Engagement in Online English language Teaching

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

((وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهَا مِن دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِن يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ بَصِيرًا))

صدق الله العظيم (فاطر:45)

To

My beloved father

My kind-hearted mother

My brothers and sisters

With love and gratitude

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Contents

Introduction

Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) pandemic has altered the system of teaching and learning process drastically. Teachers and students are compelled to conduct the teaching learning process from their homes for the unlimited time as the government is still keeping up with the growth of this pandemic.

Online learning is a growing educational alternative for adults who, due to time and space constraints cannot attend face-to-face classes on a regular basis. Since its beginnings, online education has maintained a crescent demand (Estevez, Castro Martinez & Rodriguez Grenobles, 2015) and it has evolved as technology itself has more to offer in terms of educational tools. Another reason why online education has become popular is because it offers the possibility to attend remote universities without having to move to new cities or countries (Alvarado & Calderon, 2013). More and more colleges and universities are going beyond their physical frontiers to offer quality education to distant learners. Despite all the advances, however, there are many who are still skeptical about the quality and the outcomes of online education.

Social networks play indispensable roles in fostering second language learning by providing a wide array of authentic materials. In the recent years, information technologies and social media, in particular, have affected the life of Iraqis, in general, and the educational community in particular. It is due to their different forms which help people communicate in various ways: such as blogs, social networks (Facebook), micro-blogs (Twitter), wikis (Wikipedia), video podcasts, and photo sharing (Instagram and Snapchat). Such applications as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp have massively boosted social interaction and information sharing within student and teacher communities alike.

Internet provides wide international resources of language learning. It enables second language learners to communicate directly with native English speakers. Generating language is the most important item for making interpersonal relationship for self-expression and social interaction. Receptive (listening & reading) and productive (speaking and writing) language skills can be facilitated through Internet. According to Abidin, Ahmad, & Kabilan, (2010, p.185), second language learners would increase their abilities, self-knowledge, self-confidence, and lifelong learning. They improve their life skills by using different social media that enable the learners to foster their positive trends about learning English.

A fundamental process in learning English is improving students' engagement (Yang, 2011: 33). Teachers play a primary role in enhancing their students' engagement especially in the EFL context. Engagement in the learning process is very important because it leads to the process of practice and interaction between subjects in the classroom (Judith L. Irvin, 2007). Students' engagement is defined as interest, curiosity, and passion shown by the students in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the students' engagement refers to the students' involvement in the teaching and learning process that relates to the behavioral, emotional, participation, and cognitive of the students (Christenson, Wylie, & Reschly, 2012; Mahdikhani & Rezaei, 2015; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). According to Sharkey et al. (2008), student engagement is often presented as a constructional with three levels containing behavioural emotional, and cognitive engagement. Yet, Dixson (2015) revealed that there are four students engagement aspects as the basic theory of the study include behavioral/skills, emotional, participation/interaction, and cognitive engagement.

Section One

Online Education

1.1 E-Learning

E-learning is a learning and training process with the used on technology such as the internet and computer-based learn. In this study, the e-learning is to focus on the use of online English conversation courses.

According to Spender (2001), e-learning is an innovative way of delivering knowledge, which in turn offers students more control over the process of learning. Beamish et al. (2002) described the process of e-learning as a set of processes and applications that are related to learning and training through computer-based, online, virtual classrooms, and other digital collaboration learning. Homan and Macpherson (2005) defined e-learning as the learning that is involved with electronic learning materials, intranet/internet networking systems in learning, as well as those with interactive and downloadable materials. Meanwhile, Hall and Snider (2000) explained e-learning as the learning process over electronic devices over the intranet or internet.

1.2 Online Social Interaction in Language Learning

Vandergriff (2016) suggests that online learning communities can provide a forum through which teachers may maintain contact with students at the same time as enabling students to discuss their own learning. In language classrooms, students develop and express their own identities through the language they are learning (Ushioda, 2011b), therefore language teachers can have serious, lifealtering consequences for their students and can significantly influence their motivation, identity construction and development as autonomous learners (Murray, 2011). As Little (2004, p. 16) puts it, "what they learn becomes part of what they are." Social views of the development of autonomy have gained momentum in the past few years, and the perspective that learners are able to engage in learning activities without support from the teacher or other learners have started to be called into question (Murphy, 2014). There is evidence that from a theoretical perspective, social networking appears to provide many of the conditions necessary for supporting learning (Lomicka & Lord, 2016), and an increasing number of studies that have started to explore the potential of social networking in language learning contexts (e.g., Álvarez Valencia, 2016).

Social networking as a learning tool is not without difficulties. Results thus far have been rather mixed, where learners tend to show positive attitudes but limited interaction (Tran, 2016). As Rennie and Morrison (2013) point out, not all

learners are receptive to engaging in online interactions, and without intervention from the teacher, online social interaction between learners has shown to be difficult to maintain (Fuchs & Snyder, 2013). There are also concerns from the teacher's perspective, where they must deal with additional tasks as well including training students with appropriate technical skills to use the technology and meeting learners' expectations regarding technical support, particularly outside of class time (Lai & Yeung, 2016). These extra duties could be a burden if language teachers are not familiar with the technology and/or may simply not have enough time to deal with ongoing requests for help that may take place at various times of day or night.

Studies that have looked at the use of social networking as a support for language teaching and learning have varied in their focus. Many studies have looked for features that are typically associated with face-to-face interaction to determine whether or not they are also evident in online social interactions, such as negotiation of meaning (Liu, 2017), communication breakdown (Peeters, 2018), scaffolding (Cappellini, 2016), and feedback (Ware, 2017). In the majority of cases, researchers have found that many of these features are indeed seen in online interactions, and as such many of the frameworks for analyzing face-to-face interactions are also applicable to online interactions as well. Other studies have also examined important features such as development of identity online

(Reinhardt & Chen, 2013; Vandergriff, 2016), how learners choose and use social networking sites (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012; Liu et al., 2013), and community building (Barnes, 2018).

Research that looks specifically at the relationship between learner engagement and social networking has remained extremely scarce. One such example is from Tran (2016), who found that learners using Quizlet as a support for out-of-class learning posted their quiz scores through Facebook, which resulted in impromptu competition between the learners that appeared to prompt active usage of the Quizlet activities. Learners indicated that they found the interactions to be motivating, but the study did not specifically investigate the impact that the interactions had on engagement. As a result, the current study aimed to explore how learners actually interacted online, and how this related to learner engagement in online activities.

1.3 Learning Outside of Class

Encouraging learners to engage in language learning tasks outside of class time has shown to be a rather difficult undertaking. The reasons behind engagement in language learning tasks are a complex intersection of various interrelated factors, some of which relate to motivation and others to contextual factors (Dornyei, MacIntyre & Henry, 2017). One of the more widely discussed

factors has been the development of learner autonomy, which has attracted a good deal of attention in recent years (e.g., Benson, 2011). Autonomy has proven to be an elusive concept as well, as evidenced by the various discussions that have attempted to define it (e.g., Little, Dam & Legenhausen, 2017). While there has been some criticism of most definitions of autonomy, one widely accepted description is that it is self-directed where learners take responsibility for their own learning (Benson, 2011; Ushioda, 2011a). Simply completing required tasks outside of class should not be equated with autonomy (Stockwell, 2016). In other words, just because learners do homework or what the teacher requires of them does not mean that they are autonomous learners. Learner autonomy is an extremely complex notion, and it is unlikely that any claims about the development of autonomy itself can be made without looking at the learning process and learner attitudes towards their learning in a longitudinal manner. A more short-term definition of autonomy that focuses more on individual tasks appears to be a more realistic goal for teachers, where learners become able to take responsibility for how, when, and where they engage in specific tasks.

Technology has often been proposed as a means of promoting task autonomy—often tacitly but any type of autonomy, be it of a task level or more global, requires ongoing assistance to develop and is not a natural outcome of using technology (Stockwell, 2013). Technology in and of itself is unlikely to

contribute to the development of autonomy, which is a product of both motivation and skills, both of which are variable (Stockwell, 2012). This means if students possess either motivation or skill only without the other, autonomy is unlikely to be achieved; that is, they need both factors to build and maintain autonomy. Engaging in online tasks outside of class is dependent upon sufficient training in the tools to develop the required skills, which in turn can have a positive impact on motivation as well (Romeo & Hubbard, 2012; Stockwell & Hubbard, 2014). The reality is, however, that class time is limited, and language teachers have expectations placed on them to cover the content of the syllabus meaning that alternative ways of motivating students and providing sufficient training are needed. This places pressure on teachers to be able to find ways of maintaining contact with learners outside of class time, and one such option that has become more accessible in recent years is the use of online communication tools that allow for social interaction.

Section Two

Encouragement of Students

2.1 Engagement

Krause and Coates, (2008) clarified that the objectives of engagement were to achieve students' learning outcomes by devoting their time and effort to do activities that contribute to their learning directly.

Trowller (2010) affirmed that students' engagement with active participation was done by the students through their time in the classroom. Jens (2013); Zohud (2015) confirmed there was significant effect of the student engagement to the student language achievement. Furthermore, Han & Hyland (2015) who conducted their research the student engagement in the area of teaching writing stated that the students' engagement contributes to the students' achievement in writing skill.

However, little attention has been put into the students' engagement in the online class. One that focused on it was conducted by Ginting (2020) who reflected his experience in teaching English via online. He proposed the use of inquiry community approach to promote the students' engagement in online class.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) divided student engagement into three aspects such as Behavioural Engagement, Emotional Engagement, and Cognitive Engagement.

2.2 Praising

Praise is considered as one of the subgroups of speech act of 'expressive'. It is used to express the speaker's feelings and attitudes. Therefore, praising someone means expressing his/her approval and commendation.

The word 'praise' according to Hyper-Dictionary of English (2003:190) (s.v. praise), has two different senses: the first one means " an expression of approval and commendation for worth or excellence"; while the second means " offering words of homage as an act of worship or the act of glorifying God or god". These two senses can be illustrated by the following examples:

1. He always appreciated praise for his work.

2. Praise ye him, all his angles; praise ye him, all his hosts! (psalm, cxiviii)

Etymologically, 'praise' comes from the Middle English word 'preyse', from the verbs 'preisen', 'praisen', which come from the Late Latin 'pretiare' , to value , prize, from the Latin 'pretium', price(Mifflin, 2000:303).

Generally, the English word 'praise' with its synonymous verbs such as 'acclaim', commend, extol and laud' mean to express approval or admiration. Therefore, 'praise' could be for any persons or objects that one sees excellence or worth in.

2.3 The Classifications of English Teachers' Classroom English

Generally, classroom English can be divided into four types.

1. Organization English

Organization English refers to classroom English used to keep classes in order to organize teaching procedures, to arouse students' behaviors, to control discipline in classroom and to implement language teaching in the process of English teaching. That is to say, organization English is usually used "to elicit information and encourage participation, to check students' comprehension, to focus their attention and involve them in the lesson, and also to control and manage behavior" (Cao, 2010).

Organization English is a kind of connection which brings teachers and students together. Teachers can convey the information about what students should do and what students are going to do through organization English. Some frequently used patterns of organization English by teachers in English classes are as follows. "Let's begin our class." implies that students should focus all their attention on class and other kinds of activities ought to be stopped. "Please read after me." tells that students are going to read some words or sentences as the teacher does. "Be quiet." means that students should keep quiet at the moment and listen carefully to the teacher. Effective use of classroom English can ensure the normal carryout of teaching activities and create a good language environment for English learners.

2. Instruction English

Instruction English is what English teachers use to explain grammar, vocabulary, text and so on. "In language classroom, talk is one of the major ways

that English teachers convey information to their students" (Cao, 2010). So, students can get the general knowledge about this subject from those instruction English. For example, if a teacher explains a word as follows: "it's a noun, but it also can be used as a verb.", then the students will get two pieces of information about this word.

It is worth mentioning that students' communicative ability has been paid more and more attention to in recent years, which implies that the traditional spoon-feeding teaching in English grammar couldn't adapt to this new trend. However, no matter how teachers try to develop students' communicative ability, teaching vocabulary and grammar is still the basic foundation of English learning. Therefore, English teacher talk is greatly essential in that English teachers' classroom English is the best way to convey language knowledge to students.

3. Teacher-student Interaction English

The teacher-student interaction English refers to the English in the form of classroom conversations and discussions. It also includes the English used to ask questions and answer questions.

It is said that questioning and answering are the most general ways of creating opportunities for teacher-student interaction. "The classroom question and answer discourse serves the instructive and exploratory functions in addition to the communicative and interpersonal functions" (Fu, 2008). For English teachers, questioning is a critical skill because questions can elicit students' responses and then pushes further interaction. In other words, teachers encourage students to participate in classroom activities by asking them questions, and get some feedbacks on whether the students know well about what they've learned from their answers.

Raising questions can draw the students' attention, arouse their enthusiasms of participation, offer opportunities of practice, and improve their learning. It is obvious that open questions and referential questions provide students with more opportunities to use the knowledge that they have already mastered so as to improve their communicative ability. Therefore, English teachers should pay attention to their ways of questioning so as to get better teaching effect.

4. Teacher Feedback English

Teacher feedback English is the classroom English to evaluate students' answers to the questions and to correct students' errors. Teacher feedback English can be divided into two categories: positive feedback and negative feedback. To English teachers, giving feedback is an important skill and can fulfill different functions in the classroom interaction. Positive feedback includes approval of students' answers and compliments for students, such as "Yes, you are right.", "Good job.", "Wonderful.", "Excellent performance." and so on. As far as negative feedback is concerned, it appears to be a kind of direct corrections of students' errors. For example, teachers tend to ask the rest of students "Is he/she right?" in an interrogative mood when they think that the answers are not that good.

Positive feedback such as affirmative evaluation can help students to increase their interests in learning English and establish their self-confidence which is normally considered to be a crucial factor contributing to successful learning, while too much negative feedback such as criticism against the learners will depress them.

"It's important to communicate positive messages in the classroom to enhance students' self-esteem since their beliefs about their abilities strongly influence their

performance" (Arnold, 2000). Therefore, English teachers should try to give their students more encouragement to arouse students' learning enthusiasm.

2.4 The Features of English Teachers' Classroom English

According to Cheng Xiaotang(2009), there are four features of English teachers' classroom English, which are authenticity, interactivity, logicality, and standardization.

The authenticity of English teachers' classroom English can be described from three aspects: the authenticity of conversational context, which means the classroom communication between teachers and students should observe the principles of reality and nature; the authenticity of language in discourse, which means teachers should use what exists in the real world instead of fabricated words or sentences; and the authenticity of conversational content, which means what teachers say is true but not false.

The interactivity of English teachers' classroom English means that what teachers say in class is aimed to interact with their students. Classroom interaction can be divided into 4 conditions according to the purpose of interaction: for the purpose of improving the classroom participation, for the purpose of the construction of knowledge, for the purpose of language input, for the purpose of the organization of classroom activities.

The logicality of English teachers' classroom English includes two aspects: logical order and discourse coherence. A lack of logicality of what English teachers say will lead to a shortage of coherence in teaching procedures, which is not good for students to learn English.

The standardization of English teachers' classroom English implies that what teachers say should be correct, accurate and appropriate, and should be in accordance with the majority of English native speakers. However, it is not the case in China because most English teachers in junior high school are Chinese with no experience of living in those countries where English is the native language. "They themselves are English learners and often don't know the culture and history thoroughly" (Song & Pan, 2000). For example, almost every student tends to greet their teachers with "Good morning, teacher!" in China. As a matter of fact, people in English-speaking countries won't call their teachers "teacher" face to face. Although this kind of widely used greeting is not accepted in English-speaking countries, many English teachers do not correct their students because they think it is acceptable. Therefore, quite a number of English teachers in junior high schools in China can't meet the requirements of using standard English to teach.

2.5 The Functions of English Teachers' Classroom English

English teachers' classroom English plays a crucial role in classroom teaching, and the quality and the quantity of English teachers' classroom English have direct influence on students' language development and English learning. Just as Cao Yamin(2010) says, English teachers can "give instructions to students, explain grammar, vocabulary or activities, ask questions, give feedbacks to students' response or correct students' errors through multi-form classroom English". We'll elaborate the functions from four aspects, which are as follows: Firstly, it has organization function in that organization English is considered to be an important guarantee of effective English classes. English teachers' organization English can ensure the carryout of organized teaching procedures, which will contribute to a successful class. Secondly, it has teaching function in that students can obtain

language knowledge about English and English-speaking countries, which will broaden their horizons and enrich their minds. Thirdly, it has interaction function in that teachers' classroom English can serve as a tool of teacher-student interaction. In the process of classroom interaction, students can develop the ability of communication in English and form the habit of thinking in English. Fourthly, it has inspiring and encouraging function in that teachers' positive feedback can help to arouse students' interests in English learning. Moreover, those encouraging words can make them confident to express themselves.

2.6 Encouraging (motivational or praises)

Motivation refers to "the reasons underlying behavior" (Guay et al., 2010, p. 712). Paraphrasing Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (2004) broadly define motivation as "the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something" (p. 106). Intrinsic motivation is motivation that is animated by personal enjoyment, interest, or pleasure. As Deci et al. (1999) observe, "intrinsic motivation energizes and sustains activities through the spontaneous satisfactions inherent in effective volitional action. It is manifest in behaviors such as play, exploration, and challenge seeking that people often do for external rewards" (p. 658). Researchers often contrast intrinsic motivation with extrinsic motivation, which is motivation governed by reinforcement contingencies. Traditionally, educators consider intrinsic motivation to be more desirable and to result in better learning outcomes than extrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999).

Praise is one of the most influential tools a teacher or tutor can use. It encourages students to develop good study habits, utilize productive thinking and reasoning skills, and learn course content.

These are some words and statements that used by English Language Teachers to encourage them :

1. Good   2. You've got it right   3. That's right   4. Super

5. That's good   6. You're really working hard today   7. You are very good at that

8. That's coming along nicely   9. Good work   10. That's much better

11. Exactly right   12. You just about have it   13. That's it

14. You are doing a good job   15. That's quite an improvement   16. Great

17. I knew you could do it   18. Congratulations!   19. Not bad

20. Now you have it   21. Good for you   22. I couldn't have done it better

23. That's the way to do it   24. You're on the right track now

25. Nice going   26. Keep up the good work   27. Sensational!

28. You've got your brain in gear   29. That was first-class work

30. Excellent!   31. Perfect!   32. That's better than ever   33. Much better

34. Wonderful!   35. You must have been practicing   36. You did that very well

37. Nice going   38. Outstanding   39. Fantastic   40. That's the way to handle it

41. That's great   42. Right on!   43. Superb!   44. You did a lot of work today

45. That's it   46. Thank You   47. Good thinking   48. You outdid
yourself today   49. Good attempt   50. You figured that out fast.

Section Three

Conclusion

Engagement was related to learning outcomes in the Facebook group, but not in the face to face group. Also the results of the Facebook group supported Astin's theory (the fourth principle: 'Development is proportional to quantity and quality of involvement' and fifth principle 'The effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the ability of that practice to increase student engagement'). No correlation between engagement and motivation was found. The discussion focuses on the role of engagement in learning.

There are several points that can be concluded from this study; firstly, the students' engagement during online class was high in all three aspects; cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagements. They were able to comprehend the lesson, did the task, had high interest and put high efforts during the online class. However, in certain sub categories, such as in the cognitive engagement aspect, the students had difficulties in the way how to communicate their ideas and how to conduct cooperative and collaborative activities in the class.

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