The Unique Process towards Sequential Bilingualism among Fan fiction Readers

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to discover if fan fiction can help English Language Learners (ELL) to learn English without formal education. This study aimed to ELLs' background and identity, the process, and determine the language learners' perspectives toward English. This study used a qualitative approach. This study collected the data by conducting an online questionnaire via Google Form, which filled by fan fiction readers from the Tumblr platform. The sample was 20 participants from different countries worldwide with English as their second language (L2). The result of the study was analyzed using three techniques: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The finding showed that the ELLs' age played a significant role in the language learning process. The finding also discovered that fan fiction readers consider English to connect with other people from different countries. Therefore, reading fan fiction can be concluded to be an effective way to learn English.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, fan fiction, identity, sequential bilingualism

Introduction

A communication platform on the internet is the best place to self-learn English. The young generation can read and learn and produce their own ability to write and speak English they have learned after exploring the platform. Fan fiction defined as narrative stories made by fans based on canonical works, with the same characters or plot, and taken in a different world than the canon (Thomas, 2011). Fan fiction can be accessed free on many websites, such as *fanfiction.net*, Archive of Our Own, Wattpad, and so on. The fan fiction readers live in various non-native countries and had great English understanding after spending several times

reading English fan fiction. The researcher also found that a large online base discussing fan fiction with the members coming from different countries and races but still speak English as their neutral language, such as Tumblr, Instagram, and many more. Since fan fiction is usually written in English, it is interesting to learn that this text can "teach" people English, and these people are often self-taught.

Reading has been proven to be an excellent way to learn English; thus, another previous study shows that learning English, a practical study where learning a foreign language with listening and reading, is not advisable (Moussa-Inaty, Ayres, & Sweller, 2012). Lestari (2019) found that video blog helps in term of pronunciation, accent, vocabularies and the speakers' expressions. Furthermore, narrative stories can overestimate an English Language Learner's skill level (Paradis & Kirova, 2014). Another study by Väisänen(2018) found that video games as one of the influencing elements for Finnish gamers to learn English. This analysis found that almost all gamers are motivated to learn English after playing video games. YouTube also had been a frequent subject for studies concerned with informal learning. Rather than reading comprehension, YouTube is proven to be more helpful in speaking cases(Alkathiri, 2019; Li, 2017). The result shows that the YouTube videos in the English language in learning are useful and able to motivate the learners to speak in English, which discover that YouTube was identified as the top English learning tool for students, by both females and males, and used almost daily by the Informants.

In the present day, there are more non-native speakers of English than the natives, and in the following years, the number will grow rapidly (Kaur, 2014). There are two types of bilingualism; they are simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism. Sequential bilingualism is a term to call a language that is introduced after the language that has been spoken before, starting with age 3 (Paradis & Kirova, 2014). The words in the second language (L2) are assumed to be somehow associated with the first language (L1), through the concepts between the two languages (Kroll & Stewart, 1994). The word association predicts that translations for the L1 to the L2 are reflectively faster than picture naming them. This theory is also applied by Talamas et al. (1999), which shows that those who fluent in L2 were slower to respond to the semantically related pairs. In short, English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners learn to associate between languages with the context of the words semantically. To learn English, each ELL has a different succession rate of learning. Each of them will have a different result because there are differences in identity backgrounds that differentiate between one ELLs to another.

Language and identity refer to how people understand their places in the world and knowledge of a person for their possibilities in the future (Norton & Toohey, 2002). Agustin-Llach & Jiménez-Catalán (2018) discovered that age is relevant in adult learners' vocabulary production, not because of exposure to the

L1 input. Massachusetts Institute Technology cognitive scientists found that the brain is best equipped to learn foreign languages before the age of 17.4 years, and after passing that age, the brain steadily slows down the progress for learning second languages (Hartshorne, Tenenbaum, & Pinker, 2018). Another element that holds an impact on the ability to learn English is gender. Many studies examined gender as the element used in Language Learning Strategies (LLS), and it was reported that gender has an impact, and females won the category for learning better than males (Green & Oxford, 1995). This finding also can be found in a study of gender as the effect of language learning in English as Foreign Language (EFL) achievement. They found significant differences between males and females in performance in the EFL achievement test (Zoghi, M., Kazemi, S. A., & Kalani, 2013).

Since this study highlighting the unique process, it will not be mentioned the correct or the incorrect way to learn English –instead, each process is unique and different. Therefore, this study will be uncovering the unique progress of achieving the English language that the learners can do easily. The most common way for EFL learners to learn English is by using machine translation. Machine translation works to translate words, phrases, and sentences to targeted languages. The most well-known machine translation to date is Google Translate. Google translate is a translation tool that uses statistics to calculate phrases' probabilities rather than word-to-word translations (Groves & Mundt, 2015). In addition, Tsai (2019) concluded that Google Translate could be used for ELLs to help their English writing as the second audience, which helps to generate and offers synonyms. Although Google Translate is able to translate the whole sentence, it is still not advisable for new beginners. Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada (2013) argue that learners learning a language from the closely related language as their L1 have a greater chance to succeed. For example, a learner with Dutch as their L1 will have a greater chance to learn English faster than a learner with Japanese as the L1. This is because Dutch is related in language to English.

According to Garret (2010), language attitude is what people always notice on a daily, whether unconscious or consciously. People who hold an attitude to a language will notice if someone who at that moment speaks a language. Language change is influenced by the stigma and prestige determined by speech communities to specific linguistic features. This theory of Garret focuses on the determining factors of learners when processing a new language. The learners' attitudes toward English are also defined by the learners' genders, as Paradewari & Mbato (1998) found in the study, where female learners tend to have a positive attitude much more than male learners. Furthermore, an attitude towards a foreign language or L2 is figured by the outcome of the language itself, as Montaño (2008) said:

> Attitude is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior (behavioral beliefs), weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes. Thus, a person who holds strong beliefs that positively valued outcomes will result from

performing the behavior will have a positive attitude toward the behavior (2008, p. 71).

The learners' attitude depends on the output of the language itself, and surprisingly, the learners' age. The answers varied when the students were asked how important English is among the 3rd and 7th-grade students. The 3rd-grade students believe that learning English is fun at the 90% rate, while 7th-grade students believe learning English is useful at the 35% rate (Arda & Doyran, 2017). English is now seen as the international language, and the language has become a crucial language to date. English is now seen as the international language, and the language has become a crucial language to date. The role of English in society as a whole is described by Coleman (2010), with four major roles:

1) English for employability.
   As English being the international language, employment requirements include English as the basic language for the applicants. English is such a crucial factor for employment factor.
2) International mobility and development.
   Coleman purposed English as international mobility and development in tourism and hospitality. Therefore, non-native speakers consider English as the best opportunity to travel around the world or simply just to interact with foreign tourists.
3) Key to unlocking development opportunities and accessing crucial information.
   Coleman expresses English as a key to develop skills and access information is suitable for how the world is changing. Since English is a global language, almost all information available is served in English. English will be seen by the EFL to learn information –from entertainment, academic, to self-development.
4) As impartial language.
   Coleman describes English as an impartial language with a phrase "neutral language" and "link". This term applies because, in this modern-day, English has been used as the language spoken by the majority of important institutions, organizations, and workplaces.

This study would fill in the gap by conjoining the bilingualism factors and the progress, background check of language and identity for the fan fiction readers, and what their perspective is after learning English as their second language. What the fan fiction readers thought about the English they have achieved. Furthermore, this study will discover whether regularly reading English texts may also affect fan fiction readers to gain four English proficiency elements. Hence the present study should be able to provide new insight into this behavior.

The research questions of this study are: (1) What are the contributions of the fan fiction readers' life background toward sequential bilingualism? (2) What are the processes toward sequential bilingualism among fan fiction readers? (3)

What are their perspectives towards their English after achieving sequential bilingualism?

Method

The research design that is used for this present study is a qualitative approach. According to Dornyei (2007), qualitative data collection methods tend to expand fast when it comes to achieving the data from the Informants. Since the data comes from explanations and sentences, the researchers often found the data more useful than enough data and thus created too much data to process. Qualitative methods depend on text and image data, using steps to analyze it. The researcher used the questionnaire data collection technique. The questionnaire will focus on the readers' experiences of overcoming the English language when they did not understand it.

The Informants of this study are coming from countries with English as not the first language (L1). The informants are also an age no less than 17 years old, and there is no specific gender. As the basic of it all, the Informants should be able to understand English –at least by reading or writing. Thus, the Informants should be able to speak at least two languages with English as the second or the third language. The Informants of the study are supposed to be 20 people from across the world with English as the second or more language.The present study's data is the answer of the online questionnaire from the fan fiction readers who are from non-English speaker countries. The questionnaire will focus on the readers' experiences of overcoming the English language when they did not understand it. The data collection will be collected on Google Form. The link will be given through social media platforms, such as Tumblr, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, so it will reach the expected Informants.

The data collection will be collected on Google Form. According to Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014), there are three techniques for analyzing qualitative data. The data which have been compiled from the previous procedure will be analyzed with three techniques, they are data condensation, data display, and drawing, and verifying conclusions.

1) Data condensation
   Data condensation is one of the techniques and the first one, where the data that has been compiled previously, condensed to produce more straight-forward data and much simpler than the complete answer.
2) Data display
   Data display is the next technique step used to analyze the data from the previous step. The data that has been simplified is put together in a table, or charts, or any kind of display to ease the access and simplify it. The function of data display is to simplify that will make it the readers easier to

understand the data.

3) Conclusion drawing, and verification

This is the third technique and also the last step of the data analyzing techniques. This is the part where the data which has been compiled, processed in previous steps will be concluded. This conclusion is drawn from every available data. This stage is the most important part of the whole data analysis technique.

Results

The presented data is taken from the questionnaire, which was spread on October – November 2020 on various social media platforms. The data was compiled from the answers of several fan fiction readers in the questionnaire. There are 7 questions given in the questionnaire, and the participants were required to answer each of them in modesty and honesty.   The ELLs' identity is important since it can affect how efficient it would be to learn English. Previously, it is mentioned that there are three reasons why some ELLs are better and faster to learn English than the others; they are females, learn English at the age less than 17 years old, and their native languages are still related to English (Green & Oxford, 1995; Hartshorne et al., 2018; Lightbown and Spada, 2013). To find out whether a participant is learning English better with fan fiction or not, the researcher has to determine if they indeed have the life background to do so.
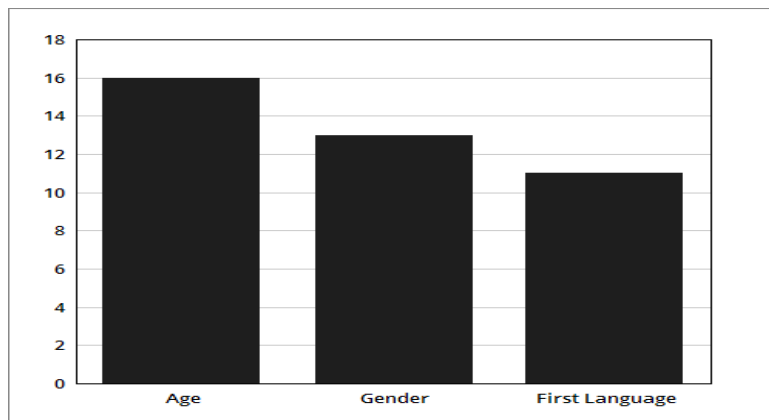

Figure 1. Identities of the participants

Figure 1 above shows the participants' identity variables (age, gender, and L1) taken from the questionnaire's answers. The participants were considered if they fulfilled the variables (Age= learned English before 17; Gender= female; First Language= have related English languages as the L1). Among 20 participants, 80% of them have learned English at the age before 17 years old, and the rest had learned English after the age of 17. 65% of the participants were female, and the

rest are males. Then, 55% of the participants were speaking English-related languages as the L1. Based on the data, 5 participants accomplished three variables at once; 10 participants with two variables; 5 participants with only one variable. To find out the succession rate of each participant, the researcher would be using this formula:

P = F/N × 100

The succession rate aims to determine each participants' exact number of succession possibilities based on their identity. Therefore, the table below shows the succession rate for participants, grouped by each variable.

Table 1. Succession rate for participants

Number of Participants	Variables	Succession Rate
5 participants	3-variables	100%
10 participants	2-variables	66,67%
5 participants	1-variable	33,3%

The succession rate is essential to underline the answer to the first research question. These participants are considered efficient in learning English if they are: learn English before 17, female, and have related English languages as their native languages (Green & Oxford, 1995; Hartshorne et al., 2018; Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Now that the researcher has found the succession rate, it could be concluded that there are 5 of the 20 participants have a success rate of 100%; this means that those 5 participants learned English faster, easier, and more efficiently than the rest of the participants. This also applies to the rest of the participants –the less the succession rate, the less efficient the learning could be.

Furthermore, to answer the second research question, the participants were asked what they usually do when they had difficulty finding the meaning of an English word or sentence. Some participants gave more than one way of how they overcome the struggle. They were given three alternatives: using online machine translation, using a dictionary, or ask people for help with the meaning/translation.
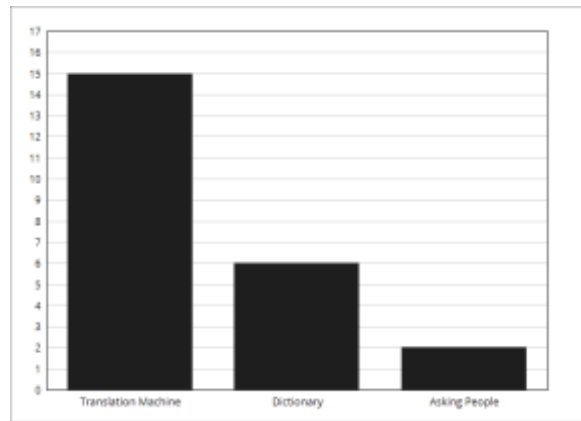
Figure 2. The participants' alternatives to find the meaning of English phrases.

Figure 2 shows the answers of the participants, which will give evidence to the second research question. The participants were given three options, and they can choose more than one option. 30% out of the 20 participants consider the dictionary to be helpful enough to help them find the meaning. There are only 2 people who consider asking other people for help to find the meaning. Meanwhile, 15 participants out of 20 would use machine translation when they met difficulties to find the meaning of words or sentences. However, some of the evidence from the answers show that machine translation only works for those who understand the context. These 15 participants made up 75% of the whole participants, and below are what they were saying taken from the questionnaire regarding the usage of machine translation:

> "Mostly I use the context of the text to understand it. I ask my husband if he knows, or I use Google translate."

> "If I can't figure it out from context I look it up on a translation website. If I'm still confused I ask my native speaker friends."

> "I try to deduce it by context, then check meaning in a dictionary, or open online google translate."

> "I first try to just look at the context and figure out if I can tell what it might mean. If I'm bothered and have the time I use Google Translate or a dictionary."

The researcher has noticed how participants mentioned above believed to understand the context first before using machine translation. The samples given above were taken from the 4 participants as an example. Almost all of them have the same way before using machine translation, which is by figuring out the context. They also have different alternatives when the latter choice was not working for them. To understand a sentence's context, ELLs tend to associate the words between their L1 and L2 semantically (Talamas et al., 1999). This is correlated again with how it would matter so much if their L1 is related to English (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

Lastly, to answer the last research question, the participants were given alternatives to answer why learning English is considered important. In this question, there are four choices, and participants were allowed to pick more than one answer. The choices are 1) English for employability, 2) International mobility and development, 3) Key to unlocking development opportunities and accessing crucial information, and 4) as impartial/neutral language (Coleman, 2010). The presented table below shows the tabulation of the participants' answers.
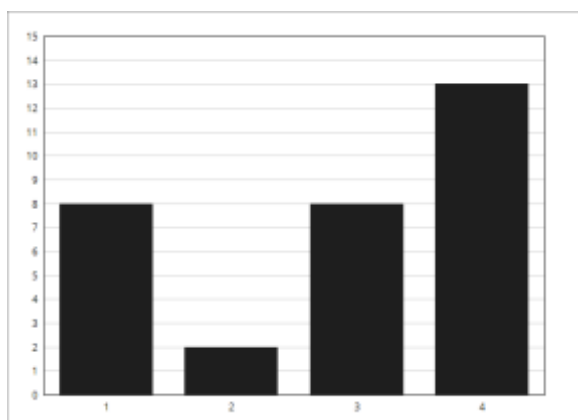

Figure 3. Participants' perspectives towards English

Figure 3 showed the participants' answers when they were asked what their perspective of English after they achieved it. The researcher changed the choices with more straightforward names to get easier to understand for the participants, explained as follows:

1) For work and professional matters;
2) For traveling;
3) For education and self-development purposes;
4) For communication with other people.

The highest number goes to alternative number 4 (as impartial/neutral language), with 13 participants. This shows that 65% of 20 participants consider using their English to connect with people from other countries in the future. Both the number 1 (English for employability) and number 3 (Key to unlocking development opportunities and accessing crucial information) have the same total in participants, which is 8 participants each. Meanwhile, number 2 (international mobility and development) goes to the last in the alternatives, with only 10% of the 20 participants consider it. Therefore, it was concluded that the majority of the participants consider building connections with English.

Discussion

This study is focused on the fan fiction readers' experience with learning English, as mentioned previously in the section above. The researcher notices that each participant has a different perspective towards their English language proficiency. Nevertheless, the researcher would like to highlight that each of these participants is: a) consider themselves to understand English or fluent in English, b) they are sequential bilingualism individuals, and c) anonymous. Although each answer's truth is unknown to the researchers, every answer is considered valid since they are anonymous and conducted online. Furthermore, the purpose of the discussion will be still objective.

In research question number one, this study questions whether the ELLs' identity can help the language learning process's efficiency. There are 3 variables of identity; they are age, gender, and L1. Each variable is essential and affects language learning progress. Based on the data result presented above, most participants were supported by the age variable (which means that most of the participants had learned English at the age before 17 years old), with 16 participants out of 20. This finding concludes that age plays a major part in supporting the language learning process (Hartshorne et al., 2018). In which the L2 will be likely to get influenced by L1 as the mature the ELLs get (Flege, Yeni-Komshian, & Liu, 1999). The L1 would be 'grow up' with the ELLs, making it more advanced and thus influence the language learning of L2. Age is also the indirect variable to motivate the learners to get higher proficiency levels and better understand the L2 culture and its native speakers (Birdsong, 2018). On the other hand, age played a major variable in fan fiction readers but biological restrictions such as brain maturation should not be so easily overturned (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999). That is why the researcher considered gender as another variable to count the participants' succession rate, but not the most important among the variables. In the Result section above, females dominate the questionnaire with a total of 13 participants out of 20. According to Green & Oxford (1995), females have a greater chance to learn English effectively than males. Gender is considered an effective factor for learning new languages. That was why the researcher needs to highlight that the questionnaire's final result is objective due to the lack of sample from the males' side. However, since every participant in this study is considered successful in learning English, this study reflects that females indeed have a higher chance of success since they filled the questionnaire a lot more than males. This result matches with several studies conducted previously, which proved that females had a higher EFL succession rate than males (Główka, 2014; Zoghi, M., Kazemi, S. A., & Kalani, 2013).

To answer the second research question, the participants were given a question that will uncover their unique process for achieving bilingualism. The participants were presented with a case where they found it difficult to understand several words. They were required to answer an alternative or more with the choices as follows: using machine translation, a dictionary, or asking people for

help. The majority of participants agree to use machine translation, 75% of them. Several participants explain how they use a machine translation like Google Translate, and they surprisingly had one thing in common: understand the context first before translating the whole sentence. Studies suggested that the machine translation has been updated to be better and reach a whole new wider audience every day, although the translation quality is not as good as human translations (Hutchins, 2007). Not only that, the present online machine translation like GT offers a 'do you mean' feature that will help the learners if they made a mistake in grammar or spelling (Bin Dahmash, 2020). Although the present machine translation has been updated in the several years since its wake, the feature still lacks bag-of-words translations, which means that several errors were found in the translation results if the texts are long (Courtney, Breen, McMenamin, & McNulty, 2020; Lucas et al., 2015). In that case, some participants voiced their concern about machine translation's validity, and they preferred to use the conventional dictionary. The dictionary is always right and formal in translation. However, its presence only to supports word-by-word translation, not phrases, which means the dictionary is more leading towards helping with vocabulary expansion. Vocabulary knowledge is a crucial tool for language learning (Tovar, 2017). Otherwise, the participants in this study prefer machine translation such as Google Translate rather than conventional dictionaries.

The last research question is focusing on the participants' perspective towards English as the ELLs. The researcher uses the proposed alternatives by Coleman (2010), they are 1) English for employability, 2) International mobility and development, 3) Key to unlocking development opportunities and accessing crucial information, and 4) as impartial/neutral language. As shown in the Result section, most of the participants chose the fourth function, which covered up the connectivity within people globally. This result suggests that most ELLs, especially the fan fiction reader ones, planned to use their English to enhance communication with other people across the world. The term to call English as the neutral language is Lingua Franca, where English is the common language used by people from different language backgrounds (Jenkins, 2009). There is evidence where the L2 learners from across the world consider themselves to have a good sense of "belong to the world" when communicating with English (Lamb, 2004; Ryan, 2009). ELLs who communicate with people from different interlanguage will feel a sense of belonging to both the local and global community if they can communicate with English (Kramsch, 2002; Sung, 2012). There are 80% of the 20 participants who started learning at the age of 12-15 years old, which are considered teenagers. Teenagers think that learning English is undoubtedly necessary no matter what the purposes are (Arda & Doyran, 2017; Mukuka, 2021). Again, with what the participants expect, what English can help them, it can be concluded that the fan fiction readers expect a sense of belonging to the global communities when they are able to speak English now. Another highest on the Result list is English for

employability. Apparently, the ELLs Language learners, especially EFL see this as the reason to learn English. As English being the international language, employment requirements include English as the language for the applicants, at least in passive English. In India, many engineering graduates were unemployed due to their lack of English communication skills (Clement, Murugavel, & Murugavel, 2015). English is such a crucial factor for employment factor. In Malaysia, local and multinational companies are preferred to accept applicants who are fluent and proficient in English than those who do not, despite Malaysia being a multilanguage country (Zainuddin, Pillai, Dumanig, & Phillip, 2019).

Conclusion

The identity background of the fan fiction readers plays a considerable part in the language learning progress. According to the final result and discussion, age is the common factor in learning progression; this is possible because fan fiction audiences are teenagers to young adults. Since fan fiction readers learn English by themselves, they must need self-guidance to learn English. The participants were given the case that needed them to reflect on what they would do if they found a word they did not understand in a fan fiction they read. The researcher gives three choices for the participants, 1) using machine translation, 2) open dictionary, 3) ask people for help. This present study found that using a translation machine could help fan fiction readers learn English by themselves. For some studies, machine translation usage like Google Translate is not relevant to be used for language learning. But in this present study, it is proven to be preferred despite other learning alternatives given. This study also discovers that ELLs consider using English to connect more with people from different countries. They also expected English to help them seeking employment in the future since English has been established as the main requirement in several countries.

This present study only focused on the process and not the outcomes of the progress itself. This study is a sociolinguistics-based field. The study's focus is to define how the readers' life backgrounds and identity can contribute to the readers achieving bilingualism, especially English, as the additional language outside their native languages. This study also focuses on achieving English as the second language for fan fiction readers, and they are often self-taught. Lastly, this study circled the idea of the outcomes for the readers after they spend a particular time reading English-based fan fiction works, such as what do they think about their English, which they have achieved after reading fan fiction. However, this study does not concentrate on other things besides the three points mentioned before. Therefore, the study will not go as far as second language acquisition. For future study, the researcher encourages the future researcher to consider Google Translate succession rate for language learning, especially in the case of EFL

learning.

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