

Edmodo and Its Potential to Foster Students' Independence in Learning

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Abstract: *This qualitative study reports on the students' response about learning through Edmodo. In this research, Edmodo is used to upload the learning materials prior to the meetings. By observing the face to face classroom activities and analyzing 37 of the students' reflective journals, it was found that the use of Edmodo in learning is beneficial in fostering the students' independence in learning. Besides, the students report that they are more ready to learn because they learnt the material prior to coming to the classroom. However, bad internet network is the reason of not downloading the materials.*

Keywords: *Edmodo*, learning independence

1. Introduction

A rapid development of information and communication technology provides a new trend in teaching and learning. It renews the teaching techniques, materials, as well as assessment tools which lead to a better instruction and improvement in the students' learning outcomes. The most noticeable rapid development of information technology is internet-mediated learning which is ubiquitous allowing the teachers and students to go beyond the classroom wall. One of internet-mediated learning which could be used in the classroom is *Edmodo*. It is online educational platform which is designed by Jeff O' Hara and Nick Borg in 2008 for educational purposes [4]. Its simplicity makes the students could easily use this online platform. The features of *Edmodo* are similar with Facebook in that the users are able to post, store, interact, and upload files. *Edmodo* could also be accessed through mobile device with internet connection. Nonetheless, *Edmodo* is supplemented with parents' account where they could see their children's progress as well as keep informed with the class events. In addition, it allows teachers to give feedback, quiz and assignment, set the due date to submit the assignment, as well as scoring the students' work. The students' chance to access *Edmodo* for social networking is also unlikely to occur because "no personal student pages can be created and to the careful teacher-directed monitoring" [1]. *Edmodo* is also more private and safe because only students who know the group code could sign in to the group.

A great bulk of research has been conducted to investigate how the students and teachers perceive the effectiveness of *Edmodo* in mediating the teaching and learning process. Students have various responses toward the use of *Edmodo*. In spite of its practicality to use, *Edmodo* might not be effective to be used for discussion session as it is possibly not be able to satisfy group members and possibility for misinterpretation of one another opinion is bigger [2]. In other words, students are more convenient to have face to face interaction when the classroom activity is discussion. On the contrary, [3] revealed that *Edmodo* encourages students' engagement and responsible learning particularly the feature for submitting assignment. *Edmodo* is mainly used for

resources, support and communication for online activities. Moreover, as a user-friendly learning platform, *Edmodo* is easy, practical, and accepted causing the students satisfied [5].

Further, students are reported to have good attitude toward learning. Their attitude toward EFL learning is getting higher after being exposed to *Edmodo*. The benefit of *Edmodo* for pedagogical purpose receives the highest level of students' agreement [1].

Internet-mediated learning such as *Edmodo* is potential to deal with time constraint in teaching. One of the problems encountered in teaching Speaking skill is limited time allocation. The time allocation for teaching Speaking is around 100 minutes per week. Such limited time allocation requires the teachers to be able to manage the time well so that all students have chance to participate in the classroom activities. To maximize the time, teachers could upload the material in *Edmodo* prior to the face to face meetings. It allows the students to explore the material before coming to the classroom. Thus, the time allocation for classroom's meeting could be used to directly promote the students' involvement.

In this study, *Edmodo* is used only to upload the material because it is Speaking instruction where the students' oral participation is highly required. Moreno and Mayer (2007) in [5] states that the way the material is presented could probably influence the students' attention and comprehension "which leads to a better academic and social achievement". It means that the process of transferring knowledge through lecturing should be complemented with recent innovation, for instance technology. Further, being regarded as digital-natives, students will probably not find any difficulties in utilizing the technology.

2. Research Method

This qualitative study aims at investigating the students' response about learning via *Edmodo*. There were 37 students pursuing Speaking 1 course who participated in this study. In this study, *Edmodo* was used to upload the learning material

prior to the face to face class session. The students were required to download and learn it. They also could browse or find other sources related to the materials being learnt. During the process, the teacher observed the classroom situation. After exposing them to such learning experience for five meetings, the students were asked to write a reflective journal about their feeling when learning speaking through *Edmodo*.

The data which were collected from classroom observation and reflective journals were analyzed based on the common themes.



Figure 1: Layout of *Edmodo* used in the classroom



Figure 2: Sample of the uploaded material

3. Findings and Discussion

In the initial meeting of the course, the students were asked about their familiarity with *Edmodo*. Since all of them already had experience learning through *Edmodo* in their previous semester, they were no longer informed how to use it. The students were only informed about the use of *Edmodo* in their Speaking class that the material would always be uploaded in *Edmodo* prior to the weekly face to face meetings. The material could be either from You Tube or teacher's made one. Thus, the face to face classroom sessions were used to identify the students' background knowledge about the topic to be learnt and then directly focused on the students' oral activities.

Based on the observation during five meetings, it was found that the students were participating actively in the classroom activities. The first two meetings ran smoothly. The students came to the classroom with the printed version of the uploaded material. So, they already had the knowledge about what they would learn at that time. Thus, the teacher only reviewed the students' understanding and went directly to the main activities. Unfortunately, problem appeared in the third and fourth meeting where the uploaded materials were from

You Tube. When asked whether or not they had watched the videos, not all students said yes. Therefore, teachers needed to explain the material firstly. Then, the uploaded material for the last meeting was in the form of Microsoft Word. There was no longer problem in the meeting. Most of the students had printed the material prior to the meeting.

After analyzing the data obtained from the students' reflective journal, there were several themes emerge underlining the students' response toward learning via *Edmodo*, namely the reasons why the students like leaning via *Edmodo*, their feeling about learning via *Edmodo* and challenges they encounter when learning via *Edmodo*.

It was found that the most frequently cited reason the students like from *Edmodo* is independence and preparedness. The students noted that they were more ready to come to the classroom because they had learnt the material previously.

"I think this way of learning is very exciting because we have got the material from *Edmodo* before we start classes. So we already prepare the material for the next meeting and I like it."

"The materials uploaded in *Edmodo* make every meeting is easy because we know and study about the materials before."

Others argue that she enjoyed the class because she could directly practice her speaking skills from what she had learnt previously via *Edmodo*.

"In my opinion, the material posted in *Edmodo* is very good and I like the class because we always practice the material posted in our group in *Edmodo*. It is very good, simple, and entertaining. I don't feel bored."

The other reported that he could learn anytime he wanted because the material had been downloaded and stored in his mobile device.

"I think when I learn through *Edmodo* application, the material is easy to remember because I can download the material and save it to my phone. So, I can open it when I have free time."

"My opinion about the class is quite easy to follow because the material to study has been prepared by the lecturer that she uploaded before starting the course. So we can independently study the material."

The two excerpts above highlight independence learning. They could learn by themselves through *Edmodo*. *Edmodo* could be a "document repository allowing students to gain access to relevant classroom materials 24/7 and making EFL instruction a continuous process that is not limited to the seating capacity of the classroom" [1].

Despite the benefits offered, there is a drawback of applying such instruction. Majority of the students reported in their journal that they got difficulty to access the materials because they were not always connected to the internet network.

“I really enjoy the class but the problem is network. Sometimes the network is bad.”

Surprisingly, the journals of some students answer the problem that the teacher got in the third and fourth meeting.

“Actually, by using *Edmodo* it makes me studied before I come to the class, so I know what we will discuss. But, it needs internet network. If we didn't have internet network, we can't know the materials. And then some materials that you give to us is a video from you tube so it has more quota making not all students can watch or download the videos.”

Form the citation above, it is obviously seen that the form of material uploaded influences the students' motivation to download the material. Besides, bad internet connection is the biggest challenge when using this online platform in teaching. It is similar with that found by [1]. She found that 47.6% of the students surveyed got frustrated using *Edmodo* because of slow internet connection.

4. Conclusion

As a learning platform, *Edmodo* is potential to foster the students' independence in learning. This study has confirmed the students' positive response in learning via *Edmodo*. Yet, lack of internet connection is reported as the biggest challenge in integrating this kind of platform in teaching and learning.

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