

POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES OF USING EDMODO POSTINGS ON EFL READING ACTIVITY: TEACHER AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted since any educational networking sites can be implemented as teaching and learning tools which form the main features of 21st Century English language education. Edmodo as one of educational networking sites can be applied to EFL reading activity. Its implementation can be expected to meet the need of EFL teachers and learners towards blended learning and to fulfill the demand of 21st Century learning as well. This study aims to investigate potentials and challenges of using Edmodo on EFL reading activities based on teacher and students' perceptions. The study was conducted at a public junior high school in Surakarta. By using purposive sampling, one EFL teacher and ten students were involved as the participant of study. This study used qualitative descriptive design in which observation, interview, and documentation were implemented for data collection. The findings were concluded that participants have to face seven potentials and two challenges regarding the implementation of Edmodo.

Keywords: Edmodo, potentials and challenges, teacher and students' perception

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension skill needs to be mastered by EFL learners since literacy also plays important role on 21st Century learning. Reading text may provide opportunities for learners to learn vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and even good models for English written text construction. In conducting EFL reading activity, teacher should engage right technique and approach to encourage students' reading comprehension competence. Teacher should be able to create interesting atmosphere for encouraging students' enthusiasm in learning. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in using technology to support and facilitate the teaching and learning processes. More recently, the use of technology has also been started since decades ago. The blend of technology use with face-to-face instruction can be one of good point to encourage students in practicing reading. The emergence of the World-Wide Web leads the use of internet technology to assist teacher and students in applying blended-learning.

The existence of Web 2.0 technologies can help to support and motivate EFL teaching and learning processes. They offer many functions that appeal to educators who are looking to extend beyond the classroom (Haygood, Garner, & Johnson, 2012). One of Web 2.0 technology features which is able to be integrated as teaching and learning platform is Edmodo. It is a private and secure platform service that is available at www.edmodo.com. It looks similar to Facebook (Majid, 2011), but is much more private and safe for a learning environment as it allows only teachers to create and manage accounts, and only their students, who receive a group code and register in the group, can access and join the group.

However, in Indonesian context, Edmodo has not been familiar yet in supporting the classroom learning process because of the slow digital adoption and lack of facilities in schools. As consequences, it also influences the lack of research in Indonesia about Edmodo implementation in education field. Hence, this study attempted to fulfill the gap by focusing on Edmodo usage in EFL reading activity. The findings are expected to contribute valuable insight in the field of language teaching and learning especially the use of technology in EFL reading activity.

1.1 Research Question

Departing from the background of the study, the present study needed to be conducted through the following research question:

What are the potentials and challenges of using Edmodo postings on EFL reading activity?

2. METHOD

This research used qualitative descriptive design to obtain the data needed. It offers deep insight to see the issue experienced by the participants (Maxwell, 1996). Therefore, the description of potentials and challenges in using Edmodo were explored deeply by using this method. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the participants. The researcher intentionally selected the participants who can provide the best information to achieve the objective of the study (Creswell, 2009). The research participants of this study were an English teacher

and ten students of the third grade IX D of SMP N 17 Surakarta. Methodological triangulation was obtained from observation, documentation, and interview. In this case, the observation was done to observe the implementation of Edmodo media in English reading activity, particularly its potentials and challenges. The next step was documentation, so the researcher took screen capture of Edmodo for document to show the implementation of Edmodo. The last step of this study was an interview. It was to seek the information about the perception of teacher and students toward potentials and challenges of using Edmodo. Then, the data gathered were analyzed by using the three stages of qualitative analysis proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994), data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1.Potentials of Using Edmodo Tool Based on Teacher's Perception

3.1.1. Edmodo as a Useful Tool to Teach English

Through Edmodo, the teacher can post learning instructions and also materials in guiding the students to learn. The teacher also stated in interview as represented in excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1

"I upload some exercises through Edmodo's evaluation facility. Then, I usually get them to write something about their assignments then they download it and submit their assignment through Edmodo."

This may show that Edmodo provides good point as tool for teacher to post learning materials as can be seen in figure 1. Moreover, students can directly submit their work through Edmodo. In other words, Edmodo is considered useful and helpful for the teacher and students as well because it provides space for teaching and learning activities. The teacher added that he can easily provide the learning-contract to the students to cooperate together in EFL teaching and learning using Edmodo.

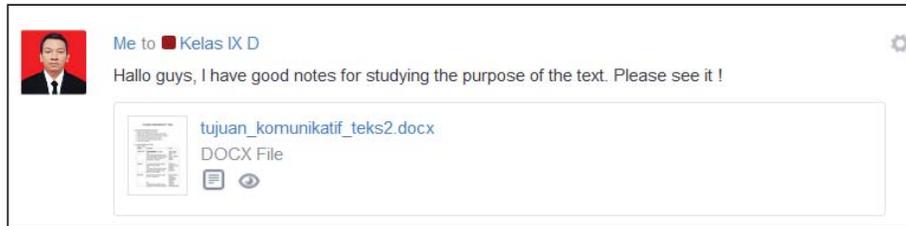


Figure 1. Learning material was posted by the teacher.

Thus, in posting some reading tasks to students, the teacher can access his Edmodo account by using computer, laptop, or even smartphone. This is in line with Meerts (2003, p. 5), he found that “Edmodo provides the instructor with a set of tools and a framework that allow the relatively easy creation of online course content and the subsequently management of that course including various interactions with students taking the course.” The result was also supported by Witherspoon (2011) who found Edmodo as a great CMS tool for helping teachers to set up and manage their online classes easily allowing students to control their own learning pace. It means that Edmodo helps teacher to teach from distance. Implementing Edmodo in blended-learning approach, the teaching and learning activities can be done in-class teaching and distance-teaching.

3.1.2 Edmodo Help to Control and Maintain Students’ Learning

In teaching English, the teacher does not only give instructions and provides learning materials for the students. He has to control and maintain his students’ learning. By using Edmodo, teacher can easily control and maintain students’ learning whether in the classroom (face-to-face) or in the distance. As stated by the teacher in excerpt 2:

Excerpt 2

“I observe them their activities during learning in the classroom. Besides, I can control their learning at home and create the sustainable learning even though from distance. So, I can make them learn continuously at home.”

This may signify that the online class as a tool to teach English in form of blended learning. The teacher does not only use the virtual class for post English learning materials but also to control and maintain the classroom virtually. The result is in line with Thongmak (2013), in his study using Thailand case that attempted to study the acceptance of Edmodo as a classroom collaboration tool

and to explore university students' views about it. His results, collected from 182 questionnaires, reveal that Edmodo can be more beneficial than any other social networks for various areas of education. It can also be used to support both distance teaching and to fulfill physical classroom learning. The teacher can provide an interactive online forum discussion for the students to ask anything related to the materials, share their opinions, and also discuss about the materials. The teacher stands as the supervisor that can give positive response toward the activities on online forum discussion as can be seen in Figure 2:

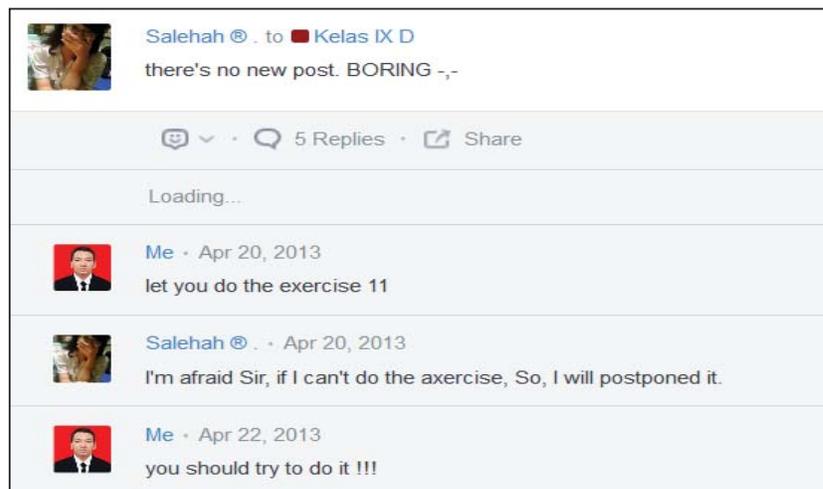


Figure 2. *Interactive virtual classroom*

3.1.3 Edmodo Provides Auto Grading System

This study found that Edmodo has auto grading system. The teacher can grade their students' worksheets by using this site. There is Annotate feature that is provided by Edmodo. It helps the teacher to examine their students' work virtually as can be seen in figure 3:



Figure 3. Grading student's work

By using assessment feature in Edmodo, the teacher can assess the students' work like examining students' worksheet manually. The teacher can give comments on the students' worksheet, thus the students know what should be revised or what should pay attention of. As stated by the teacher in excerpt 3:

Excerpt 3

"I submit some exercises through Edmodo's evaluation feature"

By looking at the excerpt, this is in line with Robertson (2008), he believes that the implementation of such a technology can have a beneficial impact on EFL course organization, lesson implementation, coursework distribution, teacher and student's communication and assessment and it can also create a more student-centered learning experience. To put it another way, it is beneficial for the teacher, not only help them in teaching but also assessing the students' work.

3.1.4 Edmodo Provides Overview of Students' Progress and Achievements

This study also found that Edmodo potentially gives beneficial for the teacher to pay attention on students' progress and also achievements. Each section for example as can be seen at figure 5, exercise 1 up to exercise 3, Edmodo provides the students' progress in term of diagram and percentages as exemplified in figure 4 which shows the students' progress in learning.

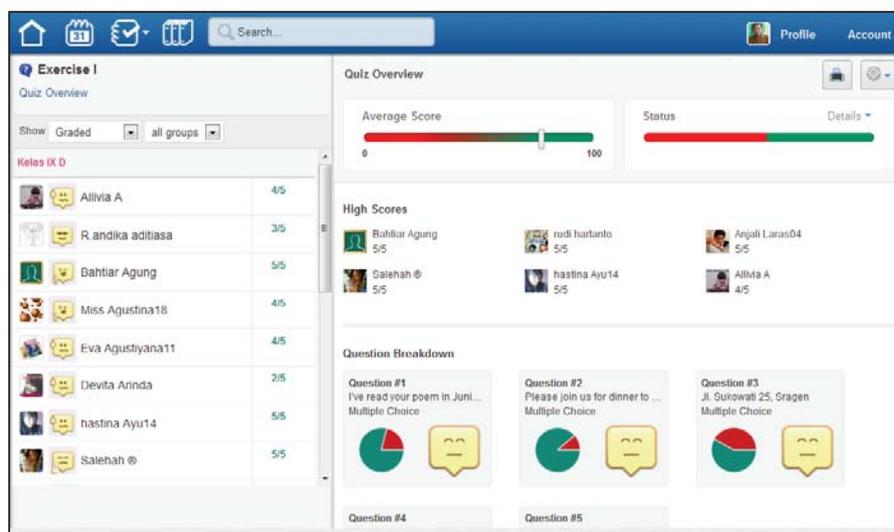


Figure 4. Students' progress

3.2. Potentials of Using Edmodo Tool Based on Student's Perception

3.2.1 Edmodo as a Helpful Tool to Learn English

The Edmodo site is not only a tool for teacher to teach, but also a tool for the students to learn. According to Turkmen (2012), he found the usefulness of social networking sites as a meaningful learning environment that could support, enhance and strengthen EFL learning. Most of the students considered Edmodo as learning media, they can learn better than by using whiteboard in classroom as stated by student 'Re' in excerpt 4:

Excerpt 4

“Edmodo would facilitate the students to comprehend in learning the reading subject easily rather than whiteboard as EFL learning media.”

This may suggest that it is beneficial for the students to learn reading subject by using Edmodo since it provides virtual learning (figure 5) and cope with student' boredom toward monotonous learning through explanation on whiteboard. This is in line with other study, in his survey to 200 Edmodo users who take English subjects at Telkom Polytechnic, Majid (2011) stated that 66% of students agree that Edmodo is useful, 79% agree that it helps them to face their study and 78% feel happy for having this site integrated with their English

classes. Hence, students can learn EFL reading subject more effectively by using Edmodo.

Dear all,
Please gather at my house this afternoon. We will discuss the destinations for our next trip.
Philo

What is the purpose of the text?

A To describe the meeting at the writer house.

B To show the readers about the writer's house.

C To ask the readers to come to the writer's house. Correct Answer

D To tell the readers about the meeting at the writer's house

Figure 5. *Virtual learning activity*

3.2.2 Edmodo Helps The Students to Build Good Interaction With Teacher

In EFL teaching and learning activities, the teacher’s role is important for the students’ performance. Edmodo may facilitate the students to have good communication regarding to the learning process. According to Technopedia, such systems may include administrative as well as teaching aspects. They may also include tools for real-time chat, or asynchronous bulletin board type communications. Most of the students agree that if there is no teacher’s guidance, Edmodo will not be enough. They need their teacher to supervise their performance in EFL learning. As stated by student ‘Sa’ in excerpt 5:

Excerpt 5

“Edmodo may be great as an EFL learning media, but Edmodo cannot replace the teacher’s position in EFL teaching.”

This may signify that it will be more wonderful when the teacher guides, controls, and maintains students’ learning. The students can learn effectively toward English reading subject by getting guidance from the teacher and also using Edmodo as learning media. By using Edmodo, they can have great interaction with the teacher, and they can ask whatever they want to ask related to the EFL materials which are posted by the teacher as represented in figure 6.

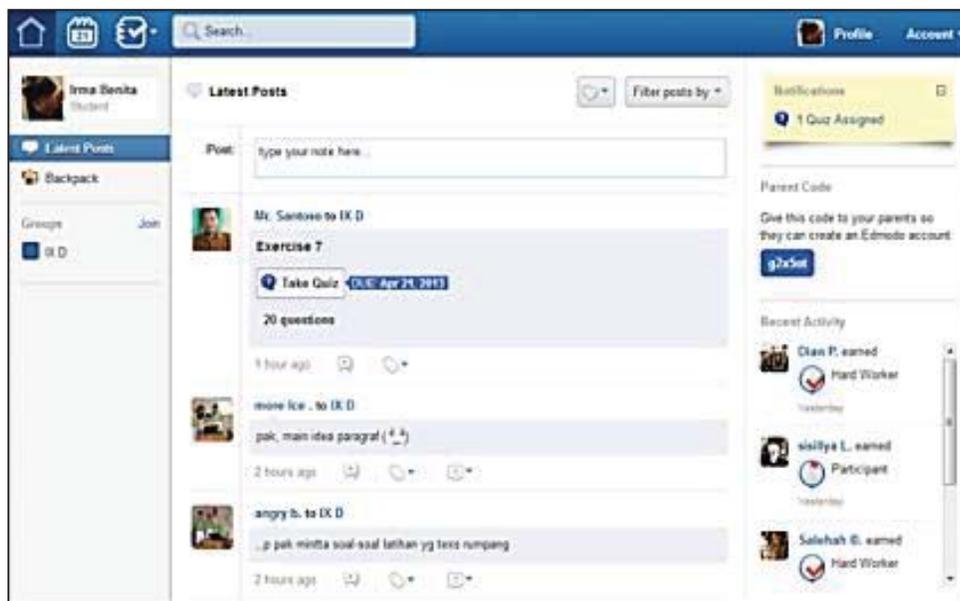


Figure 6. Teacher and Student interaction

As had been mentioned, the teacher creates a lounge in term of online group discussion. In this online group discussion, it is not only the students who are participated, but also the teacher as well. Most of the students also admitted that they have better interaction with the teacher since their encouragement is improved after using Edmodo site as the learning platform. As stated by student 'De' in excerpt 6:

Excerpt 6

“Using Edmodo in learning English, the students and teacher’s interaction is getting better, more communicative, and getting closer. The students have their encouragement to ask if they face difficulties in learning.”

This may indicate that Edmodo provides a chance of communicative teaching and learning. The result is in line with Wolf & College (2007) that Edmodo provides all users in the group can interact with one another, share information, and build an ongoing virtual community. Thus, within the same group network, it facilitates the students to have interaction with the teacher as their learning supervisor. The students can improve their reading skill by asking the teacher how to cope certain difficulties or problems that they face in EFL learning. Hence, the teacher’s role is necessary to be involved in the implementation of Edmodo in EFL learning.

3.2.3 Edmodo Shows Students' Achievement

This study found that there is transparency of students' achievements. There are two terms of achievements such as grades and badges. Giving appraisal in term of those and let the students know their scores or achievements can motivate them to be active in online class. The writer had mentioned that there is Badge feature that can be used by the teacher to appreciate students' performance. The students can also monitor teacher in examining their works. The students can know whether their work has been assessed or not by looking at their worksheet status. Hence the students can directly know their learning progress, as stated by student 'An' in excerpt 7:

Excerpt 7

"There is a significance improvement in exercises and exams grades."

Mostly, students get better improvement in their reading skill as represented in their grades that are shown in Edmodo. It is because Edmodo successfully increases students' learning motivation which also affects their achievement. In this case, the appraisal in term of scores or badges given by the teacher can motivate students to be active in virtual class. Edmodo provide Badge feature that can be used by the teacher to give marks for students who get excellent score in each learning sections as can be seen in figure 7:

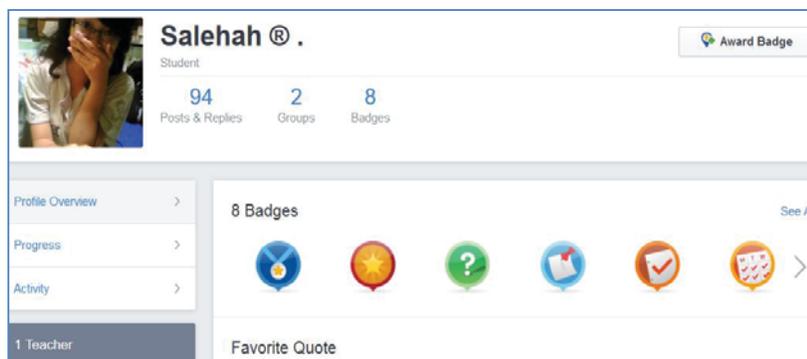


Figure 7. Students' achievements

This is in line with Tsai and Erns (2009), in their report on the implementation of Moodle as a CMS tool to assist EFL reading instruction for Chinese-speaking EFL learners. Their results reveal that CMS can facilitate and improve students' reading comprehension performance. In other words, the students will have

significance improvement and also development on their reading skills by using Edmodo as learning platform.

3.2.4 Edmodo Can be Accessed Anywhere and Anytime

Since Edmodo is an educational online networking site, it can be accessed anywhere and anytime. According to Fujimoto (2012), he found that the free Edmodo mobile application allows learners to access any recorded resources wherever they are and whenever they like. Mostly, students gave response similarly as student (Ru) in excerpt 8:

Excerpt 8

“Edmodo can be accessed 24 hours non-stop, I can learn and also consult with the teacher even though I am not studying in school at that time.”

By looking at the excerpt, this study found that Edmodo can be accessed anywhere and anytime. This virtual learning platform provides great opportunities for students to learn more and more whether at school or outside (e.g. home). This is in line with Attewell et al (2009, p.11), he defined mobile learning as “the exploitation of ubiquitous handheld technologies, together with wireless and mobile phone networks, to facilitate, support, enhance and extend the reach of teaching and learning.” Similarly, in Coffey’s research (2012), he found that 31% of his 290 respondents reported using a mobile device to help with language learning, 35% agreed that an advantage of apps was that they allowed learning outside a school or other formal environments and 34% saw a benefit in apps as being an additional means of language practice in EFL learning. This may indicate that the students can have better development in reading skill by using this media as they wanted to.

3.3 Challenges of Edmodo Implementation

Based on teacher’s and students’ perceptions, there are two challenges in implementing Edmodo as teaching and learning platform such as:

3.3.1 The Requirements of Internet Connection and Environments to Access

This study found that since Edmodo is online virtual tool, the existence of internet connection is necessary. As Grosbeck (2009) argues that the alliance between

Web.2 technologies and the teaching-learning process poses a series of challenges such as the requirement of Internet connection and the need for high digital abilities. As stated by Student (Su) in excerpt 9:

Excerpt 9

“Accessing Edmodo outside school is extravagant because I have to buy internet package for mobile phone or I have to go to internet café. Those need money.”

This may show that even though Edmodo is free, but to access Edmodo outside school requires internet connection that buy internet package for their mobile phone or go to internet café that money is needed. This is in line with Al-Asmari (2005), he believes that the factors most influencing the low level of use of the Internet technologies were EFL teachers’ perceived expertise, place of access and Internet training. Similarly, Stockwell (2008) and Motiwalla (2007) argue that small-sized screens, time-consuming typing and slow speeds of connection can reveal an evidence of resistance. Hence, this will be a challenge for them to learn using Edmodo on the outside school.

Moreover, to learn, the students need the environments to access such as mobile phones or computer/laptop. Barnawi (2009) in his study indicates that the lack of technology resources and the imposition of traditional methods of instructional delivery could be possible internal and external impediments to the use of Internet technologies in the classroom. As the teacher mentioned in excerpt 10:

Excerpt 10

“Some of my students do not have facilities to support the learning activities at home, except they go to the internet rental”

By looking at the excerpt, this may show that some students have to face challenge to use Edmodo. Some of them prefer to visit internet rental to access Edmodo.

3.3.2 The Bad Effect on Health

This study also found that some students face challenge regarding their physical health, as stated by student ‘Ar’ in excerpt 11:

Excerpt 11

"I get sore eyes if I continuously working on using computer or laptop." (Writer own translation).

This may indicate that the students can get bad effect on their health if they are doing online learning continuously. This is in line with Chan (2011), there is no research that shows constant technology use causes any permanent vision damage. But staring at bright screen for hours on end can lead to smaller scale problems such as dry eye or eye strain. Hence, this challenge can be overcome by having good time management regarding how long in using technology environments such as mobile phones and laptop/computer.

4. CONCLUSION

Edmodo as e-learning that can be used in EFL teaching and learning has some potentials and also challenges for the teacher and the students as well. Based on teacher and students' perception, there are seven potentials and two challenges toward Edmodo implementation. The seven potentials of Edmodo usage are as follow: 1) It is a useful and helpful tool to teach and learn English particularly reading subject; 2) It helps EFL teachers to control and maintain their students' learning; 3) It provides auto grading system that helps teachers to assess their students' work; 4) It provides the overview of students' progress and also achievement that can help teachers to know their students' improvement in learning English; 5) It provides a lounge for the students to build good communication with their teacher; 6) It provides students' achievements transparency in term of score and also badges for the students. Thus, the students know their learning progress; 7) It can be accessed 24 hours and anywhere by connecting the internet on technology learning environment. Furthermore, based on teacher's and student's perceptions, there are two challenges in implementing Edmodo, such as: 1) The requirements of internet connection and environments to access; 2) The bad effect on health.

Considering the potentials of Edmodo usage are greater than its challenges, it can be concluded that Edmodo can be engaged effectively to create innovative blended learning. Besides, its implementation can be expected to meet the needs

of EFL teachers and learners as it is proposed in the 21st century learning principle as well about the demand of technology in learning.

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