



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MODERN EDUCATION
(IJMOE)
www.ijmoe.com



INSTRUCTORS' PERSPECTIVES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES (ELA); AN AUTONOMOUS COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING APPROACH FOR HIGHER LEARNING

Surinder Kaur Satwant Singh^{1*}, Erda Wati Bakar², Afifah Quraishah Abdul Nasir³

¹ Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia
Email: surinderkaur@upnm.edu.my

² Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia
Email: erdawatibakar@upnm.edu.my

³ Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia
Email: afifahquraishah@upnm.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 26.12.2024
Revised date: 04.01.2025
Accepted date: 05.02.2025
Published date: 03.03.2025

To cite this document:

Singh, S. K. S., Bakar, E. W., & Abdul Nasir, A. Q. (2025). Instructors' Perspectives On English Language Activities (ELA); An Autonomous Communicative English Language Learning Approach For Higher Learning. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 7 (24), 174-190.

DOI: 10.35631/IJMOE.724012

This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



Abstract:

The demands of the 21st century higher education environment and the global workplace has triggered a shift in the way English is taught. The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education has introduced EcoELL (Ecosystem for English Language Learning) to meet this specific call especially towards producing learners who are competent and proficient in all reading, listening, speaking, and writing, with a focus on communicative abilities. The English Language Activities (ELA) is a pioneer project to assist students at higher education to have continuous engagement with the English Language beyond formal classroom. ELA focusses on students' communication and presentation skills by affording them the opportunity to use the English language while completing ELA tasks in an informal and non-threatening setting. The preparation of ELA is guided and informed primarily by the principles of CEFR, that gives emphasis to communicative language tasks and placement of language learners as social agents. This study explores English language instructors' outlook towards ELA implementation and their perceived impressions towards i) the benefits of ELA implementation, as well as ii) the challenges faced by instructors of its implementation at the National Defence University of Malaysia. By employing quantitative design, the study collected data from 23 English language instructors at the Language Centre through a questionnaire that was adapted from Lucas and Vicente (2022). The findings yielded positive responses as most instructors shared encouraging reactions towards the effectiveness of ELA in promoting effective autonomous communicative use of the English language outside classroom settings, along

with several constructive feedback and suggestions from the instructors themselves to better regulate the management and implementation of ELA.

Keywords:

Autonomy, Autonomous Learning, English Language Activities, Communicative Language Learning

Introduction

The global landscape of higher education has inevidently witnessed an increasing emphasis on English language proficiency as a crucial skill for academic success and employability. However, over the years, students at higher education do not reflect satisfactory proficiency in the language. The use of English language at higher education is generally conducted in classrooms and bound by the requirements of formal learning. Due to this, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has come up with an implementable plan known as The Ecosystem for English Language Learning (EcoELL) to support proficiency teaching in classroom with opportunities to continue using English language beyond classroom setting for students at higher education. The selection of activities and tasks for English Language Activities (ELA) are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) language specifications and communicative language activities. ELA, which foster self-regulated and autonomous learning, offer students with the affordances to use English language outside classroom informally while being facilitated by language instructors. Through these beyond-the-classroom language activities, students get to experience a holistic English language learning environment supported by digital platforms, thus enabling them to be English language competent and employment-ready graduates.

The idea of ELA originated from a pressing challenge encountered by selected higher education institutions that only allow limited contact hours and academic credit in learning English proficiency courses. For example, there are universities that offer English proficiency courses only during the first year of an academic programme, which leaves significant gap for learners to engage with English language, ergo, halted the effort to upskill their mastery in English language during the remaining years of studies. This drawback needs to be addressed urgently as students at higher education are expected to be proficient in English Language for it is a 'compulsory' skill required by industry players. English Language Activities (ELA) is a pioneer project to assist students at higher education to have continuous engagement with the English Language outside formal classroom. ELA focusses on students' communication and presentation skills by affording them with the opportunity to use English language while completing ELA tasks in an informal and non-threatening setting. Learning English language at higher education should go beyond proficiency and include the development of relevant attributes and competences such as communication skills and other soft skills to make students more employable and contributing citizens to society and the nation (Zuraidah Mohd Don, 2019). The preparation of ELA is guided and informed primarily by the principles of CEFR that give emphasis to communicative language tasks and placement of language learners as social agents. By participating in the language activities of ELA, all learners are empowered with the opportunities to become autonomous and self-regulated language learners as well as encouraging them to be self-initiated in the use of appropriate technology for better delivery of the outcome of each language tasks.

ELA is an independent and self-regulated language activities with no formal classroom instructions provided for learners. Instructors play the role as facilitator in monitoring learners' participation and completion of ELA tasks. Instructors are the role players in making learning enjoyable, shaping students' attitudes and personalities, as well as enabling and guiding learning that takes place outside of classrooms (Almahasees et al., 2021), ergo, their attitudes and experiences can greatly impact the effectiveness of ELA. By examining different viewpoints, the research can offer vital understanding into possible perceived obstacles and benefits of ELA implementation. It is instrumental to gain further insight regarding instructors' viewpoints on the efficacy and practicability of ELA. It is well established that teachers' perceptions of benefits or challenges differ and what some may consider to be a benefit, others may perceive to be a challenge (Lucas & Vicente, 2022). The way in which instructors understand the significance of ELA to complement formal learning of the English language, particularly the benefits of ELA and difficulties in facilitating its implementation will influence their acceptance of ELA and their attitude towards the implementation of ELA. Thus, this study generally aims to examine instructors' perceptions while facilitating ELA. The following research objectives are applied to navigate this study: (1) to explore English language instructors' outlook towards ELA and their perceived impressions towards the benefits of ELA, and (2) to assess the challenges and obstacles faced by instructors while observing the role as facilitator for ELA at the National Defence University of Malaysia.

Literature Review

Autonomous Language Learning

Learner autonomy is defined as the learner taking the responsibility of their own learning, as a situation in which the learner undertakes all the decisions about learning. Learner autonomy may occur in different settings and that a fully autonomous student is able to make and carry out all decisions and to take responsibility (Benson and Voller, 1997; Nunan, 1997). Furthermore, autonomous learners apart from able to take up responsibility, they are also able to acquire sources that enable them to learn by themselves (Holec, 1994). According to Demirel and Mirici (2002), learner autonomy does not imply that the learner will have complete control over all educational situations. Instead, the teacher should implement practices that cater to the learner's desires and needs during both in-class and non-class activities. Vygotsky (1991) views learning as a matter of receiving assistance and places importance on the social and interactive aspects of the learning process. In accordance with this paradigm, the teacher's responsibility is to establish an independent atmosphere and maintain it, enabling pupils to develop greater autonomy. Holec (2011) asserts that teachers should consistently monitor and analyse all the pedagogical aspects of their students. This method proposes that in the autonomous learning paradigm, teachers and students assume shared roles, with the teacher serving as a learning specialist and the student as an authority on their own learning. Aydoğdu (2009) defines learning as the self-directed study of the learner, without the need for a teacher. In this context, "independence" refers to the learner's ability to autonomously derive advantages from a predetermined curriculum. A learner may be labelled as autonomous when he possesses the ability to strategise, assess his own personal growth and able to oversee the entire learning process (Demirtas, 2010; Mehdiyev, 2020; Khan, Ali & Alourani, 2022). Autonomous learning encompasses the individual's capacity to strategise and set goals for the learning process, successfully accomplish these goals, and effectively oversee and control the entire learning journey.

Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)

The enormous potential of technology has radically changed the landscape of language learning. TELL is a shift from CALL (Computer-assisted language learning) in which technology is no longer a supporting pedagogical tool to assist language learning, instead it is regarded as a dimension that is normalised in the environment in which language exists and is used. Technology enhanced language learning refers to the use of related technological tools or means in any language learning activity for the aim to improve “efficiency, motivation, and learning style flexibility” (Zhou & Wei, 2018, p. 472). TELL is an answer to the calling for the need to innovate pedagogical and strategic instructions to facilitate learners to learn language effectively through digital realms (Nunan, 2000; Oxford & Lin, 2011; Zhou & Wei, 2018).

TELL supports the constructs of communicative language teaching and learning theory, Connectivism where communication and interaction are the keys within the paradigm of English language teaching. Learners interact not only with a diversity of ideas and opinions but also with technological tools where abundance of knowledge is placed (Walker & White, 2013). Many studies have been conducted that corroborated the positive impacts of digital technologies in language learning (Chun et al., 2016; Baydas & Goktas, 2016; Bui, 2022; Hockly & Dudeney, 2018; Kessler, 2017). Technology plays pivotal roles in shaping the manner of interaction that involves “individual volition, social conventions, situational context, and material constraints” (Chun et. al., 2016; p. 65). Furthermore, technology supports the wide range of learning ecology; both in and out-of-classrooms, physical and virtual, thus making it as a great medium for the development of language proficiency skills (Benson, 2006; Lai & Gu, 2011; Rüschoff, 2022). With technology adaptation into learning spaces, learners are given the flexibility to create their personal learning setting that caters to their learning schedules, learning environments, progress goals and asserting their preferences (Zou et. al., 2018). The growth of technology transforms conventional instruction from rigid to flexible and from teacher-centered to learner-centered (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). TELL also supports “active collaborative interaction” in which learners are actively engaged to practice languages and be involved in learning activities with their peers via digital platforms (Wargadinata et al., 2020). Technologies were primarily employed to facilitate peer-to-peer and teacher-student communication, as well as peer collaboration. Peer-to-peer communication prioritised idea-sharing, problem-solving, and experience-sharing both in and outside of class (Mitnik et al., 2009). Peer collaboration using digital platforms involves a shared and negotiated decision-making process and shared accountability (Storch, 2021). In addition, digital technologies also bring profound implications by being the mediator for students to practice using English language outside classroom as well as supporting their social practices through language learning processes (Kessler, 2017; Sauro & Chapelle, 2017). Learners’ high acceptance on the value of technology and its effective impact in facilitating their language learning have provided opportunities for instructors to maximise the use of technology in their instructions. Technology is an essential element that can encourage learners’ engagement for knowledge has become accessible and borderless. Learners can access resources easily and learning becomes a motivating process as it is not confined by time and space (Ahmadi, 2018; Hashim et al., 2023; Lai & Gu, 2011; Shadiev & Yang, 2020). The integration of technology in language learning instructions contributes to one of the crucial and necessary strategies of language learning skills; self-regulation in which it involves the process of learning, time, thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and environment management from learners (Zhou & Wei, 2018). TELL is becoming more profoundly relevant in the era of post-pandemic, thus it is

imperative for instructors and researchers to reconsider language learning strategies and learning environments that are informed by technological advancements.

Previous Studies

Multiple studies have been conducted on enhancing students' English language proficiency in higher learning institutions. In recent years, the concept of learner autonomy in English language teaching (ELT) has gained significant prominence, particularly in higher education contexts. The transition towards autonomous communicative English language learning approaches reflects a more comprehensive understanding of the role that students assume in their own learning processes. In a study by Basri (2023), there are multiple factors that hinder students from attaining autonomy in language learning, for example, the various backgrounds of students and teachers, mismatch between students and teachers' expectations, spoon feeding tendencies by teachers and large classes, which hinder personal interaction between students and teachers. To address these issues, the role of support in fostering autonomy is paramount. While some argue that minimal guidance proves ineffective (Kirschner et al., 2006), it is imperative to consider both the quantity and quality of autonomy support to prevent overreliance on instruction (Samah et al., 2009). Mohd Don (2018) asserted that the landscape of English language programme in Malaysia higher education has shifted into equipping students with the knowledge and skills required to progress in the labour market, rather than preparing students for academic work and personal development. Many jobs require graduates to be able to communicate in English effectively and demonstrate the ability to work as a team with people from diverse backgrounds. Thus, it is essential to re-evaluate classroom activities to ensure students are better equipped for the demands of the workplace (Mohd Don, 2018).

In a study by Aizawa et al. (2023), provision of support is imperative for students with limited English language proficiency. To express oneself by interacting with others has become one of the prominent challenges for students. Supplementary academic English courses (EAP and ESP) are increasingly important for improving students' readiness for content learning through English. These courses can improve students' self-efficacy. Apart from providing students with formal English courses, beyond classroom language activities is another strategy to enhance students' English proficiency. For example, Abdullah et al (2018) conducted a review on the implementation of ELEX programme at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) which aims to address the increased importance of competence in English by engaging students with the English language through formal courses and beyond classroom language activities known as LAX. The activities of LAX require students to work collaboratively in teams to complete a given language activity. The students are required to complete the language task using English language with focus given for them to complete the activities "in a relatively stress-reduced and flexible environment" to help develop students' confidence and language proficiency (p. 33). The programme demonstrates its potential not only to improve students' English language proficiency, also to prepare them to enter the Malaysian workforce as confident and competent English language users. The concept beyond classroom learning aligns with the pervasive presence and dominant role of technology that supports "new paradigm of learning" (Kivunja, 2015, p.1). Instructors are encouraged to exploit the "pedagogical potential" (Winch et al. 2014, p. 415) of technology as a learning tool for higher education students who are known to be digital natives. The integration of technology allows language learning to occur naturally and engages learners as active agents that autonomously contribute and directed their own learning (Kabilan et al. 2021). An et al. (2021) investigated technology-assisted self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies and whether the technology-based self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies

mediated the associations between English language self-efficacy, English enjoyment, and learning outcomes.

The study revealed that English language self-efficacy and English language enjoyment were both related to technology-based SRL strategies. Educators should create a learning environment that empowers students in technological based self-regulated learning through a variety of learning activities both inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, students should be encouraged to participate in social language learning activities by engaging them in cooperative learning as well as affording them with opportunities for speaking practices through diversified activities to help students maintain a positive belief about their English-speaking competence. Moreover, the integration of technology in language learning has been shown to facilitate autonomous learning. Zhao et al. (2019) found that technological tools not only improved students' oral expression and listening comprehension but also enhanced communication between teachers and students, thereby fostering an environment conducive to autonomous learning. This perspective is echoed by Tran and Duong (2021), who reported that students exhibited positive attitudes toward technology-based language learning, which in turn encouraged them to take responsibility for their own learning. Instructors should leverage technology to create interactive and collaborative learning experiences that empower students. The integration of technology and the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches are critical in fostering an environment where students can thrive as autonomous learners in higher education. As the landscape of English language education continues to evolve, it is imperative for educators to remain attuned to these developments and adapt their practices to support students with learners' autonomy.

Implementation of English Language Activities (ELA) for Higher Education

The execution of ELA is carefully thought and planned after reviewing and comparing several best practices of language learning beyond the classroom. ELA is the manifestation on the use of language beyond classroom as an extended space for learning and recognition of learners as social agents who are competent to regulate their learning with sufficient guidance from facilitators as proposed by Reinders and Benson (2017). ELA embodies the approach of Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1998) that asserted the importance of social interactions and collaboration in a learning process as well as the approach of incidental learning through various language tasks with the overall aim to improve learners' proficiency and confidence in using the language. The perimeters of ELA consist of dimensions of formality, informality, pedagogy, and locus of control (see Figure 1). The integration of these four dimensions requires involvement mainly from learners and supported by facilitators. At the formality level, all learners at tertiary level are required to complete credited English language proficiency courses. These credited courses are to be conducted in classrooms and assessed either summatively or formatively to measure the attainment of learning outcomes. Due to limited hours of formal engagement with the English language during formal learning, it is essential to complement the process of language learning with informal activities to be completed beyond classrooms. The nature of informal learning itself is an effective means to reduce learners' anxiety level when using English. Learners are placed in groups with their peers, and they are given several language tasks to be completed within a flexible amount of time. In terms of pedagogy, each group is facilitated by a facilitator to offer guidance and support for learners while completing the assigned language tasks. Overall, ELA is self-directed and self-regulated by learners themselves. Self-regulatory strategies are argued to be a functional approach to improve motivation and self-learning (Kormos & Csizér, 2014). In addition, ELA also

empowers learners with the autonomy to reconstruct their learning setting by shifting from conventional classrooms to online platforms and to use any suitable online tools to enrich and support the completion of their language tasks.

By participating in ELA language tasks, learners are given the autonomy and responsibilities for their learning as well as improving interpersonal and collaborative skills by helping each other through peer-learning. Moving on to the dimension of pedagogy, no formal lessons and assessments are delivered for ELA. However, as a validation and recognition for their effort, each student who manages to complete a minimum of three ELA language tasks will be awarded with a certificate of achievement to acknowledge their commitment and excellence in fulfilling all the ELA tasks.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive analysis design using the quantitative method through a survey. The questionnaire was adopted from Lucas & Vincente (2023)'s survey on "*Teachers' readiness for Online Teaching & Learning (OTL) around the world*". The questionnaire was divided into 4 sections: namely the demographic details of respondents, the overall perceived benefits of the self-developed autonomous activity, the perceived challenges faced by instructors in terms of its delivery and execution as well as the suggested recommendations by instructors for further improvement of the implemented activities. The original instrument from which the developed questionnaire's items were adopted had yielded an average total value of 0.846 (*Cronbach-Alpha Value*) for the differences in average mean scores between each item, indicating a range of "good to excellent" internal consistency value, making it highly valid and reliable as a primary adopted instrument for this study (Lucas & Vincente, 2023). The items were adapted and contextualised in terms of its references and suitability to the current research.

Sampling & Research Procedure

The distribution of the survey was done online, via Google forms to 23 instructors who resumed the roles of facilitators of ELA. These facilitators were part of the delivery and execution of the activities. The distribution of the survey was done at the end of the completion of three ELA's supervised by each facilitator via purposive sampling involving only the English unit teaching staff who were directly involved with the implementation of ELA. The study returned 14 ($n=14$) responses out of the total of 23 facilitators, representing more than half of the intended number of respondents (60.8%). Leavy (2022), states that while using purposive sampling, the researcher has the freedom to choose a sample size that have the best suitable characteristics representing the population identified for a specific study, hence this liberty allows them to gain more in-depth and quality information about their participants or respondents. In addition, it is further explained that neither statistical nor specific calculation method is needed in trying to determine an effective number for sample size in studies of such nature. Therefore, the total number of 14 responses received through the survey is considered valid in terms of representing majority of the participants out of the total population of the study.

The responses were then analysed via descriptive analysis for the first three sections, followed by a thematic analysis using generated themes as codes for the open-ended responses in the final section. All responses were analysed via percentage-based value for the items using a five-point Likert scale (*scale of (1) = Least agreeable to (5) = Most agreeable*). The items in section 1 mainly investigated participants' background including details such as their age range, gender, years of teaching experience and education levels. All items in sections two, three and four were organised into five key areas which investigate the perceived benefits of ELA and its impact on students as well as the challenges they faced in implementing the activities. These five (5) areas include **self-management, work-life balance, teaching & learning activities, teacher-student interaction and technological advances**. All five areas were adopted from the original instrument modelled by the present study. For section 4, the open-ended responses were also analysed according to the above-mentioned areas, through which they were later manually coded and categorised.

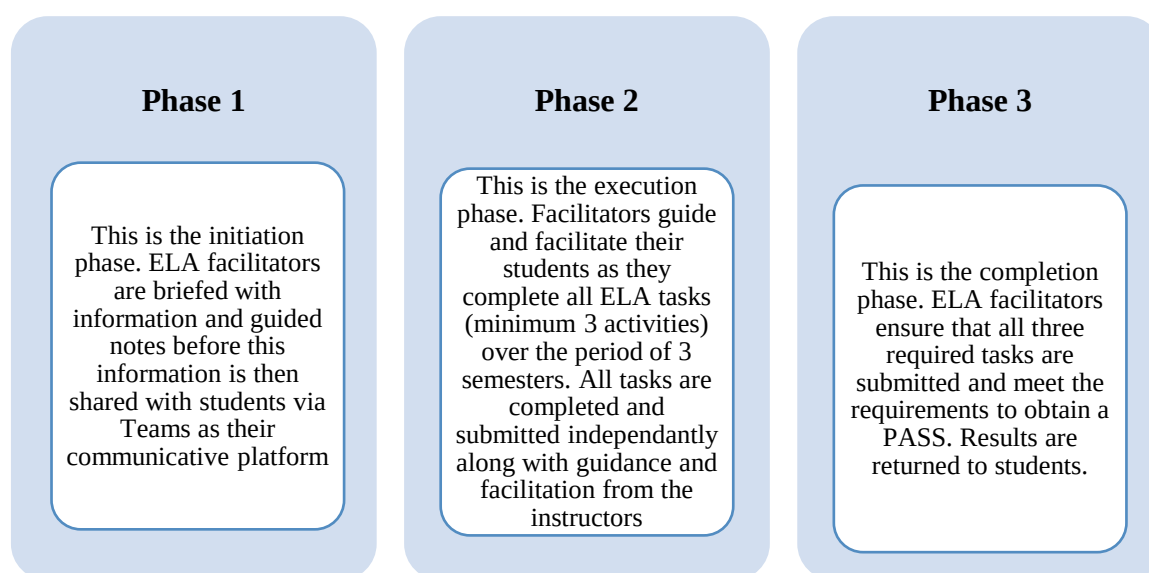


Figure 1: Three Phases Representing the Delivery and Facilitation Process of ELA

The figure above shows the three phases involved in the process of delivering information on ELA, facilitating and guiding students through the process as well as the final part whereby facilitators ensured that the minimum number of ELA's were submitted for students to achieve the requirements for a PASS. Hence, the distribution of the survey for this study was done at the end of Phase 3 once all ELA submissions were completed.

Results

The findings from the survey are divided into four main sections. The following are the overall results obtained based on the feedback received from the respondents.

Section A: Demographic Details

Overall, the results showed that majority of respondents belonged to the 30-45 age range group with 71% (10 respondents) and the remaining 29% (4 respondents) from the 45-60 age range, having obtained either a master's or a PhD degree (93%). A total of 10 females and 4 males responded with a majority (50%) having had 10-15 years of experience in teaching.



Figure 2: Findings of Respondents Overall Years of Teaching Experience

Section B: Facilitator's Perceived Benefits of ELA

The following results represent the overall findings based on respondents' perceived benefits according to five areas as indicated below.

Self-Management

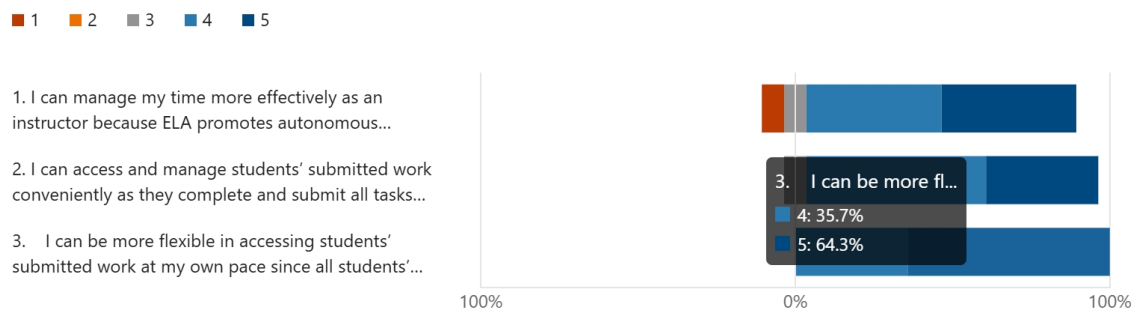


Figure 3: Self-Management Benefits of ELA

For *self-management*, Item 3 indicated the highest score (64.3%), followed by Item 2 with a total of 57.1% as most agreeable. The findings revealed that flexibility as well as ease in using the available platform to communicate with their students was highly beneficial to the facilitators. The facilitators also found the ability to store, manage and access students' submitted work made ELA effective and manageable.

Teaching & Learning Activities

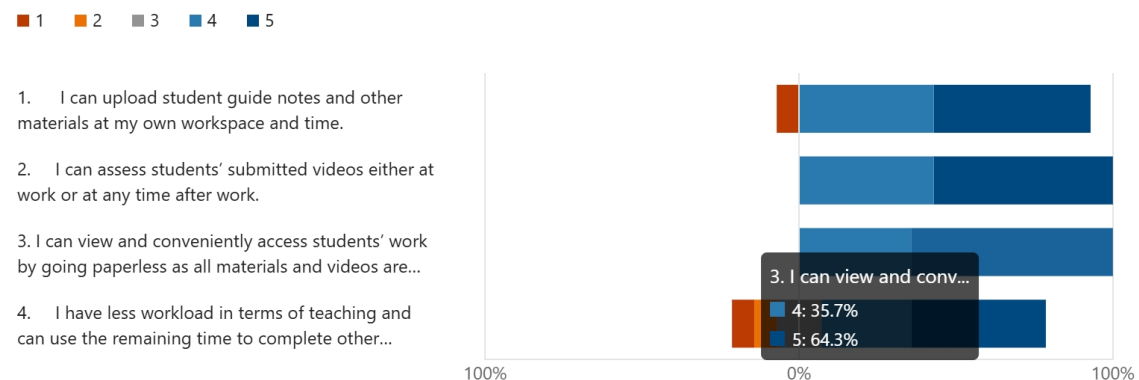


Figure 4: Teaching & Learning Benefits of ELA

As for teaching and learning activities, majority of the facilitators benefitted from the convenience they experienced in terms of viewing and assessing students' submitted work. Although 3 respondents indicated issues with the platform in relation to technicalities such as uploading guided notes and having extra workload, the rest of the facilitators (64.3%) found ELA providing them the extra time needed for other workload as there was minimal time spent on preparing, sharing and delivering the prepared notes.

Work-Life Balance

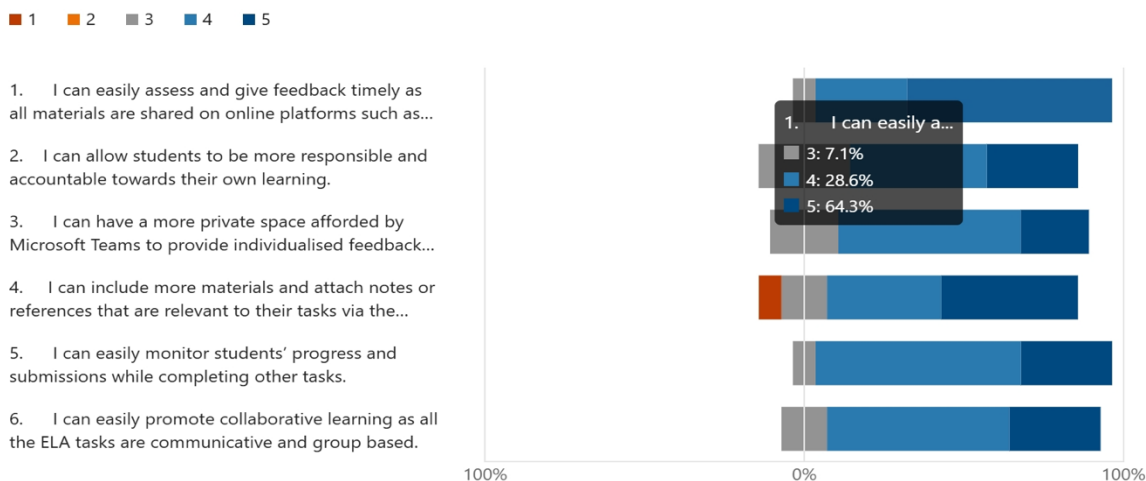
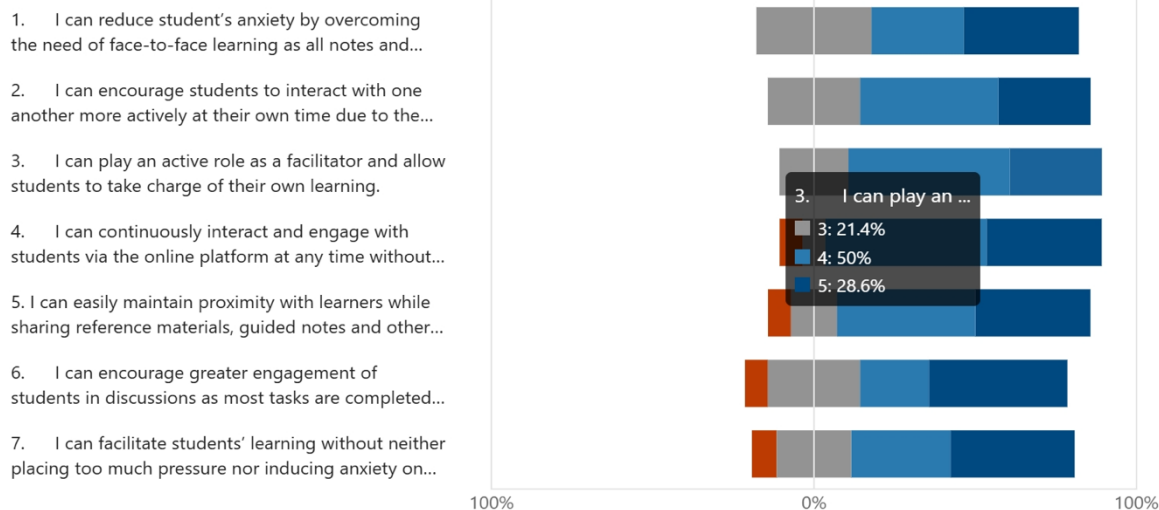


Figure 5: Work-Life Balance Benefits of ELA

Work-life balance revealed that facilitators enjoyed being able to provide timely and individualised feedback on students' work (64.3%). Most respondents agreed to items 1, 5 & 6 indicating that the facilitators were able to effectively access students' work and progress at their convenience and that they preferred the idea of promoting collaborative learning via communicative group tasks. This was beneficial as it was an extension to what most facilitators struggled to achieve, especially with the lack of contact hours experienced during the allocated class hours.

Teacher-Student Interaction

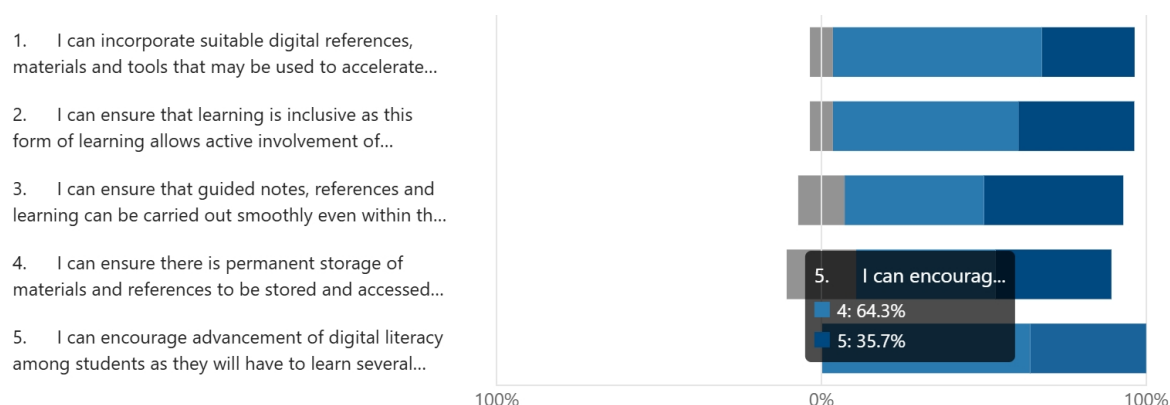
■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

**Figure 6: Teacher-Student Interaction Benefits of ELA**

Out of the five areas discussed, the aspect of teacher-student interaction appeared the least beneficial as many facilitators had selected the least agreeable options specifically for items 4, 5, 6 & 7. These items also indicated communication as a pertinent issue which hindered them from having more active engagement and discussions with students online, as opposed to having them in a face-to-face classroom. However, the facilitators also indicated that they had found ELA beneficial as it reduced learner anxiety which further encouraged learners to interact and communicate actively with one another with comfort. Most importantly, they had opted for item 3 which supports the effectiveness of ELA in terms of inculcating a facilitative role which further encourages students to experience learner autonomy at its' best (50%).

Technological Affordances

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

**Figure 7: Technological Affordances Benefits of ELA**

Overall, out of the five key areas, the facilitators indicated that the ELA's were mostly beneficial in terms of technological advances especially in managing their teaching and learning activities as it utilised an online platform for interaction. All the respondents expressed

relief that there was permanent storage of materials and references which could be assessed anytime (100%), and that the proposed activities highly encouraged digital literacy among students as they had to learn about video editing (100%). Items 2 & 3 were also opted by facilitators as most beneficial as it revealed that ELA had indeed promoted inclusivity as shared materials, references and guided notes could be remotely accessible without having the need to meet and have physical classes.

Section C & D: Perceived Challenges in Implementing ELA and Suggestions for Recommendation.

In this section, facilitators revealed to have found ELA challenging in terms of communicating and forwarding instructions to their students as there was lack of student-teacher communication and interaction via the platform used (9 responses), followed by experiencing issues with communicating and engaging actively with students using the online platforms such as *Teams* and *WhatsApp*) (6 responses). In addition, the third highest ranked challenge faced with ELA was their inability to monitor students' time management and work pace as all tasks were completed independently and submitted online (5 responses). Adding on to these challenges, the open-ended responses had also yielded some issues faced by facilitators along with several recommendations for future improvement of the programme. The following table describes this information in detail.

Generated Themes for Coding	Challenges in Implementing ELA (Feedback via Open-ended responses)	Recommended Suggestions for Improvement
Self-Management	• None	• None
Work-Life Balance	• Other work commitments	• None
Teaching & Learning Activities	• Technical issues with platform • Contacting or locating students via Teams	• (7%) Too many tasks/ assignments • Reduce the number of tasks • Assign suitable leaders for assigned groups • Provide better guided notes/one-time facilitation • Impose penalties for late submissions
Teacher-Student Interaction	• Lack of student commitment • Lack of communication with students • Student issues and involvement • Student motivation	• (79%) Improve Cooperation from students. • Introduce reward system • Give away prizes • Give students merit for completion

Technological Affordances	• None	• (14%) Improve current platform use • Avoid technical issues such as problems in adding students via Teams • Use simpler platforms that ease student-teacher communication
----------------------------------	--	--

Table 1: Open-Ended Responses for Challenges in Implementing ELA and Future Recommendations

Discussion of Findings

General Objective 1: To Explore English Language Instructors' Outlook Towards ELA And Their Perceived Impressions Towards The Benefits Of ELA.

Responses from sections B clearly suggest that facilitators had a strong positive outlook towards the activities conducted mainly due to three reasons which include the flexibility of conducting the activities via an online learning platform, ease of managing the activities as there was less involvement throughout the activities in terms of “a teacher” and more towards a facilitator as well as in terms providing instantaneous feedback and the ability to monitor students' submissions and progress. These findings support Demirel & Mirici's take on autonomous learning (2002) which explains that learner autonomy does not imply lack of control or losing control over your learners, instead it only fosters independency among learners in gathering resources and materials as well as collaborating with others to excel in their learning. ELA facilitators therefore can successfully maximise and accelerate this via the autonomous activities conducted.

The accessibility in terms of materials, guided notes and submissions done via the available Teams platform supports the idea of technological acceptance and integration into learning. Zhou & Wei (2018) claim that it is critical for technological innovation to be integrated and merged into learning as this contributes towards crucial language learning strategies such as self-regulation skills that assist learners in managing their own learning, time, thoughts, behaviours and thoughts. This enables learners to take control over aspects that affect their learning better as they can oversee their own learning. This also provides more time and space for instructors to focus on other aspects of teaching and learning, as most often autonomous learning encourages better time and tasks management space for who can now function as facilitators (Kormos & Csizer, 2014). Another key benefit of ELA highlighted by instructors were the ability to foster collaborative learning among learners. These peer-to-peer collaborations and interactions promoted positive problem solving, experience-sharing and willingness to communicate among learners. The facilitators particularly highlighted the strength of ELA in addressing student anxiety and motivation to otherwise speak confidently especially in face-to-face classrooms. Supporting this view, Storch (2021) highlights that in addition to facilitating learning, technology also mediates autonomous learning by providing a platform whereby learners can communicate and contribute without feeling anxious about being judged and being afraid of making errors while communicating. Hence, through ELA,

facilitators can provide tasks and guide learners without constantly asserting excellence or overall performance. Instead, they can focus on learners' overall progress and provide constant constructive feedback in a more personalised manner using the available platform. In summary, the instructors provided promising positive outlook and found ELA beneficial mainly in terms of **self-management, encouraging work-life balance** as well as in support of **technological advances** and its' impact on learning.

General Objective 2: To Assess The Challenges And Obstacles Faced By Instructors While Playing The Role As Facilitator For ELA At UPNM.

Like any other novel and innovative approach introduced, ELA is not one to be dismissed of challenges in terms of its' implementation. Holec (2011) imperatively suggest that for autonomous learning to take place and to be effective, it is crucial for both teachers and learners to assume shared roles with the instructors serving as a specialist or the guide, whilst the learners taking charge of their own learning. In line with this, one of the biggest challenges faced by instructors was mainly the execution and maintenance of this specific teacher-learner relationship. Most instructors found it challenging to communicate with their students as there was limited meetings and lack of motivation among students in completing tasks. Understandably, this is a challenge that presents itself in autonomous learning activities as students are constantly used to being fed with information instead of being encouraged towards a more productive independent form of learning (Holec, 2011). To overcome this, the recommended suggestion was to introduce a form of reward or merit system which could boost overall learner participation as well as encourage an increase in overall participation among learners. Another challenge faced by facilitators was distributing the ELA learning materials such as tasks and guided notes effectively. Technological acceptance, although high among learners in today's generation can still be a challenge with lack of monitoring and progress. As suggested by Aydogdu (2009) & Holec (2011) constant monitoring, preparation and review is necessary for autonomous learning to take place. For ELA, facilitators further suggested for constant improvement on the current platform used, to reduce the number of shared notes and to seek for alternative approaches in delivering the tasks to the students as well as to develop a more interactive medium that can further enhance the effectiveness of the execution of ELA.

Overall, in terms of challenges faced by the facilitators, teacher-student interactions and learning materials are the main challenges. For these, the facilitators suggested reward system to boost student participation, and improvement of the current platform and seek alternative approaches in the delivery of the tasks.

Conclusion

The research findings overall suggest that the reception and acceptance towards ELA is encouragingly positive and constructive. Facilitators unanimously agreed upon the numerous advantages and benefits that students can gain from the programme. Like any other novel initiated programme, ELA comes with certain impairments which also highlights on the limitation of this study. Since the study is limited to one cohort which pioneered the programme, it would be recommended to compare the second cohort's overall ELA performance to its' first, to gain better insights and understanding towards the overall success of the programme. Thus, it can be concluded that ELA stands effective as an alternative autonomous communicative form of language learning which aligns with the 21st century learning, in support of Ministry of Education's call towards a more CEFR-aligned framework in the formulation of ELA encourage learners to build on their strengths as well as boosts their

learning. With improvements made to its' delivery and implementation, it is hoped that this form of language learning can create a shift in the current existing tertiary English language curriculum in Malaysia.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge Global Academic Excellence (M) Sdn Bhd, who granted the Publication Grant Scheme for this project.

References

- Abdullah, M. H., Ho Sook Wah, & Wong Bee Eng. (2018). Delivering the ELEX Package: An English language experience approach for undergraduates. In Mohd Don, Z., Zainuddin, S.Z., Tam Shu Sim & Zainal, A.Z. (Eds). *Teaching and Learning English in Malaysian Higher Education: Sharing experience to improve practice* (pp. 21-41). Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press.
- Ahmadi, D. M. R. (2018). The use of technology in English language learning: A literature review. *International Journal of Research in English education*, 3(2), 115-125.
- Aizawa, I., Rose, H., Thompson, G., & Curle, S. (2023). Beyond the threshold: Exploring English language proficiency, linguistic challenges, and academic language skills of Japanese students in an English medium instruction programme. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(4), 837-861.
- Almahasees, Z., Mohsen, K., & Amin, M. O. (2021, May). Faculties and students' perceptions of online learning during COVID-19. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 6, p. 638470). Frontiers Media SA.
- An, Z., Wang, C., Li, S., Gan, Z., & Li, H. (2021). Technology-assisted self-regulated English language learning: Associations with English language self-efficacy, English enjoyment, and learning outcomes. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 558466.
- Basri, F. (2023). Factors influencing learner autonomy and autonomy support in a faculty of education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 28(2), 270-285.
- Baydas, O., & Goktas, Y. (2016). Influential factors on preservice teachers' intentions to use ICT in future lessons. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 56, 170–178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.030>
- Benson, P., & Voller, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Autonomy and independence in language learning*. London: Longman.
- Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. London, UK: Longman
- Bergmann, J. & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day*. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education
- Chun, D., Kern, R., & Smith, B. (2016). Technology in language use, language teaching, and language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100(S1), 64-80.
- Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Pergamon.
- Hashim, H., Jamal, M. F., Esa, I., & Rafiq, K. R. M. (2023). TEALL: Technology-Enhanced Active Language Learning. *Creative Education*, 14(7), 1453-1462.
- Kabilan, M. K., Aziz, R. M. R. A., & Netto-Shek, J. A. (Eds.). (2021). *Teaching and Learning of English in the 21st Century: Perspectives and Practices from South East Asia*. Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia Press
- Kabilan, M.K., Raja Abdul Aziz, R.M. & Netto-Shek, J.A. (2021) 21st century learning and English Language Education: What's next? In Kabilan, M. K., Aziz, R. M. R. A., & Netto-Shek, J. A. (Eds.). (2021). *Teaching and Learning of English in the 21st Century*:

Perspectives and Practices from South East Asia. Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia Press.

- Kessler, G. (2017). Technology and the future of language teaching. *Foreign language annals*, 51(1), 205-218.
- Kirschner, P. A., Sweller, J., & Clark, R. E. (2006). Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry-Based Teaching. *Educational Psychologist*, 41(2), 75–86. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4102_1
- Kivunja, C. (2015). Teaching students to learn and to work well with 21st century skills: Unpacking the career and life skills domain of the new learning paradigm. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 4(1), 1-11.
- Khan, R., Ali, A., & Alourani, A. (2022). Investigating Learners' Experience of Autonomous Learning in E-learning Context. *Int. J. Emerg. Technol. Learn.*, 17, 4-17. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v17i08.29885>.
- Kormos, J., & Csizer, K. (2014). The interaction of motivation, self-regulatory strategies, and autonomous learning behavior in different learner groups. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(2), 275-299.
- Lai, C., & Gu, M. (2011). Self-regulated out-of-class language learning with technology. *Computer assisted language learning*, 24(4), 317-335.
- Leavy, P. (2022). Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches (2nd ed). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Lucas, M., & Vicente, P. N. (2023). A double-edged sword: Teachers' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online teaching and learning in higher education. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28(5), 5083-5103.
- Mohd Don, Z. (2018). Setting the context. In Mohd Don, Z., Zainuddin, S.Z., Tam Shu Sim & Zainal, A.Z. (Eds.). *Teaching and Learning English in Malaysian Higher Education: Sharing experience to improve practice* (pp. 1-20). Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press.
- Nunan, D. (1997). Designing and adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 192-203). Longman. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315842172>
- Nunan, D. (2000). Technology support for second language learning. In P. Peterson, E. Baker, & B. McGaw (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (3rd ed., pp. 204-210). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Elsevier.
- Mehdiyev, E. (2020). Opinions of EFL students regarding autonomous learning in language teaching. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 16(2), 521-536.
- Mitnik, R., Recabarren, M., Nussbaum, M., & Soto, A. (2009). Collaborative robotic instruction: A graph teaching experience. *Computers & Education*, 53(2), 330–342.
- Oxford, R. L., & Lin, C.-Y. (2011). Autonomous learners in digital realms: Exploring strategies for effective digital language learning. In B. Morrison (Ed.), *Independent language learning: Building on experience, seeking new perspectives* (pp. 157-171). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Reinders, H., & Benson, P. (2017). Research agenda: Language learning beyond the classroom. *Language Teaching*, 50(4), 561-578. doi:10.1017/S0261444817000192
- Rüschhoff, B. (2022). Digital Tools in Language Education—Origins, Frameworks, Perspectives. *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies*, 33 (1), 257-269.
- Samah, S. A. A., H. K. Jusoff, and A. D. Silong. 2009. "Does Spoon-Feeding Impede Independent Learning?" *Canadian Social Science*, 5 (3): 82.

Sauro, S., & Chapelle, C. (2017). Toward lingua-technocultural competence. In C. Chapelle & S. Sauro (Eds.), *The handbook of technology and second language teaching and learning* (pp. 459–472). Wiley Blackwell.

Shadiev, R., & Yang, M. (2020). Review of studies on technology-enhanced language learning and teaching. *Sustainability*, 12(2), 524.