INSTAGRAM IN ESL CLASSROOM

Noraien Mansor[*] and Normaliza Abd Rahim[**]

Abstract: The canvas of language teaching and learning has experienced major changes in the decade of emerging technologies. The use of various applications through computers and smartphones have paved the way for ESL (English as a Second Language) instructors to innovatively shape their strategies and approaches in language teaching and learning. Students of today's world are complacent in a dynamic, digital and social world with a wide range of ever changing technologies. In fact, by applying social media in language classroom, namely facebook, instagram, blogs and twitter, learners will be highly motivated to interact socially with their peers. As such, instagram has a beneficial characteristic as it falls on the category of social networking and the main source of networking is communication. This study seeks to reveal the students experience in applying the tool to motivate as well as enhance their interest to participate and interact with their peers. It investigated students' participation in online discussions and their feedback on the use of instagram as the platform for language learning activity. The results of the study revealed that instagram is no doubt an effective tool for students' interactions especially in the discussion of their task-related activity. The subjects involved seemed to be more motivated and they love to participate and interact with their peers as instagram has fueled their interest towards learning. It is hoped that further research will focus on some essential tools of instagram such as special intelligence, linguistic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence that could benefit for educational purposes.

Keywords: Instagram, social media, communication, interactions.

INTRODUCTION

The canvas of language teaching and learning has experienced major changes in the decade of emerging technologies. Technology has transformed the field of higher education which has great impact on the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching. The use of various applications through computers and smartphones have paved the way for ESL instructors to innovatively shape their strategies and approaches in language teaching and learning. Furthermore, in a world with constant changes due to immediate access to information, the way language instructors conduct their courses must evolve and parallel to the new ways students learn. Belardi (2013) stated that studying effectively and with the right type of technology is one of the best ways to ensure that students succeed in class.

Additionally, students of today's world are complacent in a dynamic, digital and social world with a wide range of ever changing technologies. In fact, by applying social media in language classroom, namely facebook, instagram, blogs and twitter, learners will be highly motivated to interact socially with their peers.

[*]   English Learning Centre, Centre for Fundamental and Liberal Education, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Kuala Terengganu, 21030 Terengganu, Malaysia *E-mail: aien@umt.edu.my*

[**]   Department of Malay Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, 43400 Selangor, Malaysia *E-mail:drnormaliza@gmail.com*

Apparently, online interaction such as facebook had inspired students' interest towards learning English language as during the interaction they read and write to give their posts and comments (NoraienMansor, 2016). Further, Leach (2013) mentioned that the proliferation of social media users shows that young people around the world are eager to connect with their peers and are highly proficient at doing so in personal contexts.

More recently, the possible uses of mobile phones namely smart phones for educational purposes specifically in English language instruction has been debated. Researchers have argued on the diverse applications available in smart phones open up a plethora of other choices for educators and consequently ample opportunities to enhance students' learning and to make studying a worthwhile experience for them (Godwin-Jones, 2011). A review of literature has shown that many scholars have emphasized the potential benefits of 'mobile learning', thus, encouraged the researchers of this study to jump on the bandwagon focusing on the use of instagram in language learning.

Instagram was launched in October 2010 and rapidly gained popularity, with over 100 million active users as of April 2012and over 300 million as of December 2014.A recent survey affirmed that Instagram is still the most popular social media network for teenagers. As it is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service, therefore it enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them either publicly or privately on the application. Apparently, this study seeks to reveal the students experience in applying the tool to motivate as well as enhance their interest to participate and interact with their peers. It investigated students' participation in online discussions and their feedback on the use of instagram as the platform for language learning activity.It is hoped that educators will embrace technology and use social media networks to leverage engagement in developing students communication skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on social media in ESL classroom have been widely conducted throughout the world. The studies include the application of tools such as facebook, blogs, twitter and instagramthrough smartphones in language learning classroom which is well known as mobile learning. Kukulska-Hulme(2009) have explored the effectiveness of cell phones usage for synchronous and asynchronous interaction and for promoting students' listening and speaking skills. The author concluded that mobile devices could support collaborative speaking and listening activities successfully. Similarly, Lan, Sung& Chang (2009) claimed that mobile devices facilitate the development of collaborative learning environments among students. In addition, they promote their reading motivation. Borau et al. (2009) revealed the opportunities of these devices that allow students to engage actively in the English language 'production' and further enhance students' communicative competence.

Lunden (2014) and Fritta Faulina Simatupang (2015) have used the instagram for their studies and concluded that the use of media technology has helped in the process of learning. It parallels with the study done by Sebah Al-Ali (2014) who claimed that instagramcan be a successful learning tool in English as a second language classroom. Sebah Al-Ali (2014) focused on the integration of instagram as an active learning tool in a language bridge program. The program includes pictures taken and captions written for a holiday project. The results demonstrated that students were gradually welcomed the idea and were encouraged to be creating during the process of writing their activities.

Bell (2013) conducted similar study using instagram and disclosed that instagram has played a major role in enhancing the subjects learning whereby communication took place in the form of expressing ideas and feelings in their captions in instagram. Further, he claimed that written communication helps in the process of building up self-esteem and confidence in everyday lives. Salomon (2013) agreed andadded that instagram has gained a person's interest as well as confidence in expressing ideas virtually. NoraienMansor&NormalizaAbd Rahim (2016) agreed with Bell (2013) and Salomon (2013) and unveiled that the students involved in instagram interactions seemed to have build their confidence in writing.

Pero Ali (2014) revealed that instgram is such an amazing application and one of the most popular social media applications. What makes it the best application in learning English language is that its users learn in an entertaining and spontaneous way.Instagram has a beneficial characteristic as it falls on the category of social networking and the main source of networking is communication.

Wiktor.K (2012) disclosed that instagramhas some essential tools that could benefit for educational purposes related to special intelligence and linguistic intelligence. As for special intelligence, it is a mental process through which the brain attempts to interpret certain types of incoming information through pictures, maps, plans etc. In this process, the mind judges many different aspects in terms of editing and viewing the picture. When a user uploads a picture and everyone can view it, it is related to linguistic intelligence. Further, when teachers upload pictures and share them with their students and ask them to make observations or provide specific types of feedback, this will encouragetheir students to use their language skills.Therefore, this study explore further on students multitasking using smartphones through various tasks such as recording a video, uploading the video on instagram and interacting with their peers based on the task given as well as giving their perceptions on the activity assigned. This paper reports the findings of a study conducted on 20 students enrolled in the Business Communication Course at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. The main aim of this study is to investigate students' perceptions on the experience of the assigned task as well as students' communication skills through mobile learning. Along with the discussion of the potential benefits, the study will also discuss the limitations of using instagram in ESL classroom.

METHODOLOGY

This study involves20students from Business Communication Course conducted at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. They were divided into 4 groups and each group were to set up their own instagram account. Students were tasked to create and video a communication situation based on a topic given (Festivals in Malaysia, I Love Malaysia, Teenagers of Malaysia, and The Unity of Races in Malaysia). Then they were asked to upload their video in their instagram. Each group is to comment on all the presentations done by their peers mainly focusing onthe clarity of the message being delivered. The lecturer involved merely act as an observer for the group as well as a facilitator. The students' were given a time frame of one week to prepare their video and another one week to interact among themselves by giving comments on videos uploaded by each group and answer questions related to their experience interacting in instagram. They were encouraged to interact everyday.

All the students have vast experience in online social network specifically instagram as they own their personalinstagram for personal purposes. Theyhave experience in posting their personal matters as such the task given pave the way for smooth learning. This study attempts to provide a description and analysis, of the usage of instagram in ESL language learning classroom. Further, it also attempts to elicit students' perceptions on the implementation of instagramin language learning.
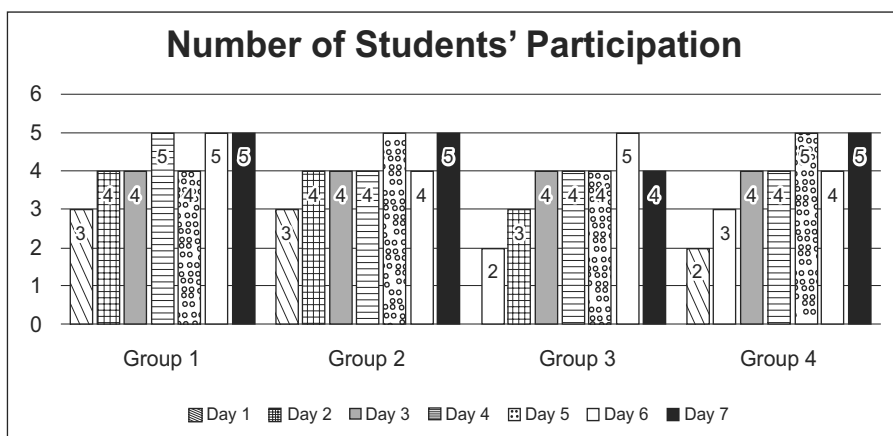
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: Number of Students' Participation

The data gathered from the students' participationduring the one week duration given, demonstrate a positive impact whereby all the students communicateby giving their comments on the video presentation uploaded by all the groups in the instagram. The graphs below show the frequency of the posts within the duration of one week. As of Day 1, only 50% of the students participated but it increased up to 70% and 80% on Day 2 and Day 3. The momentum of participation increases gradually and reached 95% on the last day of the assigned task. The most active participationwere during the last three days as they were to unveil their perceptions of their experience using instagram in language learning.

Total Number of Students' Participation (Group 1-4)

[VALUE] (95%)
[VALUE] (85%)[VALUE] (90%)[VALUE] (90%)
[VALUE] (80%)
[VALUE] (70%)
[VALUE] (50%)

Day 1   Day 2   Day 3   Day 4   Day 5   Day 6   Day 7
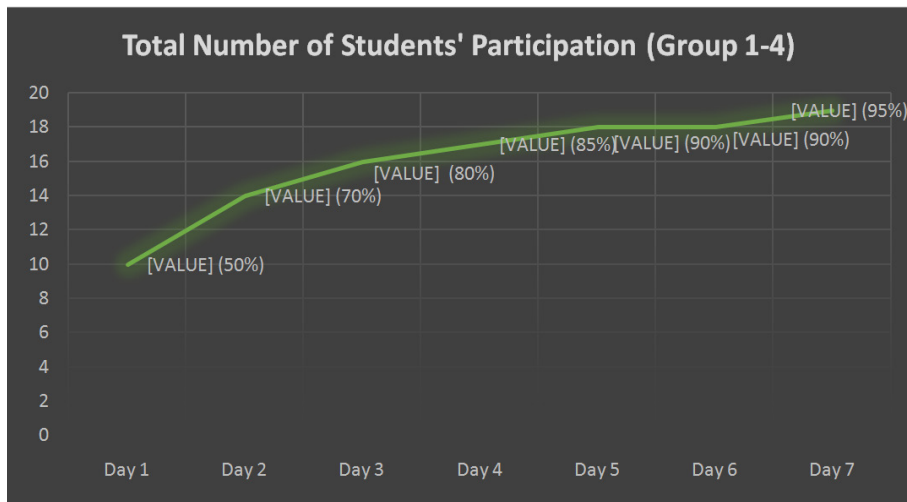
Figure 2: Total Number of Students' Participation

From the interviews done online via instagramwith the students, they love to participate and interact with all the students involved in the task. They claim that using instagram in language learning has motivated them to participate and boosted their confidence to communicate in English language. The results of the study were parallel to the study by NoraienMansor (2014) where online communication involving facebook interactions have given great impact towards students. Further, it fueled their interest towards learning English language as during the interaction they read and write to give their posts and comments. More importantly, they dare or brave enough to voice out their comments or responses based on the posts given by their friends. Thus, instagram is able to instill students braveness to communicate in English language and convey their messages successfully. Ika Destiana, Ali Salman & Mohd. HelmiAbd. Rahim (2013) posted similar results stating that the digital media helps speakers and writers to deliver their messages successfully.

Another impact derived from the interviews was the development of learning communities using groups ininstagram. The instagram groups developed for the task provides opportunities for students to interact and support each other. These findings are consistent with studies by Lao & Gonzales (2005), that indicated that the Internet provides learning experiences and a place to build upon knowledge within a learning community. Additionally, it is very obvious that online learning is a rich environment where learner-centered instructional techniques show opportunities for significant developments and offer new ways for language learning.

From the observation of teachers involved in the program, they have seen the positive impacts in the students' level of confidence which has increased tremendously among most of the students in their classes. This shows that mobile learning through instagramapplication has indeed succeeded in promoting and boosting students' confidence to participate and communicate in the task given. Students who were unwilling to speak at the beginning of the program became more enthusiastic to participate towards the end of the duration given for the task. They have succeeded in hiding away their shyness or their silence at the beginning of the activity. Further, communicative activities that require group discussion through instagrammanaged to improve the students' communication strategies where they were seen to freely expressed and shared ideas with other group members. Students were also able to hold and maintain the discussion even though they were seen agreeing and disagreeing as well as justifying opinions but in the endthey come to a consensus.

Subsequently, the research shows that learners gain educational benefits from the technology as learning becomes more relaxed and spontaneous. Wireless technology and gadgets like smart phones should be further explored to discover their potential in language learning. Nevertheless, there are certain issues surrounding the use of instagram at the students' workplace such as internet availability and network stability. As such, these problems need to be addressed by the instructors before commencing with the activity.

CONCLUSION

Instagram is no doubt an effective tool for students' interactions especially in the discussion of their task-related activity. The students are able to enhance their reading and writing skills apart from communication skills. They would use the instagram as a medium for communication as well as for a wider engagement in the process of learning namely focusing on the reading and writing skills. Therefore, mobile learning via instagram seems to be an ideal environment for such transactional learning. The instagram correspondence provided students with the opportunity to engage in a dialogical process in which the learning benefits of

reading, writing, questioning, arguing and clarifying were incorporated.To conclude, this study is desired to provide valuable insights for the future research in language learning as well as mobile learning which are crucial in the age of information and communication technology.

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