

ISMGE 2020**II International Scientific and Practical Conference "Individual and Society in the
Modern Geopolitical Environment"****EXPLORING STUDENTS' ACCEPTANCE OF WIKI SITES IN
LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY**

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Abstract

The study is aimed at exploring how students perceive the deployment of a wiki site as an educational tool to improve English language skills within the course of international exam preparation. TAM (technology acceptance model) was used to analyse students' perceptions about the usage of a wiki site for English learning. A survey methodology was deployed to gather the data among the students. The research is reported to validate quantitatively a high level of agreement among students on easiness and usefulness of accepting wiki sites for exam preparation in the context of English learning. Despite some limitations of the research, the results have revealed favourable students' perceptions and the paper proposes implications for further wiki deployment and research. The quantitative survey has helped collect and analyse the data on the main constructs of TAM. The authors tried to fill in the gaps in the existing literature concerning the usage of wiki for IELTS training. The paper proves wiki sites should become a part of academic life and be implemented for different teaching and learning purposes. The small-scale project has been conducted to explore students' perceptions of wiki's acceptance as an educational tool.

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1. Introduction

Wiki-technologies have been actively used by teachers to achieve the aim of collaboration and active equal participation in English learning activities (Brownson, 2009; Li, 2012). The examples of this type of deployment are web-quests, wiki-sites and Google forms which can be used to support an English course and facilitate (teacher- students) T-S interaction (Biasutti & EL-Deghaidy, 2012; Chao & Lo, 2011; Hu & Johnston, 2012; Hung, 2015; Li, 2017; Mills & Levido, 2011; Mironenko, 2018; Passey, 2013). Wiki-sites are proposed as an effective scaffolding platform to support L2 (foreign language) teaching and learning (Hadjerrouit, 2013; Kurbonov, 2018) Wiki sites can be used to solve various teaching problems and tasks: support of collective cognition (Lin & Yang, 2011); collaborating for language learning and peer activity (Lund & Smørdal, 2006); collaborative writing and students' interaction (Bradley et al., 2010). Such technology provides a teacher and students with the opportunity to share information by uploading/ downloading, to get easy access to the materials, to do projects. Speaking generally, wiki creates "architecture of participation" to create shared learning spaces (Lin & Kelsey, 2009).

Google sites as a free easy tool to create wiki sites for educational purposes have been used for language learning, though there is little research reporting the deployment of this technology. Google scholar resulted only in 6 papers, Onesearch (Lancaster university library resource) produced only one paper (O'reilly, 2007). However, the papers, that have been found, report effectiveness and easiness of the use of this type of wiki sites. Overall, the brief literature review has shown the trend towards deploying wiki technologies predominantly for collaborative writing in language learning (Li, 2012).

2. Problem Statement

The literature review has pointed to the fact that wiki as educational technology has not been used for improving IELTS exam preparation so far. So, before large scale implementing it on a regular basis at the formal university level to teaching and learning, it is necessary to explore whether students accept or reject this information technology as an educational tool. In thinking more about students' perspectives of technological usability and usefulness, Davis' Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was applied as a theoretical framework, as it is "focuses more on the importance of technology as a tool" (Harasim, 2000). The chosen model accesses mainly the constructs of perceived ease (PEU) and perceived usefulness (PU). Perceived usefulness is defined as the prospective user's subjective probability that using a specific application system will increase his or her job performance within an organizational context. Perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which the prospective user expects the target system to be free of effort (Davis et al., 1989).

3. Research Questions

Despite a shift of current research in L2 towards social media and student-centred approaches (Ng, 2016), there is scarce literature to inform about the social aspect of wiki-mediated learning, i.e. the interactional patterns between the learners within the group and T-S interactions (Mironenko, 2018).

There is the need to research further the possibilities for the deployment of wiki technology for studies in international exam preparation in the university.

4. Purpose of the Study

This research is aimed at exploring the variations in students' perceptions of English learning via a wiki site which is intentionally designed by the researcher to create an educational platform for teacher-students collaboration. The effectiveness of using wiki tools for learning languages as a second one (L2) is well documented in the literature (Li, 2012). Wiki sites, which are based on Web2.0 technologies, create learning communities where such collaborative goal-oriented practices can take place (Davis et al., 1989; Henderson et al., 2017). Much emphasis should be placed on a better understanding of the conditions and eliciting requirements that can nurture transformative changes in learners' experiences and increase collaborative knowledge generation (Goodyear et al., 2001; Lyashenko & Mineeva, 2018; Parchoma, 2014; Runova et al., 2019). There is a need to research how exactly a wiki platform is perceived by students in their learning experiences in a new digitized context.

5. Research Methods

The research was conducted in two Russian universities- the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) and State Pedagogical university Minin University. The requirement of the formal curriculum is to train the 2nd year students for International English Language Test (IELTS) in HSE and FCE (First Certificate in English) in Minin University. The training is arranged using conventional face-to-face weekly meetings and a learning management system (LMS). The technology is known to have a positive impact on the educational process at the university (Vaganova & Ilyashenko, 2018). However, there is some degree of reluctance among both teachers and students to use the system on a regular basis for teaching and learning. The previous research has shown unwillingness of delivering additional training via LMS or Moodle and limited usage of collaborative potential of these technologies in teaching and learning (Lyashenko & Malinina, 2015; Lyashenko & Daricheva, 2017). On the other hand, the research resulted in the statistics showing that more than 32,5 % of the respondents think that social media tools (wiki, social networking sites, google forms) are less time consuming and more convenient to share and store information. The students consider LMS as an academic environment which is deployed from above. That is why they would like to be engaged in less formal learning environments. Wiki technology can be viewed as an alternative technological solution to provide extra collaborative learning and scaffolding for the learners (Bergold & Thomas, 2012).

6. Findings

The majority of students who took part in the survey come mainly from Russia (95%) and are of one age group (18-21 years old). The gender differences are split as 47% men and 53% women. The respondents taking part in the research are only 2nd-year students from the Higher School of Economics who demonstrate a good level of the English language (Intermediate English and higher). The purpose of this stage of the research was to collect quantitative information about the extent to which students accept

a wiki site as an educational tool using the constructs of TAM: perceived ease of use (PEU), perceived usefulness (PU), attitudes and intention. The data for this phase were collected from three groups of undergraduate students (number= 32) preparing for IELTS. It involved creating a Web-based internet survey using <https://ru.surveymonkey.com/home/>. To determine students' perceptions about the acceptance of a wiki site as an educational tool for the exam preparation, the respondents were asked to answer 7 questions using Likert scale form "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The questions were designed by adopting TAM constructs to make up the statements about the easiness, usefulness. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. A total of 32 responses were returned. The questions were structured as TAM sub-constructs. The first two questions were about the students' awareness of the wiki technology and their past experiences of using it for studies. The rest of the questionnaire covered the main TAM construct and is presented in the following way: Perceived ease of use refers to statement 3; perceived usefulness refers to statement 5; attitude and intention to use: statements are explored using statements 6 and 7.

The results of the data collected are summarized in Tables 1 and given below. Table 1 summarizes the data on student's ranking the ease of wiki as an educational tool for language learning.

Table 01. Perceived ease of use

Question number	Statement	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
3	wiki is easy to use	0.00%	3.13%	25%	53.13%	18.75%
4	Easy access to wiki	0.00%	12.50%	3.13%	50%	34.38%

Most respondents moderately or strongly agreed with the statements. There were no responses showing strong disagreement. Considering the percentages, the most agreed-upon response is the statement "wiki is easy to access". The construct PU was analyzed using the question related to studies in general (Table 2).

Table 02. Perceived usefulness

Question number	Statement	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
5	Using wiki is useful for studies	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%	37.50%	56.25%

Most respondents (number=27) agreed with statements about usefulness of wiki sites for studies in general. However, 6.25% of respondents disagreed moderately with acceptance of wikis.

Table 3 illustrates the data about responses towards construct attitude (6) and intention (7) in TA model.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (number=31) show a positive attitude towards the idea of wiki deployment for studying English, with 29 respondents expressing their readiness and high degree of intention to use it for IELTS preparation.

Table 03. Attitudes towards using wiki for English learning and intentions

Question number	Statement	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
6	It is a good idea to use wiki sites for exam preparation	0.00%	0.00%	3.13%	53.13%	43.75%
7	I am going to use this site for IELTS	0.00%	3.13%	6.25%	59.38%	31.25%

Findings of the data analysis illustrate that a wiki site as an educational tool proves to be easy to accept from students' perspectives. They do not expect any difficulties to access wiki sites. However, a minor percentage of the respondents disagreed with the idea of the usefulness of the technology for studies. This statement can be categorized as the item for deeper research at the qualitative stage in future. As for the usefulness of wiki for studying English in particular, the data present the highest percentage of agreement. Overall, students rated both constructs high, with a large percentage of agreement about usefulness and ease to use, with the sub-construct PU being more influential in decision-making than PE. In other words, the students showed a higher rate of agreement concerning the usefulness of the technology for studies (statement 5) in comparison with the ease of usage (statement 3), with 94% and 72% correspondingly. The attitude and intention to use the technology in future exam preparation is high with 91% of agreement among the respondents (statement 7).

7. Conclusion

The use of a wiki site as an educational tool in exam preparation has not been widely researched yet. The study was aimed at exploring the acceptance of this technology among students with the idea of its future deployment into teaching English in the university context. The quantitative survey has helped collect and analyse the data on the main constructs of TAM. The results and the findings should be treated with some caution as the number of respondents and a limited number of questions do not provide a solid ground to generalize for a larger population. Although there were certain limitations for this small-scale study, it has resulted in some interesting findings that can inform technology-enhanced teaching in future exam preparatory courses. The research tried to fill in the gaps in the existing literature concerning the usage of wiki for IELTS training. The research is reported to validate quantitatively a high level of agreement among students on usefulness and easiness of this technology for their English learning studies. The data revealed a high level of students' rating for PU and PE of the tool. Obviously, wiki sites should become a part of academic life and be implemented for different teaching and learning purposes. The small-scale project has been conducted to explore students' perceptions of wiki's acceptance as an educational tool. The findings highlight favourable perspectives for further deployment of a wiki technology into the academic environment.

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