THE USE OF LIVEMOCHA, A PLATFORM FOR INDEPENDENT LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: The Covid -19 pandemic has affected all aspect of human's life including the educational institution. All the activities are then held mostly online. Many online platform are used as a tool to interact between teacher and students. Despite their massive growth in online teaching, little research has been conducted about the use of online language learning community in learning foreign language. The aim of this study is to examine the use of Livemocha to learn foreign language independently. This study uses autoethnography method which uses the researcher personal experience to describe and analyze the data. Result of this study shows that the site is useful for learning English independently. This study concludes with suggestions for English Learning through social networking site.

🎯 Introduction

In this globalization era, technology has increased rapidly. Nowadays, everyone including students, teacher, engineer, employee etc. almost all of them using Mobiles, computer/PC, Laptop, Notebook, or tablet. Technology has the potential to not only provide access to resources for learning in a superficial sense, but also to offer increased affordances for autonomous learning (Reinders & White, 2011).

Social networking is a media in which individuals with similar interests converse and connect with one another through their mobile phone, PC, Notebook or tablet. Recently, there are many kinds of social network. We all know Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. that offer features such as messaging, posting, upload photos and videos, and chatting. Actually, chatting is the first generation of social networking. The evolution of social networking on mobile networks started in 1999 with basic chatting and texting services (Raento, 2015). Then it develops with not only via text but also voice and visual such as Skype.

The social media also grows not only for communicating but also for studying or learning. Studies shows that it helps someone to learn new language as well (Sumalatha, 2013). Social Media Language Learning (SMLL) links interactive social media channels to language learning. It helps students to improve the skills of language and communication. In such websites, everyone can learn and practice other language with people around the world (native speakers) because they provide content exercise, and chat feature for communication practice.

Since the member of this kind of website comes from different countries, mostly people use English to make the communication easier to understood. That is why most people use it to find new friends while at the same time looking for partner to practice their English skill. This platform provides low-cost and free English language instruction and interaction to practice reading, writing, speaking and comprehension skills. Specifically in social network, interacting with foreigner offer the learner practice all four of language skills with others at every learning level, beginner, intermediate, advance, and fluent (Yadav, 2021) .

Language articulates the relations between people and the world and as such, context is central and ecological (Van Lier, 2014). Accordingly, there is no reason to teach or learn de-contextualized or prescriptive grammars. Furthermore, linguistic accuracy is important (Ellis, 2008) and can be achieved through a mix of social and cognitive constructivist approaches to language acquisition (Felix, 2005). By combining the two approaches, learners can be exposed to a range of activities that promote increasingly complex automated responses, engage in independent learning and simultaneously develop both cognitive and metacognitive processes.

Hence, it emerges the view that the users can be independent language learning by using them. According to Egel (2019) independent learning activities support the development of person into lifelong learners. He also states that in independent learning, learners are responsible for their own learning while the teachers only become the agent that foster students' progress in learning. It means that learners are expected to study and develop themselves along with the progressive development of the learning material itself.

One of the website that support to independent learning is Livemocha. This study investigates Livemocha, a social networking site that brand themselves as world's largest community of native speakers eager to help and learn from each other . In this website, user can interact with many people around the world and practice their English skill. This study examines how online social networking sites (Livemocha) may be used to acquire a language.

Livemocha is a social networking site that "advertises itself as world' largest community of native speakers who are eager to help and learn from each other"(Clark & Gruba, 2010) . Livemocha incorporates an integrated language learning concept with reciprocal benefited outcome. Furthermore, it is facilitated by free interactive courses and lessons, large community of native speakers, and of course enormous foreign language learners (Irham, 2018). Livemocha wanted to provide a completely immersive environment by integrating the community of native speakers with a series of free interactive online lessons supported by various foreign language learners because it is designed to enhance learner autonomy(Chwo et al., 2016). Users could find opportunities to learn language outside the classroom, engage in the language learning community in self-paced and self-access language course.

A study by (Jee & Park, 2013) reveals that using Livemocha requires self-dicipline and motivation in learning language. It also enhance the cultural awareness of the users since the members are from different countries and language. Meanwhile (Schmit, 2017) states that The platform change the way people learn and make it more accessible, and affordable. Furthermore Lloyd (2012) finds the type and frequency of online interactions among the participants in livemocha. These studies have not specifically explored that livemocha can be an autonomous or independent way to learn language. Thus, based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested to investigate the use of Livemocha, an online language learning community to learn English independently.

Method

This study uses autoethnography approach in which personal experience influence research process and the researcher decides almost everything about the regarding who, when, what,how, where to research (Ellis et al., 2011). In this study, the researcher recorded self- experiences using livemocha. All the data were gathered from the platform of livemocha by compiling and recording the details, the course structure, the instruction and the task given. The activities from livemocha are analyzed in detail in result and discussion.

Result

In this paper, Livemocha as one of the platform of SMLL is believed to help students to learn English language independently by communicating in chatroom with other members of Livemocha.

In order to implement independent language learning by using Livemocha, the researcher give the procedure of using chatroom in Livemocha to build communication especially using English with other members of Livemocha. Talking about independent language learning, it also known as autonomous learning. The researcher recorded self-experiences using livemocha and interpret data. Firstly, the researcher completed the registration form by writing the native language, language that want to be learnt. email address, password and then get start.
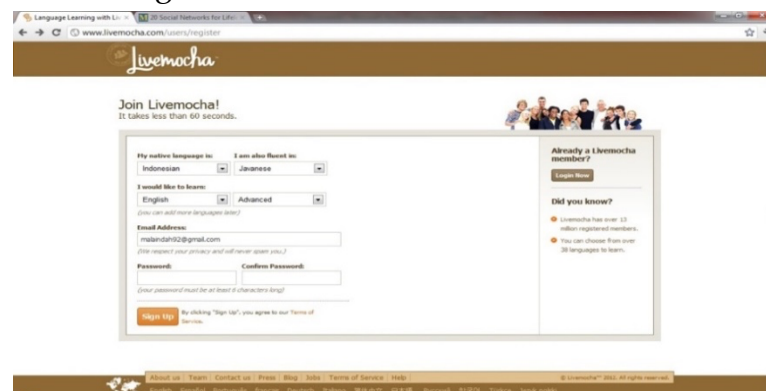

Figure 1. Livemocha.com

Next step is editing the profile and start to make friends. Livemocha will suggest new friends from all countries. the learner may directly join in chat room or start the course.

Figure 2. Profile in Livemocha.com

In Livemocha, chat rooms are free to join. Partner can be searched from everywhere, but often it is best to find a partner from English-Speaking country or native speaker. When it is done the conversation may be started with native speaker.
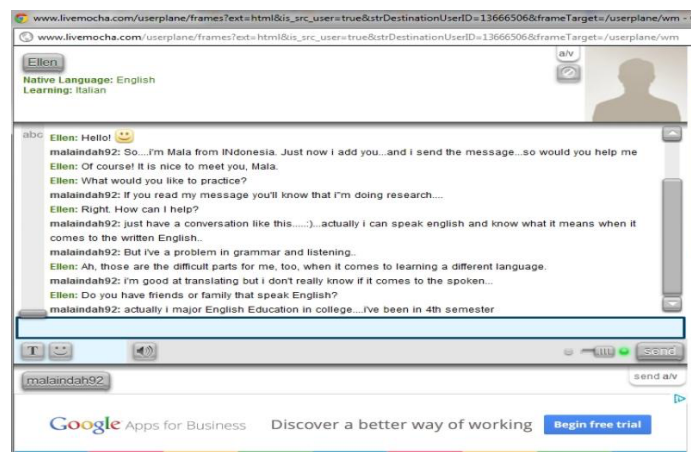

Figure 3. Chatting with Native Speaker

Discussion

English in Indonesia is considered as foreign language. Then, learning English can be difficult when people do not fully have interest and do not get immersed in it. Immersion of language means, if we want to be successful in learning English we have to live, talk, communicate, breath and do the activities with using English and we have to have English natural environment(Wilkinson, 2014). The basic idea of the immersion technique is by surrounding ourselves in a language, and even without realizing that we learn it, our brain picks things up, save and store them, and then, suddenly, just when we need it, it pops out. If we think back to our first words when we were developing Bahasa in our mother tongue, no one gave us a bilingual "Bahasa Dictionary".

The main purpose of language immersion is to foster bilingualism, in other words, to develop learners' communicative competence or language proficiency in their second

language. Language immersion usually can be done with having LIP (Language Immersion Program) that already be provided, or students can do homestay or visit other countries in order to have English environment (Crew, 2017). It is an advantage for those who live in English language country since there is support of English environment. The 'immersion technique' works on the principal that language learning should not be confined to text books and doing exercise in the classroom. Thus, students can use chatting in social network for doing English Language Immersion. Learning to chat in English may be a challenging experience.   The easiest way to learn English is through chatting in chat rooms and making friends with people who speak English fluently.

Using chatting as a media to improve English in a classroom, need a lot of preparation. Beside that teacher or students themselves have to register and join in the social networking site and make a forum or gather in a chat room. Chat room is a great way to practice written English. Recent studies in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) suggest that chatting is likely to assist learners to gain competence in some aspects of oral interaction (González-Lloret, 2013) . It states the discourse of chatting, even among non-native speaker is closer to the oral than written medium.   Other study claims to have observed improvements in the oral skill of research participants after 2 months of chat activities and reveals that skills acquired during chat sessions transfer to face to face interaction in daily activities. (Calviño, 2012).

Chat rooms in social network may be used to facilitate students to learn English. They can be used as global discussion groups which take place through social network. In order to involve students in using Chatting, learners can be encouraged to subscribe or join to the social network. They can participate in a chat room, ask a question, answer questions, share information, and express opinions. Using chat rooms learners can obtain useful information, find partners and discuss their process of learning). In the process of learning, students can exchange their ideas to write school projects, such as doing group task and writing papers. For convenience, learners are suggested to know how to participate in chat rooms. The users come from different countries and backgrounds. Keep in touch and maybe helping each other will make the progress in learning English faster.

In this paper, Livemocha as one of the platform of SMLL is believed to help students to learn English language independently by communicating in chatroom with other members. Furthermore, grammar can be overlooked a little but here.   Other member/ partner will not mind the incorrect grammar as long as they understand what other people are trying to say. If the learners do not understand what they are talking about, ask the native speakers   to explain the meaning. As the learners learn new vocabulary or phrases, copy and paste them into the vocabulary file. Then, the learners will always remember words that to be us a specific purpose. These are words that have communicative meaning for the learners.

Once learners have acquired some words in English, start trying to use those words in conversation. Most native English speakers will enjoy speaking to a foreigner and helping them along with the understanding of the language. But the learners must remember that native speaker join chat room is not to amuse themselves. They do not want to be unpaid teachers, so do noy overtly expect all correction, instruction, and interaction with them. When the learners close enough with native speaker's friends, learners can ask them to have a call or even videocall communication. The main point of learn new language is for communication, and mostly it is directly and the learner have to speak. So, if the learner's English just for chatting(in written form) it will not be enough. The learners could have face to face interaction through webcam so the correction of mistakes also include the pronunciation. The learners will know which part of the words which are wrong. Usually, they will correct the mistakes as well.

Livemocha allows users to get feedback on exercises or completed exercises from native speakers. Help for other features includes other users who need help from their native language learning. This not only allows users to learn another language on this website, but also teaches anyone who wants to learn their native language. Users can get feedback from native speakers and provide feedback to people in other countries.

Implementation in Classroom

Using chat to improve English also can be used in classroom instruction. The instructor themselves are the teachers. Teacher must have the planning and make the preparation. Teacher make an English environment by getting used students to have virtual discussion in chatrooms where class member   can join. Here is how the practice can be done :

1. Before the class, both teacher and students have to have IT tools, including computer/PC, laptop or notebook, and internet connection. More important, teacher and students must be familiar with these chatrooms so that it is necessary to join and express themselves. Ask them what they use it for.

2. Teacher and students must have social network account, teacher ask students to register.

3. Since all students in classroom have account, ask them to invite each other to join in their contact list or friend list.

4. When the registration process is done, make ideal group size which involve 6-8 people. The bigger the group the harder it is for participants to computer and for teacher to monitor and keep in track.

5. Begin the communication in chat rooms. It doesn't have to bring hard topic. Just say hi and ask what your friends doing. If necessary, invite native speaker to join the classroom.

6. Everyone has to make a post. Students could send articles,question, make a

correction, and comment. Do not be afraid to make mistake because it is immersion and learning process. If ones make mistake in their post, the other must correct it, so in the future you will not make the same mistake.

Figure 4. Direct correction from other members

In the last stage, teacher ask student to summarize what they have achieved in the chat. Teacher give a list of questions that gets them to reflect on using chat. Give the learners time to discuss all of the questions via text chat and then conduct open feedback with the class. This activity will not only create natural English environment which will make students get to use to speak English but also make them able to speak English correctly with a good grammar. Beside that students can make a new friends from local or from the other countries.

Advantages of Learning English through Social Media

English is known to be so useful throughout the world that it is the most-learned second language, with over 700 million nonnative speakers. Those numbers indicate that there are certainly advantages to being able to speak English. The first advantage which can be discover by doing learning English through social network is we can improve our English faster and better. Faster, because we must use English in chat rooms. By getting used to English every time we join chat room make our English skill improve faster.

Better because learners/students and teacher communicate through chat rooms and correct each other if they make mistakes. Since everyone is correcting each other, their English is not only such a waste but also, they able to speak English fluently with a good and correct grammar.

Usually people doing language immersion by directly visit the country which they want to learn language. Someone who wants to learn Korean will go to South or North Korea. They, who want to learn English, will go to United Kingdom or USA. They will

have a vacation in order to get language natural environment. By live in the other country they expect to practice the language to communicate with native speaker. While some people visit the country target, the other will go to language school or course which needs a lot of money. English course which provide native speaker of course will cost more. Instead of going to hard core language school or expensive vacation in States or England, doing language immersion through chatting is cheaper. The learners can do it whenever and wherever they are as long as they have IT tools. They don't have to spend money for ticket and living cost. An easiest way to learn English is through chatting and making friends with native speaker or people who speak English fluently. Chatting using English will help learners to integrate into the community and will also help learners to communicate.

Join in internet chat rooms mean that we will meet new person from different countries and cultures. Chatting with people in different parts of the country or world opens doors that we might not know even exist. Spending time communicating with people from different backgrounds and with different lifestyles fosters tolerance and understanding. By using chatting not only will improve English skill   but also learn each other cultures. If learners are already in advance or fluent level, they can begin to have discussion that both learners and partner like. They can share, discuss and talk about same thing. Learning English in chat rooms also offer flexibility to join discussions at any hour, or visit with classmates and instructors remotely in chat rooms

The advantages of learning through CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) reported in the research include the following (Abrams, 2001). The first is interactive competence is facilitated due to the many types of discourse initiation. Then, The instructor's role is decentralized. Besides, learners have a greater role in managing the discourse. Furthermore, learners' discourse is greater in quantity and better in quality . It means, both implicit and explicit feedback leads to incorporation of 'target' forms (language improves both lexically & grammatically with the assistance of tutor/ teacher /other students' direct corrections or examples of target forms). The last one, there is evidence of self-monitoring (repair of errors)

Disadvantages of Learning English through Social Media

The advantages of using chatting to improve English skill are well known. Although learning English through chatting offers people natural language environment, there are also disadvantages behind it.

Lack of facilities

Learning English through chatting requires constant, reliable access to technology. For example, they need computer/PC, modem, webcam etc. Not all of people have that so the process will not get through easily. Slow or unreliable Internet connections can be frustrating as well. Learners will lose moods and do not have motivation to continue learning**.** Thus, students need total access to the equipment necessary to fulfill virtual

immersion.

It requires self-motivation

Because chatting is flexible, especially for learners who are not guided by teachers, they need good organization, planning and work to make it happen. Students need more discipline to succeed in online courses. Though the instructor is not seated in front of the learners, active in interaction is still needed. Unmotivated learners or those with poor study habits may fall behind.

Learning English in chat room does not offer immediate feedback

In a traditional classroom setting, a student's performance can be immediately assessed through questions and informal testing. Through chat, a student has to wait for feedback because teacher also monitors other students. While students wait the response, sometimes they forget about their problem that needs feedback from the tutors. So they will lost their motivation to do virtual learning.

Text chat can be chaotic

Text chat can often appear disjointed: conversation threads got lost or questions are ignored for many reasons. There are overlapping turn and in the topic session, it can be chaotic because the learners discuss different things and don't follow the rules or instructions.

Conclusion

The Livemocha system supports a new online learning community where people around the world can gather to learn different languages. In this platform, anyone who is an native speaker of a language can be a teacher or facilitator of others who are new to the language. In addition, learners can improve learning autonomy and motivation by regularly monitoring progress and selecting and performing activities when needed. It also raise learners' cultural awareness. However, because there is no obligation to continue learning, the program requires a lot of self-discipline and motivation to actually use it to learn the language. In addition, this website seems to be designed for beginners. Thus, it requires consistent and accurate content development in the future. There are positive and drawback as well when students using social media or online community of language learning such as Livemocha. Even so, this new learning community concept serves as an alternative for anyone who wants to learn a language independently while interacting with friends around the world.

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