

PROMOTING LEARNER AUTONOMY THROUGH SCHOODOLOGY M-LEARNING PLATFORM IN AN EAP CLASS AT AN INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The advent of mobile learning platforms and Web 2.0 technologies is believed to provide an autonomous learning space that minimizes the power structure between the teacher and students in Indonesian EFL classes, accommodating the students to display their capacity to navigate their own learning. *Schoolgy* m-learning platform, a social networking learning management system, is one of potential platforms facilitating the exercise of autonomy in English language learning. This paper aims to report how *Schoolgy* m-learning platform facilitated the exercise of learner autonomy in an EAP class at an Indonesian higher education. The qualitative case study involved twenty one-students enrolled in an EAP course that adopted a blended learning method. The findings suggested that *Schoolgy* m-learning platform helped the students to exercise autonomy in EAP learning. The students exercised their control over learning management, cognitive process, and selection of learning materials. The exercise of autonomy is due to the affordance of *Schoolgy*. First, *Schoolgy*'s social networking interface facilitated interaction and communication among the students. Second, its mobile application enabled the students to learn English at their pace, time, and place. Third, the media-rich materials encouraged the students to further explore other materials online.

Key words: autonomy in language learning; *Schoolgy*; mobile learning; EAP

1. Introduction

The field of language education has witnessed the paradigm shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness so as to prepare learners to be learning agents in this rapidly changing world. This transformation requires educators to pay more attention to individual attributes of language learners. Among these, autonomy has gained a greater attention since Holec (1981, p. 3) and his pilot project to the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project, initially defining autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." Autonomy needs to be fostered as it is an educational goal (Huang & Benson, 2013; Reinders & Balcikanli,

2011), which encompasses the relationship of the individual to the society (Benson, 2011). According to Raya & Vieira (2015), autonomy is a vital aspect for the development of lifelong learning in the society as learners will participate in a democratic society and become decision-makers after finishing their formal education. For that reason, the promotion of autonomy in language education is projected to prepare learners for social life in the society where they live.

In the Indonesian context, the promotion of autonomy in formal EFL classes becomes a crucial path to prepare students to actively take part in the democratic society. However, according to Dardjowidjojo (2001, 2006), implementing the concept of autonomy is a challenging task for EFL teachers in Indonesia mainly due to three existing cultural and philosophical values in its society. The first is the *manut-lan-miturut* (to agree and obey) philosophy, considering that good children are those obeying and agreeing with their parents, elders, or people in high positions. Complaints and different views are thus not allowed to be made by children. Another concept is the *ewuh-pekewuh* (uncomfortable and uneasy) philosophy, in which people are reluctant to give different opinions to the elders or people with higher authority. The third is the *sabda pendita ratu* (the words of a priestly king) philosophy, saying that the words of people with high positions in the society are regarded as god's truth. As a result, those words cannot be questioned by people with lower positions.

Those three forms of philosophy are manifested in the power relationship between teacher and students in EFL classroom practice. Most students consequently accept their teachers as an authority figure they should follow and obey. They will feel uncomfortable to challenge the authority of teacher as what the teacher says is the ultimate truth. This resonates Littlewood's (1999) argument that the communication patterns in Asian cultures reflects the high acceptance of power and authority. As a result, the teachers control all students' learning aspects. According to Chia (2007), a teacher-controlled learning environment inhibits the exercise and development of autonomy in language learning. This also explains why several studies on autonomy, according to Nakata (2011), report that Asian learners tend to be obedient, passive, and teacher-dependent. However, according to Benson (2011), those learners do innately possess autonomy but their autonomy is inhibited by the power structure in the classroom. For that reason, an autonomous learning space is needed to stimulate the exercise of autonomy in language learning.

The advent of recent Web 2.0 and mobile 2.0 technologies has brought a great deal of attention to shape the promotion of autonomy in English language learning as those technologies provide learners with more opportunities to take control over their English

learning. According to Villanueva, Ruiz-Madrid and Luzón (2010, p. 7), technologies help the development and exercise of autonomy by providing “multiplicity of access to authentic documents, multiplicity of access to interaction, the chance to reinforce metacognitive ability through experience with others, via dialogue and knowledge of other forms and ways of tackling problems and learning styles, other perceptions of texts and discursive genres, other criteria and uses of formality and courtesy.” They can facilitate self-access and give the students opportunities to self-direct and navigate their language learning, providing them with environments for both independent and collaborative self-directed learning (Benson, 2011). The advent of recent mobile technologies which enable the installation of English language learning applications and mobile version of Web 2.0 (see Wang and Heffernan, 2009) also creates more flexible ways for students to manage their learning, allowing learners’ mobility in learning. Teachers’ intervention on students’ learning is thus minimized, providing the learners with ample spaces to work on their own as well as to interact and collaborate with others, either within or beyond the language classroom.

Even though studies on mobile learning or mobile 2.0 to boost learner autonomy in Indonesia are still limited, the integration of Web 2.0 technologies into English language learning in the light of learner autonomy in Asia has been reported in the recent literature. Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010, p. 383), for example, found out that blog-assisted language learning (BALL) fosters learner autonomy “by developing students’ language and cognitive skills and helping them to make more informed choices about their decisions.” The study also reported that students’ skills to make independent decision and to take independent action were enhanced through blogging activities. Moreover, students’ independence was advanced by their developed interdependence. When integrating a course management system called M@xLearn into a Thai traditional face-to-face English class, Sanprasert (2010, p 120) reported that the CMS is critical in the development of aspects of autonomy as it brought about “circumstances and structures that encouraged students to take control of their own learning.” The study also documented the changes of autonomous behaviors among the students due to the experiences with CMS. Furthermore, Snodin (2013) found that CMS could initiate the development of reactive autonomy in Asian context.

Since those studies were conducted outside Indonesia, further research into the implementation of mobile learning system to promote learner autonomy in English language learning in Indonesia is needed. In this present study, Schoology mobile learning system is deliberately used to promote learner autonomy in English for Academic Purposes (EAP, henceforth) course at a private university in Indonesia. Schoology (www.Schoology.com) is

an online social networking learning management system that offers an interactive learning platform for interaction and collaboration between teacher and students as well as students and students. Its mobile application available at Android, Apple and Kindle Fire accelerates mobile learning experiences beyond the language classroom. Even though the technical quality aspects of *Schoology's* software application system could instigate mobile learning experiences (see Sarrab, Elbasir, Alnaeli, 2016), the use of *Schoology* m-learning platform to foster learner autonomy in EFL learning has not been reported in the literature yet. To fill this gap, this study aims to describe how the *Schoology* m-learning platform facilitates the exercise of learner autonomy in EAP learning. The next section outlines the construct of autonomy in foreign language learning and mobile learning.

2. Literature review

2.1. Autonomy in foreign language teaching and learning

The construct of autonomy in foreign language teaching and learning has been articulated by autonomy scholars and its concepts can be found in the literature of language teaching and applied linguistics. The original and widely cited concept of autonomy in language education was echoed by Holec (1981, p. 3), who defined autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning.” The definition entails that autonomous learners themselves are fully responsible for all learning decisions, such as identifying objectives and contents, selecting materials, monitoring and evaluating their progress. Learners’ responsibility becomes the first step to autonomy (Little, 2004). Those learning decisions and their implementation occur in an independent language learning situation in which learners exercise their full responsibility for their language learning without the intervention of the teacher (Dickinson, 1987). Such a situation enables students to develop a psychological relation to the learning process and content (Little, 1991, 2007). In a nutshell, the concepts of autonomy in language learning encompass the components of learner responsibility, learning situation, and learner psychological state.

Benson (2011) argues that autonomy is a natural attribute of learners. He believes that learners naturally tend to have autonomy but the exercise of autonomy is inhibited by educational institution. Modifying Holec’s (1981) definition, he formulates autonomy as “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” (p. 58). Two distinctive elements of this concept are capacity and control. The former indicates the potential within learners, which consists of three interrelated components:

1. *ability*, which has to do with the knowledge of the language and skills possessed by the students to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning;
2. *desire*, which signifies student's volition and willingness to learn the target language;
3. *freedom*, which indicates the level of control over learning (Huang and Benson, 2013).

While a capacity describes the learners' potential, control implies "having the power to make choices and decisions and acting on them" (p. 9). According to Benson (2011), the notion of 'control' is more observable to investigate than that of taking charge or being responsible.

The abovementioned definition accordingly implies that the promotion of autonomy should be carried out by giving an ample chance for learners to exercise their potentials to control language learning. There are three dimensions of control over language learning as articulated by Benson (2011). The first dimension, *control over learning management*, refers to students' observable language learning behaviors about where, when, and how to learn the target language (Huang and Benson, 2013). Another dimension, *control over cognitive process*, has to do with how to cognitively control psychological factors related to language learning, such as motivation, belief, and emotions (Benson, 2011). To facilitate control over cognitive process, learners are encouraged to think about and reflect on their language learning (Little, 2007) so that they take control of their learning experiences (Benson, 2011). The reflective process raises students' metacognitive awareness, which, in turn, leads to more systematic and effective learning management. Lastly, *control over learning content* suggests the decisions made by learners to select language learning materials which fit their learning purpose. Even though these three dimensions of autonomy are interdependent, learners might show a greater degree of autonomy in one dimension than in others (Benson, 2011; Nakata, 2011). This happens because autonomy could "take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times" (Benson, 2011, p. 58). This leads to the conclusion that different cultural contexts bring about different forms of autonomy displayed by the learners.

As originated from the Western culture, the earlier concept of autonomy is often associated with independence, individualization, solo learning and self-instruction (Benson, 2011; Cooker, 2013), in which learners have full freedom to decide about all learning processes starting from setting the objectives to evaluating their learning (see Holec, 1981) without the presence of the teacher or outside formal language education (see Dickinson, 1987). This independent concept of autonomy embraces the individual choice and decision

rather than the collective ones. However, autonomy in language learning is more than learning on one's own in isolation without any support from the teacher and peers. Instead, autonomy is developed through interacting and collaborating with others in social settings (Benson, 2011; Cooker, 2013; Little, 2000, 2007, 2009; Murray, 2014). The interaction allows the learners to use the target language and socially construct knowledge by engaging and collaborating with peers and teacher, in which they undertake a collective decision-making process related to their learning. During the interaction, both teacher and learners share responsibilities to achieve the goal of learning, which implies interdependence (Benson, 2011). According to Cooker (2013, p. 31), the interdependence which is built through interaction has impact on the development of autonomy as "learners are able to fully interact with a world in which they have control." In this regard, they have more control over their learning process and content (Little, 2007).

The issue of culture leads to two distinctive forms of autonomy made by Littlewood (1999). The first form is proactive autonomy, which implies that learners themselves manage both the direction and learning activities. This form of autonomy resonates Holec's (1981) idea of autonomy. On the other hand, reactive autonomy is the form in which learners are to manage the learning activities and resources after the direction and objectives are determined by the teacher.

Accordingly, Asian learners that are generally seen as obedient, passive, and teacher-dependent (Nakata, 2011) could display ³⁵autonomy in language learning. Littlewood (1999, pp. 87-88) conveys ³⁴the following five proposals about the promotion of autonomy in foreign language learning in Asia:

- 1) Asian students have ⁵⁶a high level of reactive autonomy. If the directions and objectives are set by teachers, the learners are able to manage their learning resources both individually and collaboratively.
- 2) Groups of learners can develop high levels of both reactive and proactive autonomy. Group work can enable learners to develop a high level of autonomy, both reactive and proactive, because they are able to enhance self-interdependence.
- 3) Learners will experience few learning contexts encouraging them to exercise individual proactive autonomy. This occurs because the high degree of authority and control makes learners have little chance to be active in learning.
- 4) East Asian learners have the same capacity for autonomy as other learners. Even though the cultural and educational traditions, past experiences, and learning

contexts are different, learners from Asia and the West are able to develop autonomy in language learning at the individual level.

- 5) Language classrooms can provide an environment suitable for developing the capacity for autonomy. If language classrooms provide learners with ample opportunities to use their freedom of choice, students are motivated to exercise proactive autonomy.

Littlewood's (1999) proposals imply that learner autonomy can be promoted in Asia. Nowadays, the development of autonomy in EFL learning in Asian contexts is inevitably shaped by the recent advent of mobile technologies. Portable devices facilitate a greater level of learner control over language learning. Benson (2011) contends that mobile technologies enhance learner autonomy by facilitating independent and self-directed language learning. Mobile technologies also extend EFL learning beyond the classroom in which learners exercise autonomy in out-of-class activities.

2.2. Mobile learning and its potential for learner autonomy

The proliferation of handheld portable devices connected to the Internet has brought about new learning opportunities for learners, which can foster mobile and ubiquitous learning experiences. The idea has driven a shift in the understanding of the learners from that in the traditional classroom to that in the mobile learning context. While in the traditional learning setting learners and learning are physically static in the classroom, mobile learning views the learners on the move and their learning as a mobile activity (Sharples, Taylor & Vavoula, 2007).

³³ Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008, p. 273) define mobile learning as “formal or informal learning mediated via handheld ³² devices which are potentially available for use anytime, anywhere” which can happen ¹⁵ in both formal and informal settings. Such a form of learning occurs when learners are not at a fixed, predetermined location or when they take ¹⁴ advantage of “the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies” (O'Malley et al., 2003, as cited in Reychav, Dunaway, & Kobayashi, 2015, p. 142). Mobile learning is also supported by mobile 2.0, a label formulated by Wang and Heffernan (2009) to refer a mobile version of Web 2.0. The mobile technologies for mobile learning include mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and Personal Digital Assistants (PDA). This study considers mobile learning as mobile learning activities that occur within and/or beyond the language classroom by using mobile phones, laptops, and personal digital assistants.

Mobile devices and their application offer some unique features, bringing about learning experiences that cannot be found in the traditional classroom. ³¹ Sung, Chang, and Yang (2015) mention four properties that make language learning via mobile devices different from that in the traditional language classroom. The first is mobility/portability, which enables language learning to take place ²² anytime and anywhere. As a result, the mobile learning context accommodates students' new learning styles beyond the traditional classroom. The second property, social connectivity/interaction, assists learners in sharing information, collaborating and communicating with others. Another feature is context-sensitivity, in which learners can use the mobile devices for collecting specific data of a ⁴⁹ particular location, environment, and time. Learners can use the devices "to connect language learning across different settings, times, and locations" and access relevant learning resources (p. 70). The last feature is individuality, which means that learners can customize and personalize mobile devices according to their individual learning needs, styles, and interests.

Reflecting upon Sung, Chang, and Yang's (2015) features of ³⁰ mobile learning, it can be stated that the integration of a mobile learning platform into language learning has the efficacy to enhance learner autonomy. First, mobile learning facilitates learners' control over their learning. Learners could self-direct and personalize their learning and they can learn language at their pace, place and time. Second, mobile learning supports interaction and collaboration with peers and teacher. Interaction and collaboration could encourage and facilitate attention, reflection, and metacognition. Third, mobile learning enables learners to self-access the learning materials designed by the teacher or explore other materials by themselves. However, it is worth noting that mobile technology is only a tool and the mobile devices themselves do not automatically foster the development of autonomy. The teacher should choose appropriate mobile learning platform that could accommodate the underlying principles of learner autonomy.

2.3. Schoology as a mobile learning platform

Schoology is an online social learning network and interactive learning management system initiated by four college students named ¹³ Jeremy Friedman, Ryan Hwang, Tim Trinidad, and ¹ Bill Kindler in 2007. Nowadays, more than seven million users from over 60,000 K-12 schools and higher education institutions around the world use this learning platform in their classroom (Sarrab et al., 2016). This cloud-based platform is accessible via websites (www.Schoology.com) and ¹ compatible with Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari and Google Chrome. *Schoology's* mobile application, which is freely available on handy devices such as

Android, Apple and Kindle Fire, extends the traditional learning processes and fosters mobile learning experiences beyond the limitations of the classroom. The Software Information and Industry Association (SIIA) recognizes *Schoology* as the winner of CODiE awards in 2014 as the best education solution for K-12 and higher education, and learning management system categories and as the finalist of best K-12 course or learning management solution and best postsecondary learning management solution categories in 2015 (*Schoology*, 2015).

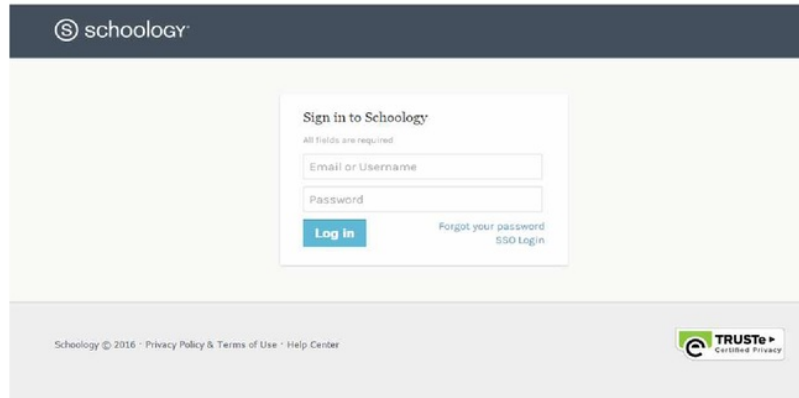


Figure 1. Screenshot of *Schoology* log in.

Schoology is a mobile social networking learning management system which facilitates pedagogically and socially sound mobile learning. Its features are the combination between those of social networking platform and learning management system. As a learning management system, *Schoology* provides various instructional tools, such as organisable lessons and self-paced learning, threaded discussions boards, micro-blogging, content migration and import (Sarrab et al., 2016). *Schoology* helps teachers to systematically manage media-rich learning materials into folders and create various dynamic assessments and assignments, followed by online grading and commenting. Teachers can prepare learning materials and assessment in advance and set their availability based on the allowed access time. Calendaring also helps to guide students' self-paced learning. Hence, *Schoology* manages classroom management tasks.

Schoology's social networking interface accelerates both student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction, communication and collaboration within a classroom network (Sarrab et al., 2016). In this regard, learning is instigated through interaction and communication. The students and the teacher can update their statuses and share links,

pictures, or other media, while the other members can give comments upon or just like them. The students can also have discussions in small groups set by the teacher and private messages can be sent by both students and teacher. *Schoology* enables both the instructor and learners to actively stay engaged and interconnected. They all find it easy to share learning materials, collaborate, and get connected from any mobile device. To get alert, the *Schoology* account can be managed to receive notifications about new materials, comments and updates. Teachers are also provided with a professional learning network, which is intended to boost their professionalism by connecting and communicating with other educators and experts from over the world in various interest groups available on *Schoology* (for further discussion about Professional Learning Network, see Trust, Krutka, and Carpenter, 2016). Analytics is another important feature of *Schoology*. It allows the teacher to monitor and track students' use of *Schoology*. It reports students' last login, spent time in the course, number of posts and the accessed materials.

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3. The study

3.1. Aims of the research

The present study followed the principles of a qualitative case study. A case study deeply explores “a bounded system comprised of an individual or entity and the context in which social action occurs” (Hood, 2009, p. 72). In the field of applied linguistics, an individual could refer to a learner or a teacher, while an entity could represent a classroom, a class, a school, or a language program. The data are collected from multiples sources of information (Creswell, 2007), followed by coding and triangulation in the process of analysis (Duff, 2008). However, the data triangulation process in this research is not intended to compare the data gained from one source to other sources to confirm internal validity but it is to enrich data from one source using the data from other sources to build “the broadest and deepest possible view of the issue from different perspectives” (Hood, 2009, p. 81).

As this study aims to describe how *Schoology* m-learning platform facilitates the exercise of autonomy in EAP learning, the entity in this study is a class of learners using *Schoology* m-learning system in their EAP learning. However, it is worth noting that “a class” here does not only refer to a physical space but also a social community of learners who also learns in spaces beyond the classroom.

3.2. Context of the study and participants

The study took place in a compulsory EAP course at a private university in Indonesia from August to December 2015. A blended learning method was used in this course, which consisted of face-to-face meetings and out-of-class online learning. The face-to-face meeting was twice a week for 75 minutes. Fourteen topics were discussed in this course during the whole semester. The course aimed at helping the students to acquire the advanced level of English by

- 1) writing essays, which encompassed strategies on writing outlines, thesis statement, and introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs;
- 2) reading academic texts to identify the main ideas and supporting details of the passages;
- 3) conducting and writing a research paper in groups;
- 4) presenting the results of the research by using advanced presentation skills.

Schoology m-learning platform was employed as the learning management system in the course. The students were asked to download and install *Schoology*'s mobile application on their mobile devices, to make an account and to join the researcher's EAP class on the platform. Besides, they were also encouraged to bring their mobile devices to the classroom and use the devices for their EAP learning activities both within and outside classroom. As the students had not experienced using *Schoology*, prior to the commencement of this study, *Schoology* training in how to use the platform was conducted.

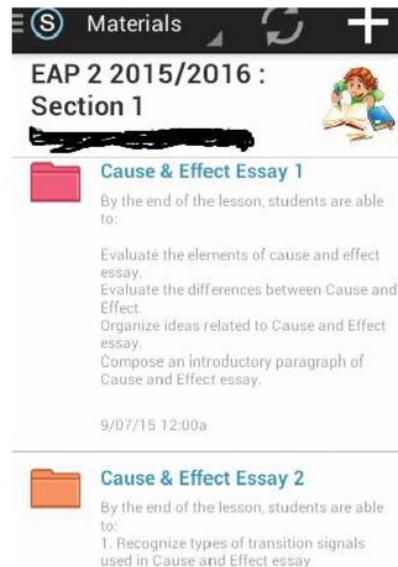


Figure 2. Screenshot of learning materials.

Various media-rich learning materials were provided in advance on *Schoology's* folders before the class began. The folders were sequenced based on the topic of discussion. The access time for each folder was customized in which the students could access the materials one week before the discussion in the class. Besides, various learning activities were also designed to foster interaction and collaboration among the students both physically and virtually. The example of the materials is portrayed in Figure 2. The in-class activities included watching videos, discussing with partners, preparing presentations, taking online quizzes and playing online games. The out-of-class activities involved reading materials, writing essays, giving reciprocal online peer feedback, doing weekly projects, conducting small-scale research, having online discussion and writing reflection.

Twenty one students, aged between 18-23 years old, were enrolled in the course. They came from various majors, such as English language teaching, management, visual communication design, industrial engineering, mechanical engineering, and computer science. The average score of their Versant™ English Placement Test (VEPT) was 57.4 (equal to IELTS score of 6.5). The students possessed several kinds of mobile devices, such as laptops, iOS/android-based smartphones, tablet and iPad. Those mobile devices were part of their life. They were tech-savvy and familiar with ⁹ social media, such as *Facebook, Line, Instagram, and Path*.

³ 3.3 Data collection and analysis

The data collection process ^{was} conducted as follows. First, students' online interactions and collaborations on the platform were observed to cater for students' out-of-class learning activities. *Schoology's* analytics was checked on a weekly basis to monitor and track how the students used the platform. Second, the participants were encouraged to write reflection about their learning processes on *Schoology's* updates. The reflection shared with the peers in the class was intended to transform their experiences into learning. Students' reflection posted on *Schoology* was used as the data for this research since it pictured how the students made sense of their learning processes via the platform. Third, personal messages were sent to several students to obtain deeper information about their reflection. The messages varied depending on the reflection that they wrote. Lastly, all online records available on *Schoology*, including students' posts and comments, threaded discussions, shared materials, and analytics, were also gauged to enrich data for this study.

The data were coded and corroborated from one source to another to build a thick description. The data were then categorized based on Benson's (2011) theoretical framework of autonomy in language learning.

3.4. Findings and discussion

Schoology proved to constitute a socially and pedagogically sound learning platform that is easy to be used by the students. Its user-friendly design resembling *Facebook* became an appeal to the students, triggering them to actively get into the course. Figure 3 depicts a one-month dynamic access to the EAP course, revealing that the students logged in the course on a daily basis.

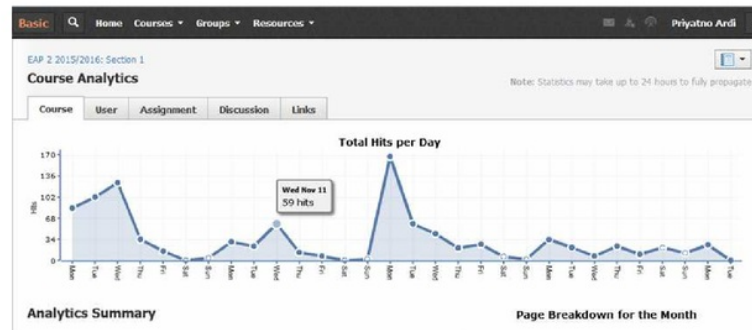
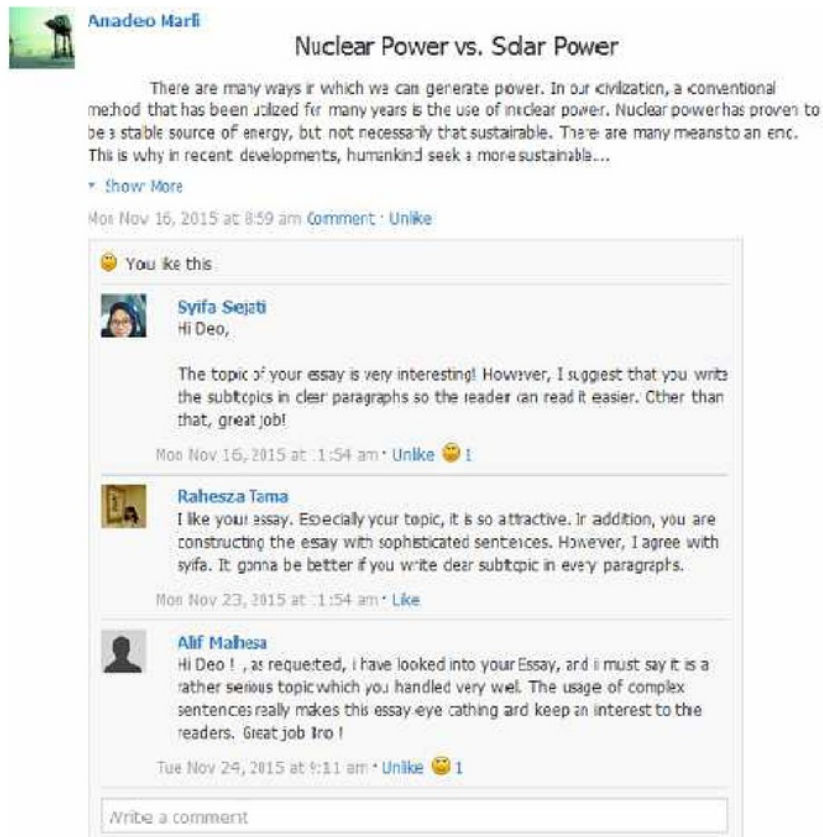


Figure 3. Screenshot of course analytics

Schoology's social networking interface leveraged on the affordance of interaction and collaboration, such as having discussions with peers, sharing thoughts, accessing additional learning materials, following links, viewing videos and pictures, posting essays, as well as giving comments and likes on others' posts. Figure 4 illustrates the interaction among the students in *Schoology's* social virtual space. In addition to its social networking interface, *Schoology's* instructional tools pedagogically accommodated media rich contents that allowed the students with different learning styles to personalize their learning. Hence, it can be concluded that the platform enabled the participants to display their active engagement in the EAP learning process.



Anadeo Marfi

Nuclear Power vs. Solar Power

There are many ways in which we can generate power. In our civilization, a conventional method that has been utilized for many years is the use of nuclear power. Nuclear power has proven to be a stable source of energy, but not necessarily that sustainable. There are many means to an end. This is why in recent developments, humankind seek a more sustainable...

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Syifa Sejati
Hi Deo,

The topic of your essay is very interesting! However, I suggest that you write the subtopics in clear paragraphs so the reader can read it easier. Other than that, great job!

Mon Nov 16, 2015 at 11:54 am · [Unlike](#) 😊 1

Raheza Tema
I like your essay. Especially your topic, it is so attractive. In addition, you are constructing the essay with sophisticated sentences. However, I agree with syifa. It gonna be better if you write clear subtopic in every paragraphs.

Mon Nov 23, 2015 at 11:54 am · [Like](#)

Alif Mahesa
Hi Deo ! , as requested, i have looked into your Essay, and i must say it is a rather serious topic which you handled very wel. The usage of complex sentences really makes this essay eye catching and keep an interest to the readers. Great job bro !

Tue Nov 24, 2015 at 9:11 am · [Unlike](#) 😊 1

Figure 4. Screenshot of student interaction

Students' ⁸ active engagement in the process of learning on *Schoology* is the basis of learner autonomy. The students were not dependent on the lecturer all the time, instead, they themselves took responsibility in the process of English learning and made choices related to their own learning. As Little (2004) states, taking responsibility is the first step to achieve autonomy. Accordingly, active engagement could raise the sense of ownership of learning in which the students took control over their learning processes. The findings of this study revealed that *Schoology* m-learning platform assisted the students in deployment of their capacities to take control over their learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content.

3.4.1 Students' control over learning management

Schoology m-learning platform installed in handheld devices helped to facilitate the exercise of control over learning management. The system allowed the students to choose the place, pace and time of their EAP learning by themselves outside the classroom.

First of all, the findings revealed that *Schoology* m-learning system facilitated the participants to exercise their choice to access the course on an 'anytime-anywhere' basis. It was supported by the portability feature of mobile devices that brought about multiple-settings language learning without any spatial and temporal constraints (Sung et al., 2015). The students could individually open and access the learning materials on the platform and submit the assignments from their home, without going to campus. Therefore, *Schoology* m-learning platform facilitated students' self-direction of their own learning (cf. Benson, 2011). The students expressed their views as follows:



Rahasza Tama Fri Dec 4, 2015 at 5:19 pm

One day, my friend asked me for having dinner in a mall near my boarding house. Since that day was her special day, after the class I went to that mall. Then, we had dinner and talked until late night. Thanks God, I brought my PC and there was free WiFi. Then, I just open my schoology for reading the guidelines for making good cause and effect essay.



Samuel Hidajat

In using schoology, i feel that it is very practical. We can either get and share materials and opinion to support our studying process anywhere and anytime. It is also easier to communicate with the lecturer and other people from the same course to discuss more about the topic provided. And one more thing, it is a lot more easier to submit our assignments since we don't have to meet up with the lecturer to submit the assignments.

Thu, Nov 26 2015 at 9:51 AM



Syifa Sejati

With Schoology, I think it is easier to share learning materials and practices. It also helps me keep track with my deadlines because there's a calendar that reminds us of our assignments. I admit it is quite fun too since we don't really have to seek our teachers to submit our assignments :)

Thu, Nov 26 2015 at 10:32 PM



Yuna Lee

This is my first time using schoology. I like the system provided by schoology because I do not have to submit my homework directly to professor. Furthermore, I do not have to print out my assignments out. Therefore, I can utilize my time flexibly.

Sun, Nov 29 2015 at 6:21 PM



Putra Varza

In my personal thoughts, Schoology did helping me a lot. Especially for this Sampoerna University students, who studied without any fixed textbooks at all. Solving this no-textbooks situation, the folder 'Materials and Assesment' come up from Schoology brilliantly since the materials uploaded could be organized into folders and it remains there forever so I could access them anytime anywhere. Furthermore, the

Thu, Nov 26 2015 at 9:51 AM

Second, *Schoology* m-learning platform provided the participants with ample chances to choose their own English learning modes. As their learning was not limited to the formal classroom learning, the students could choose their own paths of learning that fit best with their styles. Sung et al. (2015) mention that mobile devices and their application enable the

students to customize and personalize their language learning. In the current study, the freedom of choosing personal ways of learning led to meaningful and personal learning processes. This resonates with Huang and Benson's (2013, p. 10) idea that "a capacity to control learning also implies a capacity to make learning personally relevant." The findings of this research suggested that *Schoology* created conditions for students' exercise of their personal learning. The students admitted that



Syifa Sejati Today at 10:43 am

I'm both auditory and visual, so I have to listen and see my lessons. So, this makes more sense if I'm in a class, right? But I'm also kinaesthetic, so I can't exactly sit still in class for long periods of time. If I do, I get bored easily. With *Schoology*, I can access my lessons and assignments while listening to music that will help me focus. In class, you can't exactly listen to music, right? This way I will be able to do my work peacefully and efficiently.



Joice Tentry Today at 12:51 pm

Since *Schoology* allows us to access not only texts, but also pictures, videos, and even games, it helps a lot for a visual learner like me. Since I'm not an auditory (listening to lectures), I prefer learning by seeing, reading, or visualizing things through the instruments on *Schoology*. Regarding the learning environment, it is easier for me to comprehend materials when I study leisurely at home, like while lying on the bed and listening to music rather than sitting in class and listening to lectures. That way, it is more advantageous for me to learn via e-learning like *Schoology*.

Third, as regards interaction and collaboration, *Schoology* m-learning system provided opportunities for the participants to exercise a greater control over interaction and collaboration during EAP learning. The mobile devices connected to the Internet made the students interconnected all the time, which facilitated online interaction and collaboration among the students without temporal and spatial constraints. The students could control their interaction and collaboration with their peers. Furthermore, many autonomy scholars (Benson, 2011; Cooker, 2013; Little, 2000, 2007, 2009; Murray, 2014) believe that autonomy is the result of interaction and collaboration with others. In this study, there were two major collaborative assignments conducted outside classrooms, namely peer feedback and research project. Since the students came from different departments and followed diverse schedules, the virtual discussion designed in the *Schoology* benefited them as it was not constrained by the time and place. A student supported this point as follows:



Joice Tentry

In my opinion, schoology helps a lot to make us study and discuss materials without having to be actually there in the same time and space so in a way, it is efficient. The online discussion board is also helpful because a lot of us have different class schedules so it will be troublesome if we have to discuss face-to-face all the time. Assignment collection and quiz are also easy to submit and we can see our progress easily. Moreover, schoology is available in play store so we can download it as an app in our android or apple based smartphones.

Fri, Nov 20 2015 at 9:19 PM

3.4.2. Control over cognitive processing

Schoology's social network interface gave ample spaces for the students to exercise their capacity to control their cognitive processing. Control over cognitive process includes control over attention, metacognition and reflection (Benson, 2011). The features of *Schoology* were critical for the students to exercise attention, metacognition and reflection during the EAP course.

The “updates” feature of *Schoology* enabled the participants to share their thoughts and give reciprocal peer feedback on their essays. As the posts that they shared could be seen by all members of the group, the students could give and receive comments and supports from their peers. During the process, the students directed their attention towards both linguistic and content aspects. Hence, the feature helped ²⁷ the students to reflect on their English learning processes and raise their metalinguistic awareness. The exercised metacognition and reflection led the students to revise their essays. Figure 5 depicts how the students gave reciprocal feedback on their essays.

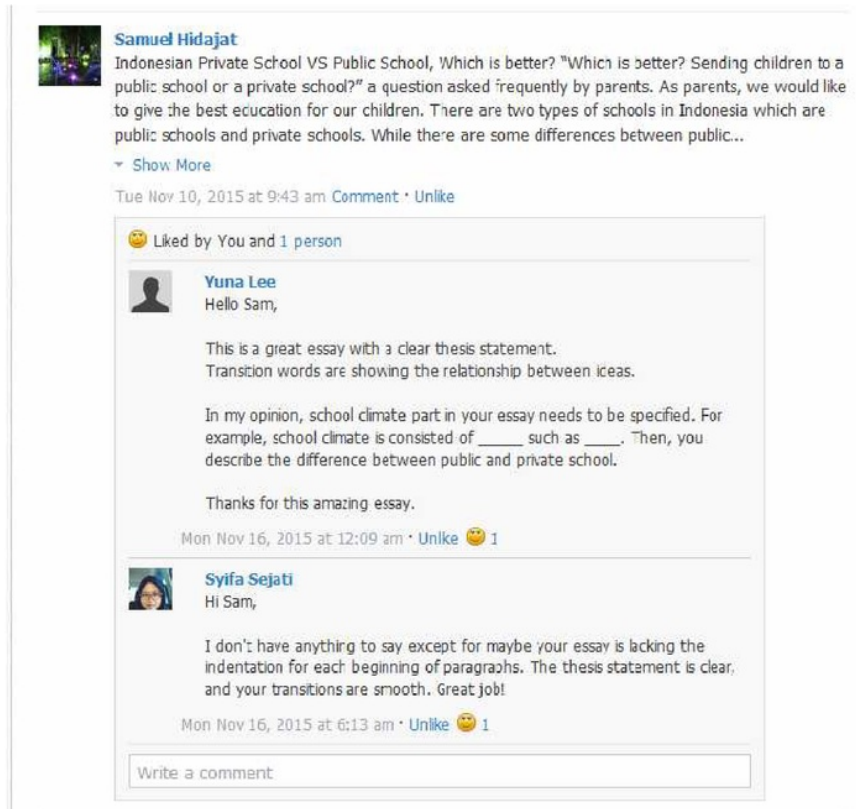


Figure 5. Screenshot of peer feedback

In addition to the “updates” feature, threaded discussion boards on *Schoology* made affordances for collaborative and interactive spaces for the students within the groups. As previously mentioned, the students worked in groups to accomplish the given projects. The feature of threaded discussion facilitated the students to interact, communicate and collaborate within the groups. Through personal message, a student admitted:

Schoology makes us easy to identify each member's progress since we share the given tasks individually. *Schoology's* discussion board helps us a lot because we can communicate and monitor one another. We can report and discuss our progress. And, we all feel responsible for our success as a group so that we need to help one another.

The quotation demonstrates how *Schoology's* discussion board facilitated interaction, communication, and collaboration among the students. During interaction and discussions, the students developed and conveyed their own voices by using English. In this regard, the students possessed the sense of relatedness in their EAP learning, supporting one another to reach success. This supports Little's (2007) idea that relatedness is developed through interacting with others. Hence, the collaborative and interactive spaces of *Schoology's*

discussion boards could enhance students' sense of relatedness. The sense of relatedness is critical to the development of autonomy (Ryan, 1991, as cited in Littlewood, 1999).

3.4.3 Control over the selection of learning content

Schoology m-learning system facilitated control over the selection of learning content. According to Benson (2011), control over learning content has to do with the freedom to select learning materials to attain the goals of foreign language learning. *Schoology* provided tools that accommodated media-rich learning materials connected to other materials available on the internet. Figure 6 depicts the example of learning materials sequenced on *Schoology*.

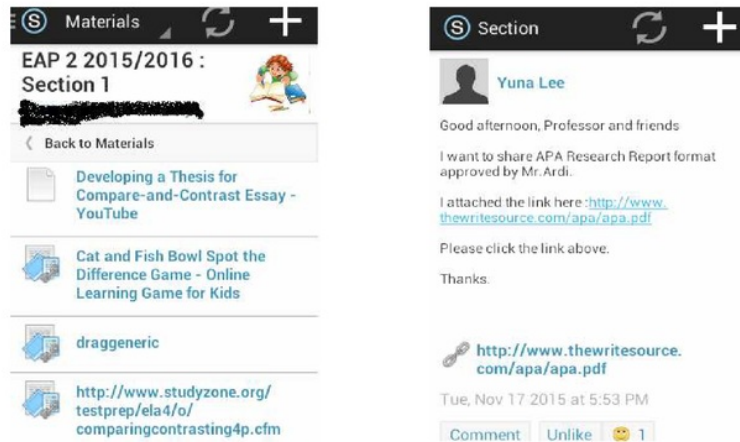


Figure 6. Screenshot of materials and an additional material shared by a student

The materials provided on *Schoology* m-learning platform led the students to self-access other authentic materials on the Internet to achieve the determined learning goals. The students, consequently, had more control over the content of their learning (cf. Little, 2007). In the process of accomplishing the research report, for example, a student found a research report format online, which she offered to her classmates. After the discussion, all of the class members agreed to use the format for reporting the research. Since *Schoology* provided tools that enabled the students to share learning materials, the format was then shared to other students on *Schoology*. Hence, this confirms Sung et al.'s (2015) idea that the learners can use mobile devices to search for relevant learning materials, as well as Villanueva et al.'s (2010) argument that technologies help to develop autonomy by providing multiple access to authentic materials.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This article reports a study that investigates how *Schoology* m-learning platform facilitates the exercise of learner autonomy in an EAP class at an Indonesian higher education. The findings of this study proved that *Schoology* m-learning platform installed in mobile devices provided the students with greater control over their EAP learning ²⁶ beyond the classroom, both in terms of the process and content of their learning.

The affordances of *Schoology* were a critical factor that supported the exercise of learner autonomy. First, *Schoology* offered a social environment that facilitated interaction and communication among the students. The social networking interface of *Schoology* enabling reflection and sharing is critical ²⁵ to the development of autonomy. At the heart of learner autonomy, autonomy is developed through interacting and collaborating with others (Benson, 2011; Cooker, 2013; Little, 2000, 2007, 2009; Murray, 2014). Second, *Schoology*'s application installed in mobile devices brought about mobile learning experiences transcending spatial and temporal limitations. The students had freedom to learn at their pace, place, and time (Sung et al., 2015). The mobile learning application hence enabled them to exercise control over learning management (see Benson, 2011; Huang and Benson, 2013). Third, media-rich learning materials encouraged the students to the further exploration of other materials on websites. This confirms Littlewood's (1999) and Snodin's (2013) findings that Asian learners tend to display reactive autonomy in language learning.

With regard to the Asian culture, the implementation of *Schoology* m-learning platform could minimize the power relationship in the traditional classroom. However, communication, interaction and collaboration among the class members were still maintained through its social networking interface. As Murray (2014) points out, autonomy is developed through interdependence and collaboration in a social setting.

This study recommends that *Schoology* be incorporated in English ³ language learning and teaching. Further research is also needed to scrutinize the issue of engagement on *Schoology*. Engagement is a critical issue in the implementation of social networking learning ⁵³ management system in English language teaching and learning. Abas' (2015) engagement framework, consisting of teacher engagement, student engagement, cognitive engagement, and social engagement, could be used to describe how *Schoology* can provide students with meaningful and relevant English learning experiences in the 21st century.

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