

The Use of Edmodo for Teaching Reading in a Blended-Learning Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The process of teaching and learning in the 21st century is complex. Today's students, who are millennials, may consider the traditional face-to-face classroom setting to be boring and not really motivating anymore. Teachers are required to attend to each student's needs, and are expected to keep up with what is relevant to today's learning. With the advancement of technology, blended-learning is expected to be one of the solutions. It is when technology is integrated with the teaching and learning process. Hence, this paper discusses how an educational network platform, *Edmodo*, can be used and is helpful for the blended-learning classroom, as well as the advantages teachers and students can get from using it in teaching reading.

Keywords: *educational network platform, Edmodo, reading, blended learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

English as an international language plays a huge role in the lives of many people. Even in non-English speaking countries, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Japan, etc., English is highly needed. Indonesians, for instance, have long started to see that the English competence is important. Not only is the language important for them to pass the National Examination, it is also important for their lives after that. They need English as a qualification to apply for a job.

As a *lingua franca*, English is also significant as a means of communication among people around the world. Therefore, exposure to English through media has become unlimited due to the advancement in technology. The desire to be involved in many projects out there and be considered as world's citizens drive many people, especially the millennials, to be competent

in English, as they see how essential the language's role is.

In the context of ELT, many experts argue that the process of teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in Indonesia is seen to be a very complex process (Hidayati, 2016). For most Indonesians and any other speakers in non-English speaking countries, English is not their first language whereas the process of acquiring L2 is not a simple matter. The English curriculum in Indonesia itself has experienced changes since 1975, but has yet brought any significant impact on the ELT class success (Marcellino, 2008). It is believed that a number of comparative studies have been conducted to find the most effective method and approach of teaching English. Some methods and approaches may have been proved to work in their respective eras. However, as the process of teaching and learning is dynamic, teachers need to keep

up with today's language learning trend. Apparently, current English learning involves technologies to attract learners' attention and increase their motivation.

The use of technology in the 21st century is a demand, especially for teaching English as second and/or foreign language. There are many applications, softwares, and internet-based platforms which can be used as supplementary learning media English classrooms. Teachers can utilize one of them to create a blended learning, combining face-to-face classroom and online classroom, in many of their classes (e.g. a writing class, speaking class, listening class, reading class, or other content courses). However, the success – or failure, of today's English classes cannot depend solely on technology. Technology is powerful for students' autonomous learning, but it is the teachers' jobs to make sure that the technology is utilized efficiently in their classes.

As one of academic platform which is widely used in language learning, *Edmodo* is relevant to a blended-learning classroom model in reading classes. The nature of reading skills which is seen passive leads to common reading classes that also require passive activities in the classroom (Looi & Yusop, 2011). This paper, however, will discuss how *Edmodo* can be implemented in an EFL / ESL reading class. The advantages and disadvantages will also be reviewed. It is hoped that fellow English teachers, educators, and practitioners can take benefits as well as insights from this library research to create a more lively teaching and learning process in their English classes.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

This section will further review the constructs of the research; ICT, blended learning, and *Edmodo* in teaching reading. The relations among those three will be seen throughout the paragraphs.

2.1 ICT in language learning

Information and computers technology (ICT) is defined as the use of computers and the internet by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online (2019). Furthermore, Asabere and Enguah (2012, as cited in Çakici (2016)) define ICT as the tools, facilities, processes, and equipments that provide the required environment with the physical infrastructure and the services for the generation, transmission, processing, storing and disseminating of information in all forms including voice, text, data, graphics and video. In the past, ICT may include radio, television, newspapers, while nowadays it also includes the use of web, internet, and online applications. Not only is it useful for the students, ICT today can also be a tool for teachers to enhance the teaching learning process in their classes. Teachers are also expected to be more resourceful and creative when integrating their teaching material with ICT.

In ELT, language teachers have shown keen interests in the utilization of ICT. It is also believed that a considerable amount of research has shown how critical ICT role is in the field of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and that it has helped to reinforce and create powerful learning environment (Çakici, 2016). Çakici (2016), and Ammanni & Aparanjani (2016) provided some forms of integrating ICT with language classroom, from the use of laptop, interactive whiteboard, LCD projector, internet and social networks in education support, webinar, mobile applications, to the use of E-books and audio books.

A great number of studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of integrating ICT into foreign language learning. One of the studies was done by Bilyalova (2016) who evaluated the importance of ICT usage in teaching foreign languages in universities. Bilyalova (2016) studied the most effective types of ICT for the development of linguistic and

communication competence of students. The study proved that the use of ICT has a positive impact on the quality of teaching a foreign language. The integration of ICT to the foreign language learning process makes it more dynamic and facilitates the activation of independent work of students (Bilyalova, 2016).

2.2 Blended learning

When discussing the integration of ICT and language teaching, it is inevitable to discuss blended learning as an area for ICT to be well-implemented. The learning blends at least two methods together in the learning process. Garrison and Kanuka (2004, as cited in Okaz, (2015)) defines blended learning simply as integrating classroom teaching with online experiences. As for Singh (2003, as cited in Okaz, (2015)), blended learning is combining different delivery media to promote meaningful and motivating learning. In other words, blended learning is the learning which blends the use of technology – or ICT in that matter, with the face-to-face or traditional classroom setting, aiming at making it more meaningful and motivating.

The traditional classroom setting which require students to attend lectures and make them listen to instructions are considered boring and irrelevant by the millennial students. They probably need one good reason why they should attend classes while they actually can have unlimited access to learning resources in the internet and that they can learn by themselves. However, learning solely from online resources may not be as interactive as learning in the classroom with their classmates and teacher because students may be “lost in internet” that it separates them from the real world (Nazarlou, 2013). This is where the blended learning fit in. Other than that, a study by Dias & Diniz (2014, as quoted in Okaz, (2015)) showed how blended learning can also facilitate students with different learning needs and interests. In terms of giving teachers a convenience to give tests, an assessment, Tran & Ngunyen (2014)

suggested that blended learning had brought good changes.

2.3 Edmodo for teaching reading

One of the ways to implement ICT in language learning is by making use of Edmodo. Edmodo is an education platform which can specifically be used for foreign language and/or second language learning outside classroom. As known that Edmodo is “Facebook for Education” (Enriquez, 2014), it is not like the usual social networking services (SNS) such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Edmodo is “an education-focused SNS” developed in the United States in 2008 (Okumura & Bronson, 2016). It has many features such as “wall, info, video, notes” that can be explored based on language teaching needs. According to Santoso, Rochsantiningih, & Sujoko (2014), “teachers can create a micro blogging network for their classes”. They emphasized that Edmodo creates an interesting atmosphere as well as engaging activities which trigger the learners to participate actively in learning process. This brings about the 21st century trend of language learning which is not limited in a traditional classroom within a time constraint, but a blended learning which combines traditional classroom (offline) with online classroom. Edmodo, here, is utilized as a supplemental learning media to gain language learners’ meaningful participation. This apparently supports the principle of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) which sees Edmodo (as one part of CALL) as “a technological innovation to display multimedia as a means of complementing a teaching method language teacher” (Patel, 2015).

Reading is significant in language acquisition. It is a skill that needs to be taught in language classroom. It relates to Santoso, Rochsantiningih, & Sujoko’s (2014) concern that “when students are provided with comprehensible linguistic inputs, some of the language will stick in their minds as part of the language acquisition process”. They also believe that

“students need to be able to read texts in English either for their carriers, for study, or simply for pleasure” (2014). Therefore, reading class should not only be interesting, but also engaging to facilitate the learners with autonomous learning. By employing Edmodo features (quizzes, assignments, notes, polls, crossword puzzles, badges, etc.), teachers can control the online classroom interaction as well as monitor students’ progress (Alimuddin, 2017, p.3). The learners will also “participate and get actively engaged” in classroom activities. This is supported by Alimuddin’s finding that there was an increase of motivation among the first-year student of University of Nusantara PGRI Kediri when they shared their ideas and opinions in a discussion on Edmodo (p.5). Most importantly, the research found that “the students’ reading comprehension increased after using Edmodo in the learning process” (Alimuddin, 2017, p.6). The same finding was also found in Santoso, Rochsantiningih, & Sujoko’s research conducted in SMP N 17 Surakarta. They encountered that “teaching reading using Edmodo posting can improve the students’ reading competence in understanding English texts” (2014).

3. THE APPLICATION OF EDMODO

Edmodo is a social learning platform for teacher, students, and parents to share content or information and homework. Through Edmodo, educators and learners are connected in a safe social environment. They can share digital contents and access homework, grades, class discussion from computer or any device. The following explanation provides Edmodo features that are useful for both educators and learners (<http://susd.edmodo.com>).

3.1 Signing up

User can join Edmodo as a teacher or a student. At the homepage, the user can sign up as a teacher by simply clicking I’m a Teacher. Meanwhile, when they want to sign up as a student, they can simply choose I’m a Student and insert a code of a group

to which they want to join. If student want to join more than one group, they do not need a new account. They can easily click Join and type the code of the group.

3.2 Groups

Groups are closed networks made by teachers for classes, clubs, or any collaborative projects. When creating a group, there will be six-digit code which can be used by students to join the group. Students can join groups to which they are invited by teachers or by using the code of the group. Once the students join groups, they can send messages to the entire group or teacher directly, but not to other students.

3.3 Calendar

A teacher can post important dates on the Class Calendar. The due dates and important description of all assignments can be posted to the calendar automatically. It is also possible to share events, announcements, assignments, and reminders with groups or individual members with Edmodo Calendar.

3.4 Posting

3.4.1 Notes/Alert

Notes will be useful when the user wants to start discussion panel as messages, reminders, writing/discussion prompts, etc. Similar to notes, alert is considered as urgent messages or immediate notification to group members, and it is limited to only 140 characters.

3.4.2 Assignment

This feature is used to give a writing assignment online. The teacher can create assignment online, the students will answer them online, and the teacher will grade it online. Teacher can title the assignment, put the due date, insert a description or the assignment, as well as include attachments from the web, computer, or Edmodo library. Once the students log in, they can see the assignment and the embedded file or media. After that, the students can turn in the completed assignment to the teacher.

Next, the teacher can track which students who have submitted their assignment then grade it so that the students can immediately receive the feedback.

3.4.3 Quizzes

This feature enables teacher to create, edit, and post quizzes for students. It is also possible to set the time limit for a quiz and preview it before sending it to the group. Furthermore, Edmodo provides some types of quizzes for students, namely multiple choices, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and short answers. Once the students submit the answers of a quiz, it will be automatically scored (except for the short answer).

3.4.4 Polls

Poll is used when the teacher wants to get a quick feedback from students. For example, when teacher wants to have a make-up class and need his/her students to choose when the make-up class should be conducted. Another example is when the teacher wants to know which type of the final exam that your students want to do.

3.5 Student badges

Student badges are used when teacher wants to give an award for the students' hard work, participation, achievement, perfect scores, and more. A teacher can create their own badges or use badges provided by Edmodo. To award a student a badge, a teacher needs to choose the class, select a member or a student to be awarded, and choose the badge.

3.6 Library

Library allows teachers to store and manage files and links. They can access the files as well as share them with the group members. Every file uploaded in any assignment is stored here. Teachers can add any type of file such as photo, video, document, web links, etc. however, it has limited space for each piece of content no bigger than 100 MB.

3.7 Parent communication

Through this feature, parents can track their children's/students' assignment, grade, due dates, and read any dialogue between students and teacher.

3.8 Grade book

Students are able to access the grades of their Edmodo assignments at any time. The grade can be printed out as a spreadsheet to be included in the grade book.

4. THE USE OF EDMODO FOR TEACHING READING

Edmodo with its features can assist English teachers to create more engaging classes. This paper, however, focuses more on how Edmodo can be used as a supplementary tool in blended learning, particularly reading classes. In this section, how Edmodo can be implemented in a reading class will be discussed. The limitations and other possible disadvantages of using it will also be reviewed.

4.1 Implementation of Edmodo in reading classes

In general reading class, Edmodo can be used as an additional tool to provide more learning experiences (quizzes, assignments, exercises, discussion, etc.) outside classroom. The features of Edmodo highly promote independence or autonomous learning due to time constraints. They will also result in incidental learning as language acquisition process. As explained previously, Edmodo doesn't only benefit teachers but also students (Warawudhi, 2017). Hence, below is the possible Edmodo implementation in reading classes.

4.1.1 Attractive classroom

Reading is a receptive skill. Common reading classes, then, are seen as a passive classroom since it only requires students to read. However, the learners should not be regarded as "passive receivers of ideas and knowledge" (Looi & Yusop, 2011). One way to gain students' engagement is to create active learning strategies through

reading involving other “pedagogical methods such as in-class discussion, questioning, debate, and explaining” (Looi & Yusop, 2011). Due to time constraint, Edmodo helps teachers to provide online quizzes (fill-in-the-blank, short answer, multiple answers, and true-false) which will make the class be more interesting. According to Warawudhi (2017), the program is easy to use and it engages the students to get involved in outside classroom. That way, the use of Edmodo nurtures the class to be attractive and further, because of the emergence of motivation in learning language, result in a lively language learning process.

4.1.2 Lifelong learning

Any regular classes must have duration or time limitation. In reading classes, it is not enough to learn only from teaching and learning session in a classroom. Blended learning, then, helps the teacher to go beyond that boundary. In this case, Edmodo plays an important role to provide academic online resources which are relevant to the topics discussed in classroom. In her research, Warawudhi (2017) found that the majority of the students could use and participate well on Edmodo interface by “doing quizzes, polls, posts, making comments and sharing resources”, then uploading files and suggesting websites to other friends. It shows that the materials, quizzes, exercises, or other learning resources can be continually used by both the teachers and students. The teacher can use it for the next reading classes and the students can forward, share, and even recall their learning track as well as progress in Edmodo even if they already finish the class. This lifelong learning also promotes meaningful learning as believed by Santoso, Rochsantiningsih, & Sujoko’s (2014) that “when students are provided with comprehensible linguistic inputs, some of the language will stick in their minds as part of the language acquisition process”.

4.1.3 More language exposure

Regarding comprehensive input mentioned above, the features in Edmodo allow teachers to provide unlimited exposures to the students which can be accessed anywhere and anytime. All learning resources can be stored and reused by the users. Thus, the input is various as the teacher can upload videos, links, exercises, and other documents to support the learning process. It is very beneficial for the language acquisition process so that the students will get an incidental learning as well as autonomous learning, not dependent to face-to-face classroom. The input is to overcome the problems encountered by the students who have “limited vocabularies, not knowing the communicative purpose of the text, still confused to find implicit information, lack of motivation, not having good media to support them” (Santoso, Rochsantiningsih, & Sujoko, 2014).

4.1.4 Social networking community

As mentioned by Santoso, Rochsantiningsih, & Sujoko (2014) that Edmodo is the way teachers can create a micro blogging for their students, interactions between teacher and students, and students and students are also developed. This is supported by Warawudhi (2017) who argued that “with this program, class engagement and interaction between students and teacher were created” (p.157). In line with Krashen’s theory which believes that language is supposed to be learned through interaction or communication, Edmodo gives collaborative-learning environment among students and teacher in order to achieve meaning-making result. It can be done through Edmodo post column which has comment section allowing students and teacher to have online discussion. This is highly supported by Looi & Yusop (2011); “Microblogging built in the social networking sites seems to have the potential to extend these possibilities by providing the platform to facilitate reading interactivity, develop autonomous learning and support meaning making activities.”

4.1.5 Auto grading system

Apparently, teachers can facilitate assessment feature in Edmodo to do auto grading system. Muhlis (2017) explained that, “the teacher can assess the students’ work like examining students’ worksheet manually”. The teacher can also give, “comments on the students’ worksheet, thus the students know what should be revised or what should pay attention of” (p.30). This auto grading system will also allow students to get immediate feedback which can be useful for their language learning process. In Edmodo, both students and teachers are able to keep any assessment and progress in track.

4.2 Limitations of using Edmodo

Aside from its benefits in improving traditional reading classes, there are some limitations of using Edmodo. The limitations can be challenges that both teachers and students should overcome. The limitations and/or disadvantages are discussed below.

First, Edmodo needs a good internet connection. Although it is a free education platform, “Edmodo is online virtual tool” and the internet connection is crucial (Santoso, Rochsantiningsih, & Sujoko, 2014, p.35). In their research, they described that some students still need to go to the internet rental to access Edmodo.

Second, students are not well informed by Edmodo. For instance, when getting student badges and doing quiz, there are no notifications received by the students. This is supported by Warawudhi (2017) who stated that “students also informed the problems when doing quizzes that they did not get the notifications”.

Third, auto grading system is not available for all types of quiz. Short-answer quiz still requires the teacher to grade by herself/himself.

Fourth, continually accessing Edmodo as virtual learning media causes both teachers and students get “bad effect on their health”

(2014, p.37). One most possible effect is eye-sore caused by the exposure of laptop and mobile phone’s monitor.

5. CONCLUSION

Edmodo, as a social learning platform and “Facebook for Education”, gives meaningful experiences for both teachers and learners, considering that the use of technology in this 21st century has been very common. Realizing that English is an international language and *lingua franca*, Edmodo can be a good supplementary learning media within the teaching and learning process, particularly in blended classroom. Moreover, Edmodo is able to create an interesting atmosphere as well as engaging activities in teaching language skills, especially reading which is closely related to passive skills (Looi & Yusop, 2011).

In conclusion, Edmodo gives many contributions for supporting language teaching and learning process. Edmodo may facilitate teachers to create more attractive classroom since it has features to create various types of exercises or quizzes, and the students can access it on the go, leading to motivate them to be more active and reducing passive classroom activity. Furthermore, the ability of Edmodo in storing files (assignments, quizzes, and etc.) which can be accessed and reused by both teachers and students anywhere and anytime promotes a lifelong learning. There are also unlimited exposures to the students which are highly beneficial for their language acquisition. This, of course, helps students to experience incidental learning and autonomous learning, not limited to the face-to-face classroom or traditional classroom. Most importantly, Edmodo allows the students to learn the language through interaction and communication which is believed by Krashen to be an effective way to learn and/or acquire a language. In addition, Edmodo provides auto-grading system which benefit teachers to grade the students’ work immediately and give direct feedback.

Nevertheless, Edmodo also has weaknesses in implementing teaching and learning process in reading class with blended-learning model. The academic platform requires good internet connection which cannot always be guaranteed, especially in Indonesia; lacks of notification for quizzes and student badges; doesn't provide auto-grading system for all types of quizzes; and causes health problems due to a continuous effect of monitor exposure. Hence, further studies discussing more practical use of Edmodo in other content courses, not only classes teaching language skills, are needed.

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