EMPLOYING LINE APPLICATION FOR ENGAGING 'GADGET-FREAK' HIGH INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS AT LBPP LIA PEKANBARU

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Abstract

The gap between digital immigrant teachers and digital native students is inevitable. Prohibition of using gadgets in the classroom resulted in decreasing students' enthusiasm and participation in classroom activities. Therefore, this research was carried out. It was based on the difficulty that the researcher as a teacher faced in engaging student to reach the targeted outcomes. LINE application was choosen for this investigation since it is applicable for smartphones and tablet computers as well as personal computers. The said application is also considered as one of the most frequent social network messengers used by these teenagers students in communicating with each other and it enabled the teacher to fit into students' place. Observation of 17 students has revealed that incorporating LINE was increasing not only the engagement of the students toward learning, but also their language skills. This is because the real-life collaboration existed among the students and the teacher. It was amazing to see how these young digital natives thrived on technology mediated by their gadgets. Meanwhile, the digital immigrant teacher, hardly struggled with adapting it. Although the lack of technology skills of the teacher sometimes slowed down the process of engagement, the teacher still managed to be in line with the students. On the contrary, there was so much temptation in misusing the gadgets for distracting purposes, which also turned out to be another problem to come to grips with. Despite those predicaments, employing LINE indeed worked well for engaging 'gadget-freak' High Intermediate students at LBPP LIA Pekanbaru.

Keywords: LINE Application, Gadget-Freak, High Intermediate

A. Introduction

As twentieth century students mostly digital natives, the digital immigrant teachers need to cope with their students technology literacy. The adaption is a must, for teachers will start losing their students when they avoid to. Indeed, there will always gap between students and teachers when they come from different background of generation. The task of the teacher is to lessen the gap to engage their students during teaching and learning process so that they can reach the targetted outcomes.

More and more students bring their gadget to school or courses. In the place where the researcher teaches, LBPP LIA Pekanbaru, especially at specific class she taught and did the research, all of the students got so attached with their gadgets, whether they are smart phones or laptops. There are no written rules that prohibit students to bring them. So, as a teacher, the researcher was really bothered at first when her students kept playing with their gadgets in the classroom where, according to the researcher former opinion, the students and teacher were supposed to learn something seriously.

Considering that they had already reached the highest level at LIA, Hihg Intermediate 4, the outcomes are much higher than they had used to have at the previous levels. However, they seemed to care more about the opinion of their friends in topics which were not even related to the lessons not to mention the outcomes and chatted using their gadgets during the course time. In addition, most of these students, had started to learn English at LBPP LIA since they were at elementary school. At the time this research was carried out they had been at 11th or 12th grade at school. They had been there for years and the researcher had taught them at several previous levels. No wonder that these students were so familiar with the class and the teacher. The prohibition in using gadgets in the classroom, resulted in protests from students. Some of them even being unresponsive to the classroom instructions. Others, although they were still with the teacher, obviously shown their reluctance of being in track with the instructions.

Having been aware with that situation which cannot be ignored, the researcher asked other teachers' opinion. In fact, other teachers who had taught them also complained that they paid attention more to their gadgets than the classroom activities. It was noticeable that the problem is the gadgets. Standing against gadgets for their negative effects might not be wrong, but the researcher was in the opinion that, if there were negative effects, there must also be positive effects. That was the reason why the researcher, finally, decided to incorporate LINE application in the teaching and learning process.

There are many applications that the students linger to. Among all of those applications, LINE is the most frequent social network messengers used by these teenager students in communicating with each other. Various features in LINE had attracted so many users especially teenagers in using this application. Hence, LINE application was choosen for this investigation since it is applicable for smartphones and tablet computers as well as personal computers. It is not a very complicated application. Surely a not-technology-savvy teachers are able to manage this application, of course, with efforts.

Seeing that Information, Communication and Technology has actually been integrated in teaching and learning process for this 21st century, the necessity in incorporating it to the process is something that should be taken into consideration. Besides, the lessen the gap that teachers and students have, the lower affective filter can be found in the classroom. The low filter also supports the achievement that the students will get during teaching and learning process.

It is undeniably that when some digital immigrant teachers see how these young digital natives thrived on technology mediated by their gadgets, the feeling of inferior to this technology comes up to the surface. Some even linked it up with dignity as a teacher being beaten by students in acquiring technology skills. In spite of this uncomfortable feeling that the teachers have regarding technology, one thing that the researcher keeps in mind is a quotation by Ignacio Estrada, "If the students do not learn the way the teacher teaches, maybe the teacher should start teaching the way the students learn."

Therefore, at the outset, the researcher tried to install the LINE application by herself. Being able to read in English actually helps a lot when ones want to deal with any application on smartphones or even any other gadgets. It took time, indeed, but then, she managed to have the application on her smartphone. The rest depended on her efforts and her being learner in proportion to the application as a teacher is actually a learner as well.

By utilizing this LINE application, the researcher anticipated that the students would be more enganged in learning than merely entertained by using their gadgets without any linkage to the lessons. Even if it would be quite an effort to be in line with the students speed in using this application, the researcher had maintain with the situation.

B. Brief Review of Related Theories

ICT in language teaching and learning process has been an issue for years. Educational institutions in the thick of purchasing the latest technology devices such as computers and any other gadgets as well internet access. To contend with students need, teachers are trained to use these devices (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008; Prensky, 2001a; Tapscott, 1998). Garret (1991) suggested that it is necessary to introduce teachers to various methods, approaches and pedagogies in order to enable teachers to wisely control the usage of those gadgets for they are only tools.

Media available on gadgets for communicating are messaging applications In point of fact, there are many messaging applications that are available on smartphones or tablet computers. Some of them are even available for personal computers. They are acknowledged as WhatsApp, Kakao Talk, Chat ON, WeChat, LINE and etcetera. Among all of those applications, the researcher chose LINE application for it was widely used by her students to communicate to each other. Morever, LINE was the only application that all of the students had an account on.

Referring to online wikipedia, LINE is a proprietary application used for instant communication on electronic devices such as smartphones, tablet computers and personal computers. It is possibly for its user to swap over texts, images, video and audio. This free messaging application also enables its user to have free VoIP conversation and video conferences.

The researcher saw that this LINE application was a media that would engage students as well as entertained them. The application started to be launched in 2011 and it has been widely used by millions of users including the ones in Indonesia. Before doing the research, the researcher conducted a simple survey to her students and found out among all of the applications available on their gadgets, it was only LINE that all of them had an account on. Some also logged in WhatsApp and WeChat, but it was not all of them had those accounts.

Based on Salehi and Salehi (2012), more energy and times are needed by some teachers to learn to use those gadgets. It also happened to the researcher which in contrast with her students, as digital immigrant teacher, the researcher found that she hardly struggled with adapting it. It would not be easy to catch up with students who were even born in the technology era that every information can be accessed by the tips of their fingers. They practically lived with them. They got the gift while she had to acquire.

Furthermore, the researcher did this simple research by applying action research. According to Cresswell (2008), action research has an applied focus. He also added that this research is usually done due to specific, practical issue which purposes to explore or rummage around it to solve a problem. In this circumstances, the problem in engaging students was the issue which the researcher focused on.

To be more specific, the researcher came to a decision that Participatory Action Research (Schmuck, 1997) which is attributable to targeted approach to win students' attention so that using gadgets inside or outside classroom can be more than just entertaining as it is also engaging. In order to gather data from this research, she refers to Mills (2000) whom was in the opinion of action research is designed as a systematic procedure with the intention of improving teaching and learning process.

Mills also introduced Dialectic Action Research Spiral which the researcher tried to implement in the procedures as follows:

- Identifying an area or focus
  This process involves defining an area of focus, doing self-reflection and description, reviewing the literature, and writing an action plan to guide the research. This earlier stage is a preparation time for doing the research.
- Collecting data
  Collecting data by gathering multiple sources of data and by using a variety of inquiry tools. The data is gathered by observing students' reaction and comments and results of their learning toward the usage of application.
- Analizing and Interpreting Data
  Analyzing includes identifying themes, asking key questions, doing an organizational review, engaging in concept mapping, while interpreting involves extending the analysis by raising questions, connecting findings to personal experiences, seeking the advice of critical friends, and contextualizing the findings in literature and theory.
- Completing an Action Plan
  Completing an action plan which resulted in summary of findings, recommended actions, and the identification of individual responsible for action and individuals who need to be consulted and informed. In this case the whole class members are the subject of the research and all of findings related to the effects of incorporating LINE application was considered to contribute to students' learning development.

C. Data Analysis and Discussion

Before doing the research, the researcher learned how to install and use LINE application either by herself or by the help of the students outside the classroom. She did not even know how to set the group if her students did not lend their hands on doing it. It was not easy for her as a teacher to realize how she was left behind too far by her students in term of technology.

Having the group set, she started the first meeting of the research by using the application. When she entered the classroom, the students did not even recognize her for they were so busy with their gadgets. Without saying anything orally, she did motivating strategy by greeting the students via LINE. Surprised students responded to her quickly. Having connected with her students, she led them to the topic of the lesson. Happily replied any questions or comments from teacher or among classmates, they did not realized that they actually were in the process of teaching and learning until one of them said, "Why don't we just talk, Ms? Instead of typing?" There she was, then. Having the whole classroom members connected to any activities they did afterward.

Several days before the second meeting, the researcher reminded her students of their writing assignment, incomplete essay; introductory paragraph and the first body paragraph via LINE. Just like many other typical students, these students also complained, telling that they had so much to do, homeworks and other activities. The responses from the students were so quick and various rather than when the researcher told it directly at the previous meeting. How they responded to their gadget was really surprising as they got "too attached" to them. Somehow, the LINE reminder worked well than a teacher "shouting" to their ears telling them to write down their introductory paragraph previously. It was 8 out of 17 students missed the chance to submit it.

Whereas, at the second meeting, there were only two students who did not submit their incomplete essay. One because she did not come and another one because he had difficulties in developing the main idea and wanted to change his topic. The students was so aware that the researcher were going to use the same approach, that was by using LINE in this meeting. Anticipating this, she used other motivating strategy. LINE was used at skills practice. The students who did not attend the class was following the class through LINE. So, she was there on LINE with other students when it came to skills practice and she asked a lot question about the targetted outcomes. Her friends were so eager to explain them to her that the researcher assumed that the explanation of some students to their absent friend as summing up at that day.

Since then, the interaction of student-student and student-teacher were so intense even outside classroom. The students felt free asking any questions on chat option on their LINE group. It was often that the researcher did not have to answer the question because other students replied quickly to their friends inquiries. Online resources were so easily accessed. The one with better internet connection would happily

help others with limited connection. The data, pictures, stickers and even photos of part of their assignments were posted on the chat where every member had the availability to view and review. Comments ad suggestion were welcomed. They surely communicated and interacted in English.

Observation of those 17 students has revealed that incorporating LINE was increasing not only the engagement of the students toward learning, but also their language skills. They accessed materials although the teacher did not ask them to do that. In some part, it was too help their weak friends and in other parts they were happy to be able to stick with their gadget longer.

This is because the real-life collaboration existed among the students and the teacher. It was amazing to see how these young digital natives thrived on technology mediated by their gadgets. They informed that they did almost all of activities with their gadget. They are as follows:

- Using them for listening to the music although they have sophisticated audio system at home.
- Benefiting from their handheld gadget to find resources for doing assignments than using their desktop personal computers.
- Chatting and sharing information with family and friends were more interesting and real-life setting as pictures and video can be sent and received instantly.
- Watching movies via gadgets are more interesting for it was so personal and if they wanted to share some part of it, they can be easily cut and edited as per needed to later on be shared directly or in a link.

Meanwhile, the digital immigrant teacher, hardly struggled with adapting those gadgets usage. In using LINE, the application which gained popularity among the students, the researcher was struggling so hard too keep in pace with her students speed. It was fascinating to see how fast their fingers moved on those small screen or keypads while the teacher had to take some rest after posting or typing a little. Some students sometimes protested when she slowly responded to the comments or questions posted on group chat. Although the lack of technology skills of the teacher a bit slowed down the process of engagement, the teacher still managed to be in line with the students.

On the contrary, there was so much temptation in misusing the gadgets for distracting purposes, which also turned out to be another problem to come to grips with. With the addition of the researcher tardiness in responding to the students activities in LINE, the temptation was getting stronger. The research was ended until 5th meeting. Despite those predicaments, employing LINE indeed worked well for engaging 'gadget-freak' High Intermediate students at LBPP LIA Pekanbaru.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Pertaining to analysis and discussion, the researcher comes to a close conclusion that incorporating LINE in teaching and learning process for this 'gadget freak' High Intermediate students at LBPP LIA Pekanbaru was increasing not only the engagement of the students toward learning, but also their language skills. They demonstrated their willingness to view and review their works and to explore more from the researcher as teacher as well by themselves by accessing the online resources even, surprisingly, from their student book that used to be reluctantly seen or opened.

LINE application covers most all of type of students in the researcher's class. From the introvert to extrovert, the silent and the talkative, rejoiced in LINE group, actively involved in discussion or task given. It was time consuming, then again, it was quite effective to engage the students. Their attachments to their gadget brings about strong reason for using this to assist their learning.

As a final point, this action research of incorporating LINE is possible to handle teaching and learning problems, especially in engaging students. It is attributable to develop further digital teaching tools to achieve better and effective engangement of students. The results can be regarded as one of alternative in teaching digital native students who are gadget freak with by adjusting to the classroom situation and the availability of online access.

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