

USING GOOGLE FORUM AS A PLATFORM FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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Abstract

Google reaches its popularity as a top search engine. On its development, there are various features owned by Google, which support certain functions. Google forum is one of them. This descriptive qualitative study attempts to find out what Google forum is and how it is utilised as a platform for English language teaching in university level. Freshman (n=30) of English Education Study Program, University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya joined Extensive English Class. They were asked to collect and submit the daily assignments through this platform. Questionnaire and teacher's evaluation were used to obtain the data. The result showed that the application of Google forum, which is one of Google features, could replace the use of paper as a media for students in collecting the tasks. This easily accessible platform is also beneficial to facilitate students in doing the tasks without any boundaries. The application of Google forum is recommended to support the activity of teaching and learning. It can optimize the process of learning both in-class and out-class activities.

Keywords: Google Forum, Online Platform, English language teaching

INTRODUCTION

The use of online platform in English language teaching is significantly growing. The development of ICT encourages teachers to apply technology to improve the quality of learning and give joyful learning experience to the students. The use of ICT is really helpful and recommended in education (Albakrawi, 2013).

The application of ICT enables virtual environment. It improves creativity and expands the networking and interaction among students. Virtual environments are accessible for people in discovering, exchanging information, opinions and ideas via internet (Parker & Berry, 2010). In addition, virtual classroom and blended learning enables students to be more creative by associating their in-class and out-class activities. They also can work both in group and independently (Slaouti, Onat-Stelma, & Motteram, 2013).

Internet is now more familiar among people and become primary need. Teaching resources are easily obtained and we can get information, pictures and audio based on what we like. (Cai, 2012). Internet proposes unlimited access and enables the users to connect one to another whenever and wherever.

On the use of internet, the teachers aim to optimize students to be more independent. Teachers create in-class and out class activities to encourage students to be active learners. There are many platforms for educational purposes. Google is well-known search engine which has several features. Google group is one of them. It is an online and free service, which facilitate people to interact and discuss in groups. This facility enables people to communicate without any boundaries. In education setting, Google group is applied for classroom discussion. Here, the teachers are facilitated to share the sources of learning and material. Google group can be used also a platform for students to submit assignment. Harris, (2011) in his research found that Google group was a good facilitation for students to

collaborate and communicate outside the classroom. It is also flexible since it can be operated through laptop and mobile. (Abrantes & Gouveia, 2011) in their study assert that Google group is very good for students to learn and give possitive effect for students.

This paper attempts to find out how Google group were used to facilitate students in submitting assignments.

METHODS

This qualitative study, conducted in a private Indonesian university. The data was obtained from teacher’s evaluation and questionnaire, which can be used to find out how Google group is utilized by students and their perceptions on using Google group as a platform for task submission.

The participants and the research context

This study conducted in English Education Study Program, University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya in academic year 2016-2017. Thirty students of first semester were involved (7 males and 23 females). They were enrolled in Extensive English course, which aims at equipping students to enjoy reading and listening activities in English. A lot of reading materials and audio are discussed to encourage students to be more familiar with English text and audio. Through this course, the students are required to build their reading and listening speed and fluency, (ii) expand their confidence, motivation, and enjoyment and a love of reading and listening, (iii) improve their automaticity in recognizing words orally and written and (iv) get to know on how the language fits together.

Research timeline

The study was conducted in three meetings where each meeting consists of different topics. The following were the detail of the activities.

Table 1. The activity of ELT

Meeting	Topic	Activities	Lecturer’s role	Students’ role
8 November, 16 2016	Transportation	The Students in group were required to find article about transportation and they discussed in the class Each group retold the text in front of the class.	The lecturer encouraged students to find the key information from the text and present it in front of the class.	In Class, In group, students read the text about transportation and made notes. Each group had different text and they retold in front of the class. Out Class, independently, the students were assigned to share their ideas about the dream concept of

				transportation in Surabaya. They posted through Google group.
9 November, 23 2016	Entertainment	The students watched English short movie without any subtitle. The movie title was Imagine. The movie was about story of Milie, a girl who suffers from Niemann Pick Type C; an extremely rare, incurable disease which causes neurological decline and dementia.	The lecturer assigned students to watch the movie very carefully. In a certain minute, the lecturer stopped the movie and let students developed the story in the movie.	In class, the students watched the movie very carefully. Out class, the students developed the story of Milly and posted it through Google group.
10 December,8 2016	Hobby	The students watch two videos about professional climbers from Austria. On the video, each climber told the experience as a climber.	The lecturer encouraged students to find the key information from the two videos and made some notes.	In Class, The students watch carefully on the two videos. They were assigned to identify the differences between those two videos. Out Class, they posted their identification on the two videos through Google group.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Prior to the use of Google group, 98% students were Google users. They used it as search engine where they browse and find information in the internet. After the students were introduced to Google group, they got to know that Google was more than just a search engine. However, Google has several features with its different functions. In this course, Google group was used as a platform for students to submit the tasks. This platform was used in eighth, ninth and tenth meeting.

On the eighth meeting, a group of students discussed about different text on transportation. Each group took turn present the discussion in front of the class. As out class activity, the lecturer gave question through Google group and the students answered and post it through that platform as well.

Dear Students,

Surabaya is well known as a second largest city in Indonesia. We agree with the fact that Surabaya is very crowded because there are a lot of personal transportation here.

Now, let us discuss about how Surabaya life can be without car. Do you agree with reducing the number of cars and change into using public transportation, walking and cycling?

Tell us about your dream concept of transportation in Surabaya!

(16/11/2016, 11:29:05)

The following were the example of students' answers on the question above

Student 1 (16/11/2016,19:38:36)

Maybe I'll agree if president of indonesia reducing the number of cars and change into using public transportation if the public transportation can ensuring the savety of passengers because we all know if now many criminal acts. And if many people must to be a nature (walking and cycling) I hope all of rich people must walking or cycling not use a car.

And my dream concept of transportation in surabaya :1. Make a flycar 2. Build a subway 3. Build a fly over 4. Invent water way like in germany 5.Make a Mass Rapid Transportation

That's my argument right? Wkwkwk 😊

Student 2 (18/11/2016, 19:42:29)

I agree if the government of Surabaya reduces the number of personal cars and changes into using public transportations or cycling and walking. these are my dream concepts of transportation in Surabaya. (1). the government has to set the time of trucks that pass first way, because if trucks pass first way susceptible traffic jam.(2). build fly over way at cross way. because transportation who wants to turn left or right. this thing will superintend the way that susceptible traffic jam.(3). the government has to increase the public transportation like (busway) who is good quality, because many people want to ride the public transportation if the public transportation is comfortable. (4). time to come in must be different. for example, PNS, TNI, Polisi must go to office at 7.00 am. students, teachers, lecturers must go to schools or campus at 8.00 am. private workers must go to office or market at 9.00 am. naaah,, if like that I think it will reduce the traffic jam. (5). the

government has to make 3 space ways. and make comfortable way for cycling and walking.
(6). the government has to make the helicopter transportations, but the government must build the towers of helicopter's landings. this transportation must be public transportation, but the government must give cheap cost for this transportation

On the ninth meeting, the students watched English short movie without any subtitle. The movie title was Imagine. The movie was about story of Millie, a girl who suffers from Niemann Pick Type C; an extremely rare, incurable disease which causes neurological decline and dementia. In the class, they paid attention on the story and made some notes. The lecturer then stopped the video and assigned students to develop the story. The students posted it through Google group.

Develop Millie's story based on the short movie that you have watched! (23/11/2016, 11:20:32)

The following data showed how students developed Millie's story based on the movie they watched.

Student 1 (30/11/2016,18:50:06)

The first time Millie's dad didn't agree with her mom's suggestion for Millie's treatment, because he was a part time worker, than Millie's mom hoped to her husband to bring Millie to America for treatment there, but her husband stay didn't want, because didn't have enough money. after that when Millie's dad go to work, he looks sad. Than his boss came to him and asked "what do you fell, are you ok ?" he answered "no, I'm OK, but I sad because of my daughter" .” what happen with your daughter” . than he told about his daughter's disease "bla..blaaa.blaaa.blaaa" after that . his boss wanted to help him to bring his daughter to America for treatment. He was so glade because got helping from his boss. .. and when he had gone home, he told his wife that he got helping from his boss, so his wife was happy and cried. Than a week later, they went to America with their daughter for treatment there. Than treatment had done for about a month, after a month millie could be normal child without disease. Millie could do activities like others. Millie's parents were very happy when they looked millie could play and smile with her friends. Two years later, millie got disease again, but this disease was different with before. This disease was not serious disease, just little disease and millie could do activities. In the last school, millie had been third class in Junior High school and when farewell party, millie called by master of ceremony as getting excellent grade, and her parents was happy when they looked their daughter got it.

On the tenth meeting, the students watched two videos about two professional climbers from Austria. Each video explained how the climber made the debut until become the professional ones. The students were assigned to identify the different careers from those climbers based on the videos they watched.

Watch the two interview videos of climbing athletes, Anna and Jakob from Austria.
Rewrite the points of the interview and compare the career of Anna and Jakob as professional climbers. (08/12/2016, 08:44:06)

The following data showed how students wrote the point of the interview and identified the career path of the both climbers.

Student 1 (*11/12/2016, 10:02:32*)

Anna and Jacob are professional climbers from Innsbruck, Austria. They are both like to climb rock. Anna background family is climber so she is well climber from the first time and joins kid's climber group but Jacob start climber with bad skills but he can improve well. They win many competitions. Anna and Jacob love to have many friends from different country. They have a similar dream that want to climb around the world and never stop to climb.

Derived from the data above, it showed that students could submit the task through Google group. The students were able to respond the instruction from the lecturer. When they post the answer, the lecturer could see the time when students sent the task.

Table 2. Questionnaire Result

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Operation of Google group						
	It is so easy for me using Google group.	2,7%	0%	18,9%	40,5%	37,8%
	I like using Google group because it is so practical	0%	5,4%	10,8%	48,6%	35,1%
	I do not like using Google group because it needs internet connection.	10,8%	37,8%	37,8%	8,1%	5,4%
The Benefit of using Google group as a platform in ELT						
	Google group help me a lot in doing the task.	0%	0%	16,2%	54,1%	29,7%
	The use of Google group encourages me to share my ideas.	0%	2,7%	10,8%	54,1%	32,4%
	It is good to use Google group in other English learning activities.	2,7%	0%	21,6%	43,2%	32,4%

The result of questionnaire showed that among 30 students, 40, 5% or 12 students agree and 37,8% or 11 students strongly agree with the easily access of Google group. It was in line with the students' response on the practicality of Google group. It showed that 48, 6% or 14 students agree and 35,1% or 10 students strongly agree. In addition, 37,8% or 11 students admitted that they didn't have any problem with Google group. Furthermore, 54,1% or 16 students agree and 29,7% or 8 students slightly agree that completing the assignment through Google group was really helpful. Even, Google group encourages 54,1% or 16 students to

share their ideas. Last but not least 43,2% or 12 students agree and 32,4% or 9 students strongly agree that the use of Google group is very recommended in other English learning activities.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the finding and discussion above, Google group was well utilized in English language teaching in higher education. It could replace paper as platform for task submission. It could encourage students to share their ideas and help them to do the task more practically. In addition, by applying Google group, it could associate the in class and out class activities. The students do not depend too much on in-class activity while they can explore much their out class activity wherever and whenever.

Derived from the result of this study, it is recommended for using and exploring the other features of Google group in the other English language teaching.

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