context of an English language course for adult learners in a Malaysian public university. The course employed blended learning as its mode of instruction.

Blended learning is defined as the integration of classroom face-to-face meetings with online learning experiences (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). The course, Advanced English for Academic Communication, was a required course for all third-year undergraduates and was conducted during the University's short semester period over a period of two months. The objective was to prepare students for advanced academic communication in English as a second language emphasizing oral communication and writing skills.

The course was designed to fit into a blended learning environment setting in which instructional activities were conducted both face-to-face (F2F) and online. The F2F instruction was conducted in the faculty during weekends for three hours each day over a period of two months. During the F2F session, the course instructor provided all input needed by the students, including lectures, tutorials and scaffolding to support students' writing activities. Students were required to work in small groups of two or three where they collaboratively research on a self-chosen topic of interest, which was to encourage their task participation. They were later required to analyze and synthesize related literature, present it orally in class, and write a report describing their research. Considering the minimal face-to-face meetings, the course instructor chose to utilize Wiki as a platform for student interaction, collaboration and virtual meeting place outside of classroom hours.

The Wiki collaborative writing project

Wikispaces was chosen as the Wiki platform for students to work together online, and the course's Wiki was available at http://spaceuhb2422.wikispaces.com/ (*Figure 1*). Wikispaces is an open-source platform, and the 'open-source' concept enables collective production of a product intended to be freely shared, improved upon, and redistributed to others (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2007).

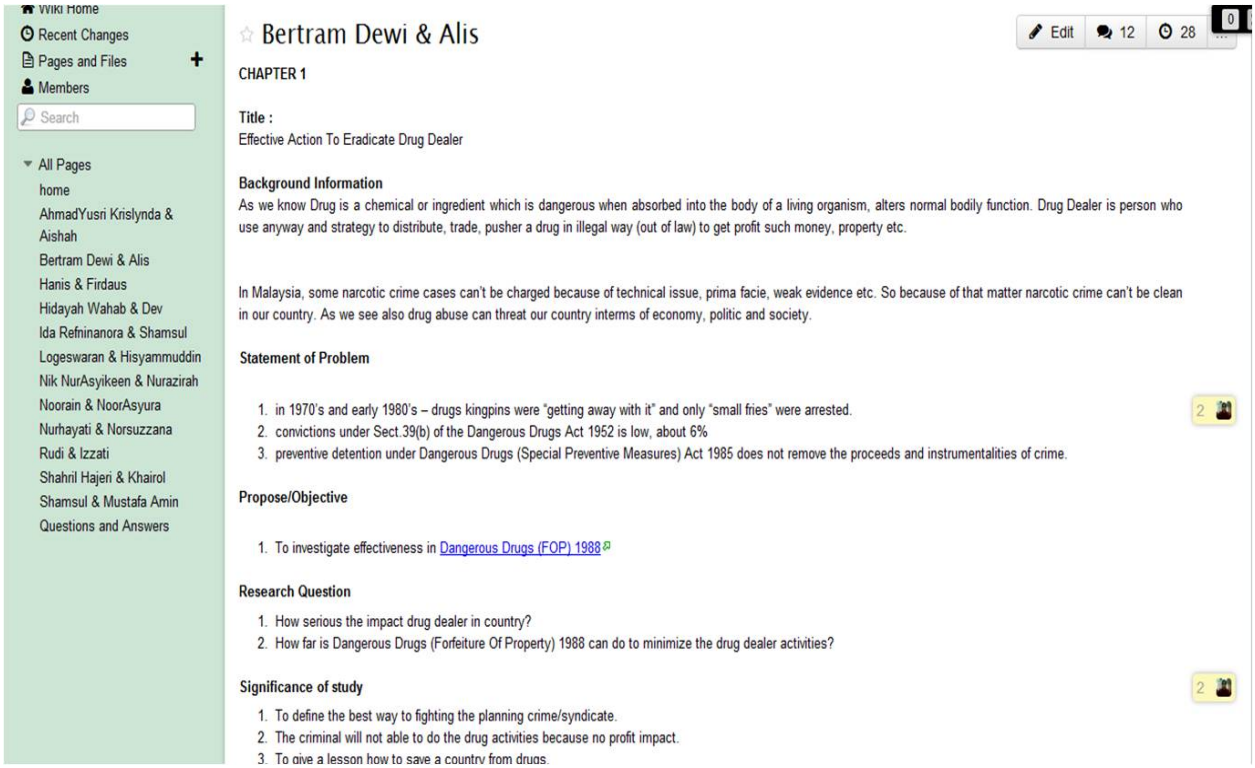

Figure 1: An example of a group assignment in the Wiki page

Since all the students were first-time users, the first week of the course was focused on introducing and training them to use Wiki so that they are familiar with it. This was an important step to encourage contribution during the course activity and to ensure that none were left out due to their incompetency in using it.

The online activity was conducted in small groups where students worked together in groups of two to three and were given the freedom to pick a topic of interest to encourage their participation in the task. Most of the titles chosen by the groups revolved around real-life issues; examples included "Satisfaction level of outpatients waiting time: A case study at general outpatient department in Hospital Kuala Lumpur", "Awareness of using plastic bag among the public in Kuala Lumpur", and "Facebook and the effects to working adults". The Wiki activities were made viewable by everyone in the class so that students in other groups could view and provide constructive comments, as well as to suggest corrections to their peers' mistakes to help students with their writing progress (Woo et al., 2011). Students were constantly given encouragement from the instructor to keep them motivated and active throughout the sessions. Figure 2 shows a sample of a students' Wiki group page.

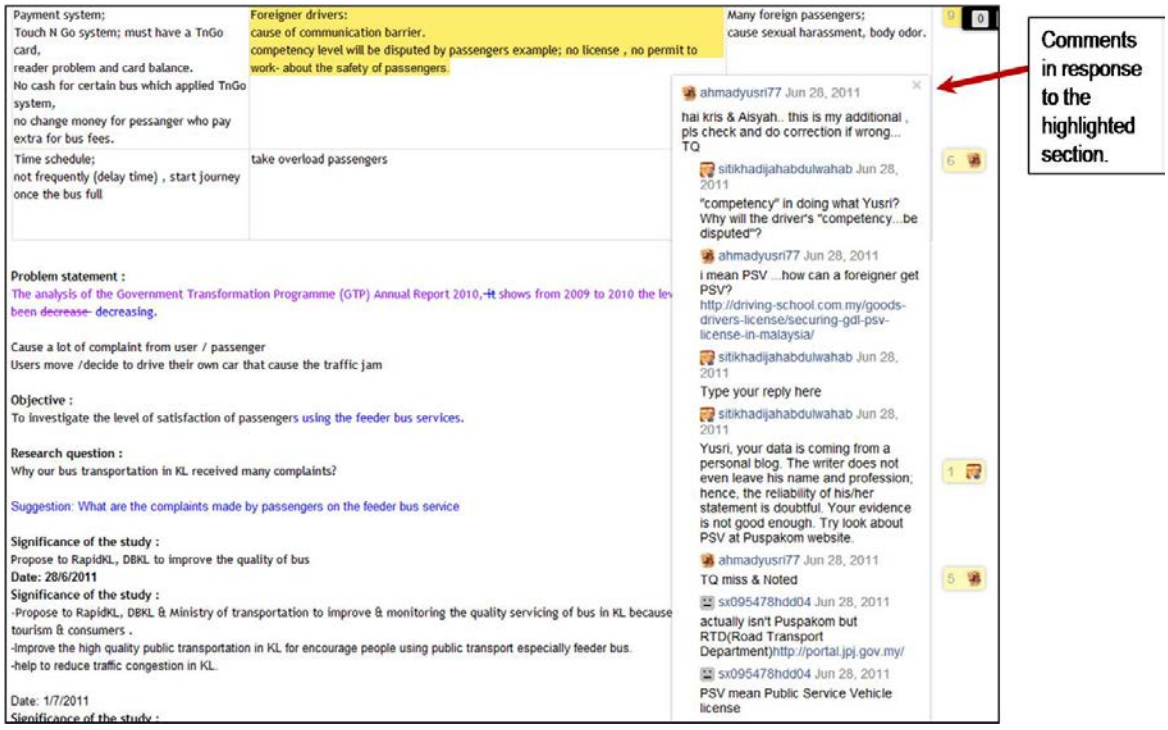

Figure 2: Sample of students' Wiki group page and comments received.

In this online activity, students were required to actively take part in the group Wiki while the instructor took a role of moderator and facilitator in which she monitored the group activities besides keeping the learning process moving forward.

Online participation was not graded by the instructor but the tracking progress in Wiki could observe students' participation and contribution to ensure that everyone participated and the task load was evenly distributed among group members. Students' performance was formally assessed based on their final product, which was the research proposal done via Wiki and a final exam at the end of the course.

Data collection method

An online questionnaire was administered to measure participants' perceptions with respect to their collaborative Wiki experiences in terms of five aspects: motivation, group interaction, knowledge-sharing, confidence in writing and improvement in writing skills. The survey entitled *Learners' perceptions of online collaborative writing using Wiki for language learning* was adapted from the study by Li et al. (2010) and administered online via Google Docs. The participants were informed beforehand that providing honest and sincere responses was very important and that these responses would be kept confidential and not affect their course grades

The questionnaire comprised three sections. Section A was devoted to participants' demographic characteristics, Section B focused on their computer, Internet and Wiki competencies, and lastly Section C focused on their perceptions toward Wiki. Respondents were required to answer all questions in each section before being allowed to proceed to another section to ensure there would be no missing data.

Data analysis procedure

The collected data were first screened to focus on the bigger picture. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, and mean scores were used to analyze the first research question, directed toward understanding learners' perceptions towards the benefits of using Wiki for online collaborative writing in language learning.

Prior to that, the collective scores from each question in the subscale were summed up to measure each of the learner's perceptions. Summed scores are the scores from an individual item that were added over several questions to measure the same variable and compute an overall score for that variable (Creswell, 2008). The scores represented whether the learners' perception was low, medium, or high. Inferential statistical analysis, namely Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the second research question, which was to find the relationships between learners' engagement in Wiki and their perceptions towards the benefits of using Wiki for online collaborative writing in language learning. The results are discussed in the following section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings section is divided into two sections. The first section will describe the findings of learners' perceptions towards Wiki and the second will present findings with respect to the relationship between Wiki engagement and learners' perceptions.

Learners' perceptions on the benefits of online collaborative writing in language learning

Motivation

Table 1 provides a summary of learners' perceptions toward Wiki for collaborative writing in terms of motivation. The findings indicated that a majority of students (83.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they liked writing collaboratively on Wiki and that Wiki improved their writing interest (67.8%). Some 90.3% of the learners also agreed or strongly agreed that the opportunity to both post their work for others' viewing and to simultaneously look at others' work encouraged them to put more effort into producing better and higher quality work.

Table 1: Learners' motivation to write collaboratively using Wiki

Item		n (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	I like writing collaboratively on Wiki.	-	-	5 (16.1)	25 (80.6)	1 (3.2)
2.	Compared with writing with pen and paper, I prefer writing on Wiki more.	-	2 (6.5)	6 (19.4)	20 (64.5)	3 (9.7)
3.	Wiki improved my interest in writing.	-	-	10 (32.3)	19 (61.3)	2 (6.5)
4.	I participated in writing more because of Wiki.	-	2 (6.5)	11 (35.5)	17 (54.8)	1 (3.2)
5.	I stayed on writing more because of using Wiki.	-	2 (6.5)	10 (32.3)	17 (54.8)	2 (6.5)
6.	The opportunity to post my work for others to review encouraged me to work harder and produce better quality work.	-	-	3 (9.7)	23 (74.2)	5 (16.1)
7.	The opportunity to look at other group's work motivated me to put in more effort.	-	-	3 (9.7)	23 (74.2)	5 (16.1)
8.	I hope to continue using Wiki next semester	-	-	9 (29.0)	19 (61.3)	3 (9.7)
9.	Overall, Wiki facilitates my motivation in writing.	-	-	11 (35.5)	16 (51.6)	4 (12.9)

Group interaction

Table 2 illustrates students' perceptions with respect to the importance of peer and group interactions in collaborative writing activity using Wiki. In all, 83.9% of the students agreed that the Wiki activity allowed them to learn a great deal from their peers.

Some 96.8% also agreed that contributions from every member were important when writing in order to get the best composition, while 96.7% agreed that collaboration affects the group's collaborative writing. The results show that 80.6% also agreed that interaction with peers improved their writing ability more than interaction with just the teacher.

Table 2 Learners' perceptions on the importance of group interaction in collaborative writing activity using Wiki

Item		n (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	I learned a lot from my group members, which enriched my writing content.	-	-	5 (16.1)	24 (77.4)	2 (6.5)
2.	On the whole, the conflict among group members brought more benefits than disadvantages.	-	-	5 (16.1)	24 (77.4)	2 (6.5)
3.	I think the contribution of every member is important. In order to write the best composition, everyone needs to try his/her best.	-	-	1 (3.2)	24 (77.4)	6 (19.4)
4.	I think student's collaboration in a group will affect collaborative writing significantly.	-	-	1 (3.2)	25 (80.6)	5 (16.1)
5.	I think interaction among students can better improve my writing ability compared with only interaction with teacher.	-	-	6 (19.4)	24 (77.4)	1 (3.2)
6.	Compared with the traditional writing, interactions in Wiki improved my writing ability.	-	3 (9.7)	9 (29.0)	17 (54.8)	2 (6.5)
7.	Overall, Wiki is beneficial to heightened group interaction among my peers and I.	-	1 (3.2)	9 (29.0)	17 (54.8)	4 (12.9)

Knowledge sharing

As shown in Table 3, 96.7% of the students positively perceived Wiki as beneficial for knowledge-sharing purposes. It was also reported that they learned better when reading and examining examples from other groups' Wiki pages (93.5%). A majority of participants also agreed that they were more careful in their writing knowing that there would be an audience looking at their Wiki pages.

Table 3 Learners' Perceptions on Benefits of Online Collaborative Writing in Language Learning in Terms of Knowledge Sharing

	Item	n (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	Since more people can know my group's compositions, I become more active in writing.	-	3 (9.7)	8 (25.8)	19 (61.3)	1 (3.2)
2.	I think there are more audiences when I write on Wiki, which is one advantage of this writing environment	-	4 (12.9)	6 (19.4)	18 (58.1)	3 (9.7)
3.	I learn better when reading and examining examples from other group's Wikis.	-	-	2 (6.5)	28 (90.3)	1 (3.2)
4.	When there are more audiences, I am more careful in my writings.	-	-	1 (3.2)	26 (83.9)	4 (12.9)
5.	Overall, Wiki is beneficial for knowledge sharing.	-	-	1 (3.2)	25 (80.6)	5 (16.1)

Confidence in writing

Results shown in Table 4 indicate that students perceived Wiki as beneficial in increasing their confidence in writing. Two items - items 3 and 4 – in the survey received the highest scores. The students acknowledged that both peer (90.3%) and teacher comments (93.6%) boosted their confidence in writing. More than half (77.4%) of the students agreed that the characteristics of Wiki technology also help improved their writing confidence.

Table 4 Learners' Perceptions on Their Confidence in Writing Collaboratively in Wiki

	Item	n (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	I produce more text than required in my group's Wiki because it can boost my confidence in writing.	-	2 (6.5)	7 (22.6)	21 (67.7)	1 (3.2)
2.	The technology characteristics of Wiki helped improve my confidence in writing.	-	-	7 (22.6)	23 (74.2)	1 (3.2)
3.	Comments from peers boosted my confidence in writing.	-	-	3 (9.7)	27 (87.1)	1 (3.2)
4.	Comments from the teacher boosted my confidence in writing.	-	-	2 (6.5)	27 (87.1)	2 (6.5)
5.	Overall, Wiki improve my confidence in writing.	-	-	8 (25.8)	18 (58.1)	5 (16.1)

Improvement in language skills

As displayed in Table 5, 87.1% of the students agreed that Wiki was beneficial in improving their language skills.

Table 5 Learners' Perceptions on Improvement in Language Skills When Writing Collaboratively in Wiki

	Item	n (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	Learning collaboratively using Wiki helped enhance the development of my language skills.	-	-	3 (9.7)	26 (83.9)	2 (6.5)
2.	Commenting on other group's Wiki helped improve my language skills.	-	-	5 (16.1)	26 (83.9)	-
3.	Comments received by peers and teacher helped improve my language skills.	-	-	4 (12.9)	25 (80.6)	2 (6.5)
4.	The technology characteristics of Wiki helped improve my language skills.	-	-	6 (19.4)	22 (71.0)	3 (9.7)
5.	Overall, Wiki is beneficial in improving my language skills.	-	-	4 (12.9)	24 (77.4)	3 (9.7)

Language skills in this study referred to students' reading, writing, and listening skills. Some 83.9% of participants agreed that the ability to comment on other groups' Wikis helped improve their language skills. The students also improved their skills through comments received from peers (87.1%).

Relationship between part-time adult learners' engagement in Wiki and their perceptions towards the benefits of online collaborative writing

The association between students' perception with respect to the benefits of using Wiki for online collaborative writing and their weekly contributions were investigated using correlation analysis (Table 6). Measurement of students' contributions was based on their perception on their weekly Wiki activities. The first activity was content-editing, including adding new ideas, elaborating existing ideas, reorganizing existing ideas and replacing existing ideas. The second was formatting activity, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, font choice, and paragraphing (Woo et al., 2011). In this section, students were asked whether they rarely contributed, somewhat contributed, or frequently contributed to the Wiki.

Table 6 Correlations Between Part-time Adult Learners' Contributions in Wiki and Subscales of Learners' Perceptions towards Benefits of Online Collaborative Writing

	Wiki participation	Motivation	Group interaction	Knowledge sharing	Confidence in writing	Improvement in language skills
Wiki participation	-	0.465**	0.210	0.091	0.344	0.367**
Motivation		-	0.652**	0.630**	0.703**	0.693**
Group interaction			-	0.751**	0.811**	0.776**
Knowledge sharing				-	0.690**	0.732**
Confidence in writing					-	0.841**
Improvement in language skills						-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results displayed in Table 6 indicate that there was a significant positive relationship between students' contributions in Wiki and their perception regarding the benefits of online collaborative writing in two aspects; motivation and improvement in language skills. This shows that students who perceived that writing collaboratively using Wiki could improve their motivation and language skills are more active and would participate more in their Wiki assignments. On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between students' contributions in Wiki and their perception regarding the benefits of online collaboration in terms of group interaction, knowledge sharing, and confidence in writing.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated part-time adult learners' perceptions with respect to the benefits of Wiki for a language-learning course. The overall results suggested that part-time adult learners positively perceived Wiki as beneficial in motivating them to write more. They also perceived that collaborative writing via Wiki increased peer-to-peer interactions, fostered knowledge-sharing, boosted confidence in writing, and improved their language skills.

Motivation to write

The findings of this study concurred with previous studies in which learners perceived that online collaborative writing activity conducted via Wiki was beneficial in facilitating their motivation to contribute more to shared knowledge (Franco, 2008; Li et al., 2010; Notari, 2006; Zorko, 2009). The awareness that other people are reviewing their work motivates the students to produce a better and higher-quality work.

Group interaction

The open nature of Wiki enables learners to share information and contribute constructive comments among and beyond their own group members to heighten group interactions (Chong et al., 2011; Franco, 2008; Li et al., 2010; Seet & Quek, 2010; Woo et al., 2011). The findings of this study showed that in order for collaborative writing to be successful, everyone's contributions are important in producing a good composition.

Interaction, whether with the instructor or among group members, is one of the most important aspects in collaborative learning. As found by Seet and Quek (2010), students feel that experiencing the feel of teamwork brings a richer learning experience and profitable discussion among group members. A strong collaborative team structure enables students to share more ideas and knowledge, which in turn caused them to produce a better and higher quality work. Wiki supports these interactions by allowing students to view and comment on each other's pages. By doing so, Wiki indirectly supports collective language production skills (Lund, 2008) and cultivates teamwork among group members (Woo et al., 2011).

Knowledge sharing

The findings of this study were in line with previous studies (Biasutti & El-Deghaidy, 2012; Li et al., 2010) where it was found that the technological and interactive nature of Wiki supports knowledge-sharing activity among students. It allows students to read and examine examples from other groups' Wikis and thereby enhance their own learning. The fact that students are allowed to view each other's work makes them more careful in their writing. This feature of Wiki encourages students to constantly produce good work and do better in their tasks because they are constantly

aware of the potential audiences (Zorko, 2009).

Confidence in writing

The findings of this study were consistent with previous studies (Mak & Coniam, 2008; Woo et al., 2011) which found that collaborative writing in Wiki could boost learners' confidence in writing when they interact with each other while completing the assigned tasks. During this process, students developed a sense of group community through the sharing of ideas and comparing their experiences with each other (Mak & Coniam, 2008). As the students' confidence levels grew, the amount of writing they produce also increased.

Improvement in language skills

In this study, it was found that improvements in students' reading and writing skills, were in line with other studies (Li et al., 2010; Lund, 2008; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2009). The improvement was because in a Wiki, texts are neither finite nor finalized, but function as resources for further expansion, reconfiguration, and new syntheses (Lund, 2008). This was further highlighted by Mak and Coniam (2008), who noted that when a student goes through the process of writing and revision on a path toward achieving a final product, all draft copies are retained in the Wiki page, providing an "invaluable learning tool for students whereby they can see what errors they initially made - and subsequently corrected (p. 441)".

CONCLUSIONS

This paper investigated part-time adult learners' perceptions with respect to the benefits of collaborative writing activity via Wiki in five factors, which are, increased motivation to write, increase in group interaction, enhancement of knowledge sharing activity, elevated confidence in writing, and improvement in language skills. Out of these five benefits, three are deemed as particularly vital and inter-correlated in terms of encouraging learners' active participation in collaborative writing tasks via Wiki. Those three are motivation to write, confidence in writing, and improvement in language skills. This means that the more motivated and confident students are, the more active Wiki contributors they are likely to become. Similarly, they become more active when they perceive that collaborative writing via Wiki improves their language skills.

In a broader perspective, the findings of this study seem to corroborate at least three principles of adult learning (Knowles, 1980): motivation, self-concept, and relevance. Adult learners respond better to intrinsic than to extrinsic motivation. We believe that a collaborative learning approach combined with the open nature of Wiki makes learning experiences more transparent because learners are able to freely view and respond to others' works as exemplified in this study. This results in greater student curiosity about what others are learning along with caution about the quality of their own writing. As such, adult learners are constantly involved in deciding about what to learn when they peek into others' learning experiences via group pages. This ability to control their learning results in improvement of their own individual self-concepts. Finally, it was found that the topics the students choose to research and write about tend to have direct and/or indirect relevance with respect to their actual work and/or personal interests. It was believed that this relevance positively affects their active participation in Wiki.

Since a huge number of students agreed that their confidence level was increased when receiving comments from the instructor, it was strongly argued that the course instructor also plays a huge role in motivating learners in this faceless online learning environment. The instructor could and should actively act as a moderator to encourage learners to remain active and to participate in the tasks given. As in any online learning environment, the instructor's online presence not only

motivates adult learners to further explore content knowledge, but also provides a sense of being in the same learning community as the learners. It is hoped that the findings of this study can help guide future course instructors as well as instructional designers, especially those dealing with adult learners, in producing an effective online learning course structure using Wiki,

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