

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF “WHATSAPP” AS A MEDIA OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the implementation of WhatsApp as one of the current beneficial devices to assist students in communicative language learning. It allows them to engage actively in online conversation and create confidence to use English in daily communication through two forms of conversation such as independent and dependent conversation. The first type assists students in interacting among themselves to discuss curious interesting topics, whereas teachers are not involved in their online dialogues. The later, however, acquire, teacher to guide the whole processes, and they are actively participating in the online discussion. This media can help students build their confidence and motivation to learn. Based on the question are distributed to the subject, it revealed that they felt confident, independence, enthusiasm, and having a positive attitude to learn English using application, hence, WhatsApp is one of the recent technologies that can be used in language teaching.

Keywords: WhatsApp, Conversation, English Language Teaching

A. INTRODUCTION

Online media is magnificent tool in this decade, and people consider this as a major device to communicate. This media is broadly used to share and take information from and among people across different regions in the world. They are keep on using this to help them interact each other more easily with cheaper cost compared with the other type of devices. Indeed, both teenagers and elder people use online media on daily basis for communication or even for business. As Zaideh (2012) points out, “social networking has become very popular during the past few years, and it plays a significant role in people’s lifestyles nowadays”. In fact, it is beneficial and used in various sectors such as politic, economic, and education field.

Particularly, in the aspect of education, teachers can use it as the instructional media to facilitate students in learning English. There are some basic considerations why the online media is used in the process of learning. Firstly, it is believed that this tool can serve as an alternative device to provide motivation

and new learning experiences for learners. Generally, teachers need considerable efforts and ways to involve learners in classroom communication and encourage them to practice speaking or writing in the target language. For instance, based on the writer's experiences in teaching English for specific purpose (ESP) at Information Technology department, for instance, most learners are neither interested in learning English not having self-confidence to practice using English in the classroom. In this void, it is essential to make a use of online media to offer new learning experiences, provide interest, and assist students to practice their language optimally. It is likely true that the use of such media can engage learners in learning English and improve their skills.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that students are probably familiar with such technologies. Most of them use gadgets, and they are active in online social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Blackberry, Line, WeChat and other related online devices. Although most of them might have negative attitudes towards learning and think that English is not the core competence they should learn in the college (i.e., to learn computer network), the use of such devices will help them reduce their anxiety and encourage them to take a part in learning English.

Among various online media, WhatsApp is considered as the easiest, most popular and effective tool that can be occupied by teachers. It is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging subscription service for smart phones and selected feature phones that use the internet for communication. The popularity of this application is as noted by Trevor (2013) who claims that WhatsApp, cross-platform messaging application, continues to grow in popularity with more 250 million users. Additionally, Rolve (2013) adds that most users choose and use this application because it allows to the send message one another with a low cost. Users are not only able to send text message, but they can also post image, video, and audio media messages as well as their location using integrated mapping features. Those features, therefore, offer a great opportunity for people, including students, to express their feelings, thoughts, ideas, or events with other more easily and efficiently.

With its easiness and sophisticated features, this application can help students interact with others at any situation with or without the teacher's guide, and it can encourage learners to participate in group discussion to improve their skills. While the advantages of WhatsApp are true, this sophisticated media must be applied in positive and careful ways to assure the result of learning. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention on how to make a use of WhatsApp in teaching English, especially to explore learners' ability in writing. In accordance with that, this article discusses the application of WhatsApp as one of mobile technologies to teach English, benefits, and the way how to establish a WhatsApp conversation among students to enhance students' writing skills.

B. WHATSAPP AS ONE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES TO TEACH ENGLISH

Nowadays interaction with mobile technologies is part of the daily routine for millions of people in all ages. In a survey of advanced placement (AP) and national writing project teachers (NWP), it is revealed that digital tools benefit students from learning writing as they encourage the majority of them to express personal thought or ideas in written works and they have a wide audience to share and receive feedback (Purcell, bucham & friedrich, 2013). On the other hand, teachers may also get advantages from the tools as they make teaching writing easier and more effective, whereas they should be aware of implementing such tools and anticipate the drawback that might happen. Digital tools, as so this argument goes, may also create problems if teachers do not manage them property and facilitate students improperly. For instance, students are possibly to encounter problems with an ambiguous line between formal in informal writing or poor understanding of issues such as plagiarism and fair use.

In particular, the AP and NWP teachers pinpoint that digital technologies benefit student in several ways (Purcell, Bucham & Friedrich, 2013). Most students who had been surveyed contended that digital technologies “allowed them to share their work with a wider and more varied audience (including 52% who strongly agree).”Furthermore, there were three forth of respondents who stated that the technologies encouraged greater collaboration among them and just

over one third of them conveyed that such technologies reinforced idea creativities and personal expressions.

The result showed that WhatsApp was the most familiar tool as all of subject had used the application for communication. Among the subject, 82% of them were involved actively to communicate with WhatsApp group to practice their English and the same number of subject agreed that it increased their confidence and bravery to communicate using the target language. While most students (74%) liked to share new information on WhatsApp, the rest confirmed that they were rarely to comment on the group's conversation but they were interested in reading and following their chats. A closer analysis revealed that the application makes students be brave and confident to communicate with lecturers and among themselves. Furthermore, this tool can reduce their barrier in learning i.e., anxiety and reluctant, make a good relationship and communicate between learners and lecturers, show their personal expression, and share their experiences by writing.

Moreover, WhatsApp is one of alternative mobile technologies that can be applied to support, strengthen, or even perform a major online instruction. According to Siemens (2006), "when students use digital tools to connect, they are able to reflect on dialogue about, and internalize content in order to learn." Through a series of conversation in a group chat, students might always constantly notice the messages sent by others, attempt to comprehend the information, and subsequently join in written chats. This subconscious process gives a wide chance for them to learn and practice using the target language naturally.

C. DETERMINING A WHATSAPP CONVERSATION AMONG ESP STUDENTS

Since some studies and the results of this survey reveal the WhatsApp is effective to teach English, teachers are expected to incorporate this tool to explore students' English abilities. While the importance of this application is obvious, teachers should be aware of how to apply in learning. In order that its application is successful, there are some points that should be paid attention. In teaching

English using WhatsApp, generally students can be engaged into two forms of interaction, such as independent and dependent conversation.

1. Independent Conversation

Independent conversation is establishing a WhatsApp conversation that allows students to communicate among them to discuss any ideas they want to talk and without teacher's involvement on the students' online dialogues. In this model, learners build conversations on free topics to maintain their interpersonal communication. The role of teachers is to facilitate a group of WhatsApp, motivate students to write and express their personal feelings, and monitor the members of the group to observe whether they are active or not. Teachers are not directly involved in the conversation in order to make them feel free and sundered informal situation.

The following excerpts are examples of conversation taken from a WhatsApp group of ESP students.

Excerpt I

Erik : Hello friends
Febrian : Hello G, How are you?
Khosik : good good
Alfian : Hello
Erik : I am from Lampung Febrian, InsyaAlloh Friday I am bring fruit hand from lampung.
Khosik : Empek empek
Febrian : Are you sure G. you give me oleh*hihihi
Madina : Already bought eyeliner Feb. Give us typical foof from Lampung mr.G
Erik : Oke al
Alfian : I'm waiting G.....bring a lot

Excerpt 2

- Decha : Good Monday guys. Lets go refreshing
- Farid : Hmm ... yes guys ... but stay at home dec ... I'm bored
- Erik : night that beautiful, mending invite
- Kolik : I'm alone G
- Farid : in the hospital very cool G ... Cz in here many new nurse G ...
Come here you can see G...very cool in heart
- Akbar : alone in my house
- Farid : guys ... when we playing badminton in the dome of reoguniv?
- Erik : wow, whatever friends other bal ... lam going to do also
- Ryzki : ok ok, where are you know?
- Erik : I am try finish my proposal kwubal ... in home sweet. Hey
youngest other where are you sound all? Koksepisah ...
- Farid : maybe try learn calculus
- Erik : guys I feel now know word kalkulus, lam feel ilfildeg
- Farid : loh G, why you ilfeel?
- Angga : the look kalkulus, I'm bad mood'
- Farid : hmm ... so English very funny more kalkulus
- Akbar : I like English
- Erik : I like English
- Yudha : I like dangdut ... I like English
- Dirga : who is playing badminton, I'm waiting you
- Iskandar : I like your expression my brother
- Mita : I like English.

The two examples above showed that without guiding from the teachers, students used to make conversation in English. A good effect of these conversations is that they love English now. In this conversation, I just read and monitored their informal dialogues. I was not involved to their dialogue to make them free to say anything. I analyzed their error in writing and used it as my need analysis. My teaching material can be based on their errors made in the WhatsApp conversation.

2. Dependent Conversation

Dependent conversation is the conversation that occurs under the teacher's guidance. The teacher actively participated in an online dialogue. The teacher guides the online dialogue and takes part in the conversation. The situation of the conversation is formal because it is guided by the teacher. In this respect, the roles of the teacher are to motivate students to be confident to write, facilitate a group of WhatsApp, make the schedule of conversation to make the students stay in on line group, give materials through WhatsApp, ask students to discuss the materials, give set of question to students and ask them to answer the questions and give feedback towards students answers both teacher's feedback or peer comment.

To make it clear on how teachers should engage students in dependent conversation, excerpt 3 provides an example of group's chats. The conversation happened when teacher gave a text in WhatsApp group and asked the students to give comments to the text given. Then, the teacher also gave feedback to the students' comments on lexis and grammar. The students noticed and reflected between their sentences and the feedback given. On face to face class, teacher discussed the errors made by students. The text is about the meeting between Mark Zuckerberg, the facebook founder, with President Joko Widodo that would be scheduled and held in The Jakarta City Hall on Monday morning. The followings are the students' comments on the text.

Excerpt 3

Yuda : I think what the mark is a good thing for the world to see the development on technology in Indonesia has been left the behind the neighboring countries.

Teacher's Feedback for (TFf) Yuda:

1. Delete the word "the",
2. You need to put very after subject 'Mark'

Tara : I think that Indonesia has many programmer being reliable, unfortunately government didn't glance at their work

TFf Tara : 1. Add 's' in the end of the word programmer to show that the word is plural.

2. Change the structure of the sentence ‘ many programmer being reliable’ .
3. Use capital letter for the word “Indonesia”
- Dirga : in my opinion this is extraordinary once Indonesia will be known in the eyes of the world and IT will be more advanced.
- TFf Dirga : 1. Add article ‘an’ in the word extraordinary, 2. Change the word once.
- Alfian : that was a nice picture and are you not fell cold using that short pants LOL. President.
- TFfalvian : 1. Change tobe ‘are’ into auxillary ‘do’ and in the form question tag ‘ don’t you’
2. ‘feel’ not fell
- Eric : this great step for the development of the technology in Indonesia through the closed meeting. Hopes to improve the network in developing countries.
- TFferik : 1. Your two sentences do not have verb, remember to make sentence you need to put verb after subject
- Bayu : I am happy listen to news about mark whitch visit to Borobudur temple.
- TFfbayu : pay attention to the word ‘whitch’ →wrong spelling, ‘listen’ → is not appropriate word
- Febrian : I think this is a good opportunity for technological competition witch other counties to be the number
- TFffebrian : pay attention to your sentence: ‘witch other countries to be number’, it does not have a sense febrian. And the word ‘witch’ → wrong spelling
- Arief : I hope that after the arrival of Mark Zuckerberg, Indonesia could field of technology.
- TFfarief : 1. Delete the word ‘that’, 2. I do not understand with your sentence of ‘Indonesia could field of technology’
- Bayu : oh yes mom, supposedly Indonesia provide a reliable job opportunity for programmer that are not misused for crime and criminal.

TFfbayu : 1. Delete the word 'supposedly', 2. Add 's' to the end of the word 'provide', 3. 'That are not misused for crime and criminal' ---→ what does it mean?

It can be differentiated between the examples of independent conversation and dependent conversation. Dependent conversation establishes students to use formal language and the conversation are guided by the material. On the other hand, independent conversation established students to use informal situation and no material is available.

D. BENEFITS OF USING WHATSAPP ON TEACHING ENGLISH

Some studies related to the use of digital media, including WhatsApp, in learning writing have been undertaken. Kajder and bull (2004) researched an undergraduate class to examine with a paper and pencil journal. This study found that students wrote more when they were using a computer for their electronic journaling instead of a paper and pencil journal. The sample group used WhatsApp electronic journaling to write responses in this study showed a significant improvement in their writing skills.

Alsaleem (2013) conducted an experimental research to determine whether WhatsApp electronic journaling as new application in smart phones has any significant effect on students, writing vocabulary word choice and voice of undergraduate. The results indicated a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the students that were kept in journal. In addition, examination of individual item scores reveled that there were statistically significant improvements in vocabulary word choice and voice as two critically important writing factors. The study can raise a positive social change by helping teachers understand the prospective benefits of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling to improve the vocabulary word choice and voice writing skills of their students.

Furthermore, reflecting upon my six month experiences establishing WhatsApp in an EAP class, it can be noted that there have been various positive effects on the students' progress in learning in particular, students show their confidence, independency, enthusiasm, and positive attitude towards learning English.

1. Confidence

Teachers may expect students to participate actively in learning by using their target language. While a few students are aware to involve in classroom communication, most of them are considered passive in joining the class and pretend to keep silent. Less-confidence students tend to be passive in the class, do not respond teacher's questions or rarely ask questions to teachers although they do not understand the materials, and give less contribution to the class discussion. Teachers may blame that these happen because students have lack of confidence, and consequently they are reluctant and afraid of speaking. However, they should be aware that it is also one of their jobs and challenges on how to help passive students to become active. Research about the students' barrier factors to communicate in a speaking class was conducted by Mufanti (2015) showed that students were worried, scared, shy, unconfident, and uncomfortable to communicate in English and it is suggested to support as what they need and eliminate their barriers to be brave to start to be communicative in speaking class. They need to find ways how to build and maintain their confidence in the classroom communication. A good news comes when I establish group communication among them through WhatsApp. Less-active students attempt to be active joining the conversation. Previously, they only read and/or try to write a comment in words or phrases. However, a couple of weeks later, they showed great improvement as they were able to write sentences. Students contend that they are not afraid and embarrassed anymore to make any mistakes in grammar or vocabulary as they have friends and the teacher to help them write. They confirm that they are happy and comfortable using WhatsApp to write in English and admit that they have been confident enough to learn.

2. Autonomous

WhatsApp enables students to become autonomous learners because they can learn independently. They can practice to use their language to share any ideas on their own without being limited by the time and classroom, either in independent or dependent types of conversation. However, teachers must observe, facilitate and guide students in the conversation. They have to monitor

students' activeness and their progress in writing, assist the group of WhatsApp and guide them to write well by giving feedback. The role of teachers as facilitators is important to guarantee that students have adequate language exposures and instructional guidance. More importantly, teachers are required to play their important roles in helping students develop autonomy (Benson, 2007; Nakata, 2011; Sinclair, McGrath & Lamb, 2000). It is also believed that autonomy learning creates responsible students. Thus, the use of WhatsApp also creates the students to be responsible persons.

3. Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is a crucial factor that may also hinder students to participate in classroom activities and influence the result of learning English. If they have less self-motivation in learning, it is surely hard to reinforce them to do any activities. However, the use of WhatsApp can increase their enthusiasm in learning. Regardless of their proficiency levels, most students feel excited to join online chats using their own words as it looks like that they communicate with their friends in daily context. It seems that they do not learn English, in fact that they show their motivation to perform well than what they have done in the regular writing class. Generally speaking, their enthusiasm in giving comment on each other improves their interest in writing.

4. Positive attitude towards Learning English : Love English

When teachers ask students whether they like learning English, most of them may say no because they hate to learn it. They join the English class because they have to do so. Although they attend the class, they are not interested in joining any language activities arranged in the classroom and want to finish the class as soon as possible. In fact, their negative responses and attitudes towards English are simply because they almost never communicate in English. However, once they have experienced using the target language in such a natural process by using a media that they are accustomed to use, they might be impressed and probably encourage themselves to practice it regularly. This is in line with what I have experienced for six months in teaching English using WhatsApp. After then I

gave the same question as the first time i met them, and surprisingly i received different response from them. Most of them are fond learning English because they need to improve communication skills, and they wish to have English leassons each semester to maintain their skills.

E. CONCLUSION

A six month experience in teaching English by applying WhatsApp gives a lot of knowledge on how to assist student learn English optimally. Generally, the use of this application does not only provide interest for student to learn, but it also gives them a wide opportunities to practice the target language in a group chats regularly without being restricted with the time and classroom meeting. More importantly, as WhatsApp is one of digital media that is closely related with the time and their need in interest, it can make student excited in writing and it can hide them from barriers that can affect their achievement in learning, such as afraid of making mistake or embarrassed to practice the target language. Furthermore, this media can help student to build their confidence enthusiasm and autonomous in learning, and explore their English ability. In order to have optimum result in teaching English using WhatsApp, teacher required to assist student by establishing and involving them into tips of conversation independent and dependent conversation, as well as monitor the process of online chats by giving proper feedback. Hence, since the use of WhatsApp can encourage motivation and increase English skill, teacher are suggested to incorporate it in teaching English.

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