

Undergraduate students' perception toward Edmodo integration into EFL classroom: An interview study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative interview study (Kvale, 2007) aims to explore students' perceptions about the integration of Edmodo into an Indonesian EFL writing classroom. Three participants enrolled in the Advanced Paragraph Writing course at one of the private universities in the East Java Province, Indonesia, voluntarily involved in the current study. Drawing upon semi-structured interviews, the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) showcased that the participants felt so comfortable with Edmodo as a learning management system (LMS) integrated into their classroom. Not surprisingly, they recommended this app to be incorporated into their classroom in the future as a complement to the traditional face-to-face classroom. Finally, we drew conclusions, limitations, practical implications, and recommendations.

Keywords: Edmodo; EFL students' perceptions; higher education, interview study, LMS

INTRODUCTION

On January 31st, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a global health emergency crisis. To cope with the contagious virus which spread around the world, many educational institutions around the world have shifted their teaching mode, from brick and mortar classroom to emergency remote teaching (Arora & Chauhan, 2021; Chick et al., 2020). Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an inevitable surge in the use of digital technology due to social distancing norms and national lockdowns (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). To cater to this need, several scholars (Makumane, 2021; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Suleri, 2020) argued that there is a pressing need to innovate and implement alternative education strategies by increasing the adoption of online teaching and learning. The instructors must prepare and serve learning materials that are easily accessed by students mediated by technology (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020; Khoza, 2020; Mok et al., 2021) as an alternative solution when they are restricted to go to school and join the online education (Alsubaie, 2022).

Distance or online education has been considered a technology-guided application of software, tools, and equipment to facilitate in-class course content delivery in a particular classroom (George, 2020). Some authors (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2014; Singh, 2021) contended that technology is a part of everyday life, especially for higher efficiency and better productivity which means, the use of technology in class is naturally inescapable. In this instance, technology can facilitate learning needs in the teaching and learning process. In the same vein, Selwyn (2011) claimed that digital technology in educational institutions supports learning, both as a means of accessing learning resource information and as a means of supporting learning activities and related to organizing assignments (Ateş Çobanoğlu, 2018). Recent developments in computer technology and the internet have had a huge impact on higher education as we live in a digitally-driven world (Starkey et al. (2021). Digital technology plays a vital role in enabling teachers to teach students remotely using tools that allow

synchronous and asynchronous communication with entire classes, groups and individuals of children or youth, access to learning materials, interactive, and collaborative activities.

Along with the development of the technological era, many online learning platforms can help teachers to organize online learning in their classroom such as Google Classroom, learning management systems (henceforth, LMS), learning houses, and even more platforms in the form of video conferencing tools such as Cisco WebEx Google Meet, Skype, Jitsi Meet, and Zoom. LMS can be operationally defined as a governance system developed to enable collaboration between students and teachers. The LMS not only makes it easier for teachers and students to carry out teaching and learning activities. LMS also assists the teachers to control and arrange the activity in teaching and learning such as to save of course content by lecturers, administer educational administration, testing, and evaluation which the function to provide the students with professional knowledge-build (learning process) (Darius et al., 2021; Durak, 2017; Ekmekçi, 2016; Mpungose & Khoza, 2020; Unal & Uzun, 2021). In this pandemic period, collaborating with technology and learning management systems in education is one way for the teaching and learning system to make fluency.

Edmodo is one application that has been recognized as an expected learning tool in education by combining social networking and classroom utilization (Aydin, 2021; Unal & Uzun, 2021). This app is a free online social networking website that can be accessed via computer and smartphone. It is designed to help educators harness the power of social media as well as to help connect and collaborate between students with fellow students or teachers and students on activities and project ideas (Charoenwet & Christensen, 2016; Gushiken, 2013; Ma'azi & Janfeshan, 2018; Manowong, 2016; Qaddumi, 2021; Trust, 2017). For some authors, this can be considered a popular online learning network (Al-Kathiri, 2015; Shinji, 2017; Siahaan, 2020). Edmodo is found by Jeff O'Hara and Nick Borg in 2008 in Illinois, Chicago, as one of the social media that has been used in various countries worldwide to complement online teaching and learning activities.

Specifically, Edmodo is made to create an online learning environment for both teachers and students to share ideas, assignments, and events (Khodary, 2017). Edmodo is also a tool that allows teachers, students, and parents to cooperate throughout the educational process, contribute the chance to upload, tag, stock up and share various files and videos that are relevant to course content, through a library system and exchange information by using any device with internet access (Altunkaya & Ayranci, 2020; Ateş Çobanoğlu, 2018; Bicen, 2015; Khodary, 2017; Ractham & Chen, 2013). This growing popularity has been associated with open access and the variety of educational functions of Edmodo by any educator (Nami, 2020; Qaddumi, 2021; Ractham & Chen, 2013). Edmodo is also user-friendly and easy to use for learners which is first-hand experience in using it (Al-Kathiri, 2015; Almoeather, 2020; Aydin, 2021; Ekmekçi, 2016; Kongchan, 2008; Shinji, 2017; Unal & Uzun, 2021).

There are several advantages of Edmodo such as the appearance of Edmodo which is very simple, familiar, and attractive. (Alsmari, 2019; Aydin, 2021; Balasubramanian et al., 2014; Holland & Muilenburg, 2011; Khodary, 2017; Kongchan, 2008) claimed besides, the point of ease-of-use consists of several reasons such as students' ease to operate the appearance of Edmodo. Edmodo has complete features to support the online learning process, which is equipped classroom setting, library, find, and message (Sefriani et al., 2021).

Moreover, Edmodo is also a very effective platform for teachers in teaching and learning activities. Further, it has several features that lecturers can use to communicate and interact with students. Several studies (Al-Kathiri, 2015; Aydin, 2021; Ekmekçi, 2016; Nami, 2020; Trust, 2012, 2015) claimed that teachers can easily create an online class in a small group or large group and invite an infinite of students to each class, using the class code or student email address. Teachers can deliver quizzes, assignments, class material, activities, and exams, give feedback, accept completed assignments, stipulate grades, stock up and send content in the form of both files and links, manage a class calendar, conduct polls, as well as send notes and text (SMS) alerts to individual students or the entire class. Those features assist to make it easier for lecturers to interact with students actively and make teaching and learning activities more effective.

Furthermore, students can also use the application to submit assignments, answer feedback given by the lecturer and see the value of the assignment in real-time. Some authors (Ekmekçi, 2016; Nami, 2020) claimed that Edmodo helps students stay connected and interact with teachers and peers through instant messaging, in case enabling students to stay connected and collaborate in the learning process in a virtual classroom environment. Edmodo also can increase student interest in teaching and learning activities, and increase the self-discipline of students (Khodary, 2017). This platform provides an integrated environment that responds to all the scholastic needs of students, improves their abilities and level of understanding, develops their performance, informs developments in their field of study, and increases their readiness to learn better, in addition to developing skills of collaboration, interaction, and sharing (Al-Nawaisah, 2022). By utilizing of the text alerts and bell-ringer options feature in Edmodo can motivate students to build their self-discipline during teaching and learning activities (Khodary, 2017). Therefore, a positive atmosphere can significantly increase students' interest, self-confidence, and self-satisfaction and reduce feelings of anxiety during learning activities that lead them to obtain quality learning achievements (Al-naibi et al., 2018; Almoeather, 2020).

However, there is limited empirical evidence examining the efficacy of Edmodo integration in EFL classrooms contextualized at tertiary-level education in Indonesia. It is therefore an urgent call to explore the perceptions of students on utilizing Edmodo in EFL contexts. Thus, this study aims to explore the university students' perceptions of Edmodo integration into an EFL classroom situated in an Indonesian private university. This research will contribute to providing a practical teaching-learning model mediated by Edmodo in the context of EFL online learning classrooms. Therefore, the research question guiding this study is "How do undergraduate students perceive Edmodo integration into EFL classrooms situated in an Indonesian private university?"

METHODS

This interview study (Kvale, 2007) aimed at investigating students' perceptions about the integration of Edmodo in an Indonesian EFL writing classroom. The interview study is an interaction that is built between the interviewer and the resource person (Kvale, 2007). Through these conversations, we can get to know others by sharing their experiences, feelings, and hopes. The reason for selecting this research design was to know about the undergraduate students' perception of the integration of Edmodo into the EFL writing classroom.

We employed purposive sampling (Jupp, 2015) to recruit the participants in this current study. After signing the letter of consent, there were three students (two females and one male) voluntarily partake in the current research. They were all enrolled in an Advanced Paragraph Writing course at one of the private universities in the East Java Province, Indonesia. The selection of the participants was based on the following criteria: 1) undergraduate students enrolled in the English language education department at a private university in the East Java Province, Indonesia, and 2) Edmodo users for at least one semester.

Semi-structured interview (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) was employed in the current study for all data-gathering processes. Participants were asked to answer the interview guidelines, adopted from (Ekmekçi, 2016), as follows: 1. How do students experience using Edmodo during online learning? 2. Do you think Edmodo is an effective tool for an assessment? 3. What are the pros of using Edmodo in your class? 4. What are the cons of using Edmodo in your class?

As for the data analysis procedure, we employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyze the qualitative data resulting from semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis can be conceptualized as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are several procedures for doing thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke described as follows 1) familiarizing yourself with your data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report. To increase the credibility of the data, we used the peer-debriefing technique as recommended by several prominent scholars (Janesick, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (REVIEW ARTICLE USE DISCUSSION)

The current study aims to explore student experiences in using Edmodo as an online learning during the Covid-19 period. When asked about their first-hand experience in using Edmodo, after conducting thematic analysis, Irene and Diva confessed that she was confused about using this app since there are so many strange features that were unfamiliar. On the other hand, Udin had a wonderful experience using Edmodo during online learning. This statement can be explained through a piece of interview as follows:

“.....at the first time, I am so confused ...not many lecturers use Edmodo as an online learning platform”
(Interview Irine 19, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

“I have a wonderful experience of using Edmodo during online learning because Edmodo has a good interface or appearance ...That is easy for me to surf in the internet” (Interview Udin 19, August via WhatsApp)

“...definitely, I am so confused, (because) I have never used Edmodo at all. ... (It is) totally different from Google Classroom. ... (I) need much time to operate it” (Interview Diva 26, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

The next question asked about the effectiveness of Edmodo for assessment. Based on the result of the interview, Irene and Diva stated that it was very effective and very helpful in their teaching and learning activities during Covid-19. There is a feedback feature for students in this case teachers or students, can get feedback from each other through the features available. Similarly, Udin had a wonderful experience using Edmodo. This statement can be illustrated through a piece interview as follows:

“...very effective (because) there are several features available such as giving feedback, making it easier to get inputs from teachers” (Interview Irine 19, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

“I think that Edmodo is quite effective for assessment because it has a strict assessment rule (Interview Udin 19, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

“I think it's very effective because there is a feedback feature, so we can know what went wrong and what should be corrected” (Interview Diva 26, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

In Edmodo, there are also some pros and cons. When asked about the pros of using Edmodo, Irene stated that there are so many advantages of Edmodo such as the complete feature for designing assessments interactively and the opportunity for feedback provision. In addition, Udin argued that the appearance of Edmodo was so friendly that everyone can operate it easily, although for first-time users. He also claimed that the submission deadline on Edmodo can force me to have a high self-discipline level. In the same vein, Diva also acknowledged the powerful aspect of deadline submission in this LMS, as described in the following excerpt:

“For me, there are many advantages ... such as in arranging assessment and providing feedback (via Edmodo)” (Interview Irine 19, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

“...it is a friendly-user interface with interesting and interactive appearance... (also) the appropriate assignment submission system that can stimulate me to be on time on the due date” (Interview Udin 19, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

"...it has many interesting features, especially in assessment deadline feature that can maintain my self-discipline in light of assignment submission deadline" (Interview Diva 26, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

Edmodo is certainly not a perfect application. There are some cons of Edmodo. When asked about the cons of Edmodo Irine argued that a bad internet connection can affect the website running slower and Udin stated the lack of Edmodo is strict in terms of the deadline for submitting the assignment. Diva claimed that there is no setting to change the language and no private comment field for teachers and students. The statements have described as follows:

"I think it's about the unstable network ... sometimes there are some errors, that's how it is the lack" (interview Irine 19, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

"Well the cons of using Edmodo is Edmodo unlike the other LMS or learning management system it is quite strict in terms of the deadline, if we submit the assignment past the deadline then Edmodo will not accept it." (Interview Udin 19, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

"I think the language on Edmodo only uses English, It cannot change to the Indonesian language ...no private comments." (Interview Diva 26, August 2022 via WhatsApp)

This current study aims to investigate students' perceptions of the integration of Edmodo into an Indonesian EFL writing classroom. As aforementioned, the findings indicate a positive response to the use of Edmodo in EFL writing classrooms. The empirical data resulting from thematic analysis of statement 1 about the first-hand experience in using Edmodo reveals that one participant confessed that Edmodo is very easy to use and useful for facilitating virtual learning. This finding is in line with earlier studies (Al-Kathiri, 2015; Almoeather, 2020; Aydin, 2021; Ekmekçi, 2016; Kongchan, 2008; Shinji, 2017; Unal & Uzun, 2021) claiming that Edmodo is user-friendly and so easy to use and useful for the learners. On the other hand, the two participants argued they had trouble using Edmodo since they are first-time users. It is therefore that the lecturer needs to introduce the application intensively by providing such kind of simulation or training about how to operate Edmodo so that the process of teaching and learning activity has become more conducive and minimizes any technological constraints that possibly occur.

The next item is in light of the aspect of ease of use. One participant argued that he had a wonderful experience when using Edmodo, particularly when taking online quizzes. This means that Edmodo seems to be a wonderful learning platform and is also very effective for assessing the students' outcomes (Ekmekçi, 2016). Similarly, the two participants confessed that Edmodo is a very effective assessment tool and a good educational tool in the teaching-learning process during the Covid-19 outbreak condition. More specifically, there is a feedback feature that makes it easier for students to interact with the teacher. This finding is in line with the previous study carried out by Ekmekçi (2016) claimed that Edmodo provides students with immediate feedback and scores for their tasks. Moreover, Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) claimed that authentic assessment and timely feedback are important components of learning. Shortly speaking, Edmodo users have a great experience while using this app, particularly in managing virtual classrooms including assigning quizzes and managing submission deadlines, which supports the claim reported by the earlier studies (Kongchan, 2008; Mark Angelo S. Enriquez, 20014). Moreover, several qualitative studies reported several advantages of using Edmodo. One of the benefits of Edmodo is that this app can also increase student interest in teaching and learning activities, as also reported by previous studies (Al-Nawaisah, 2022; Nami, 2020).

When asked about the important features of Edmodo, One participant mentioned that there are several beneficial features in Edmodo such as feedback features and credible assessment tools. Those features can significantly upgrade teachers' assessment tools by moving from traditional feedback (e.g. traditional pen and paper exams) to the modern feedback method, as also contended

by Ekmekçi (2016). The other participant also claimed that Edmodo provides an easy-to-use and understandable option so that the students can easily utilize it, even for first-time users which is congruent with the earlier studies (Alsmari, 2019; Balasubramanian et al., 2014; Holland & Muilenburg, 2011; Khodary, 2017; Kongchan, 2008).

To take this matter further, several studies (see Al-Nawaisah, 2022; Ateş Çobanoğlu, 2018; Bicen, 2015; Ekmekçi, 2016; Khodary, 2017; Nami, 2020; Qaddumi, 2021; Trust, 2012, 2017; Yunkul & Cankaya, 2017) reported that those positive features can significantly motivate and encourage students in their learning processes specifically during online learning activities. The interview data also revealed that those interest features in Edmodo (e.g., modern assessment tool), can positively increase her self-discipline during learning activities. This is congruent with the earlier finding (Khodary, 2017) claiming that the teacher can motivate the students to build their self-discipline during teaching and learning activities by utilizing the text alerts and bell-ringers option available in Edmodo. Therefore, such a positive atmosphere can significantly increase students' interest, self-confidence, and self-satisfaction and, even, decrease their anxiety feelings during learning activities which leads them to acquire high-quality learning achievement (Almoeather, 2020).

On the other hand, using Edmodo as an online learning platform has also disadvantages. One participant argued that poor internet connectivity has become the major issue when utilizing this LMS. The weak network will affect the performance of this application. This statement is supported by a previous study (Al-Kathiri, 2015) claiming that poor internet has proven to be a major obstacle to technology-mediated learning in the online classroom. Meanwhile, the other participants claimed that the other big issue is in tandem with the deadline for submitting the assignments, where the students cannot submit assignments beyond the time limit that has been set, which is supported by a recent study (Khodary, 2017). Each participant also uses Edmodo to write and post assignments individually on time with their own learning responsibilities. The last participant argued that there is only one language available in Edmodo, English only. It is impossible to set another language in Edmodo which sometimes makes her difficult to operate it.

CONCLUSION

The present study investigates undergraduate students' perceptions of Edmodo integration into EFL classrooms during the Covid-19 outbreak condition at a private university in East Java Province, Indonesia. Based on the analysis of the data generated from a series of interviews, it was revealed that Edmodo has been recognized as a powerful educational medium. The result of the data analysis found that students had positive views towards Edmodo used in education. The students perceived Edmodo as a user-friendly application, practical, time-saving, enjoyable, and can increase students' self-discipline. In addition, Edmodo has a simple appearance that can motivate students and increase students' interest actively. Edmodo is also very effective as an alternative assessment tool. The features in Edmodo are very interesting. It can train students to be more active as independent learners. However, poor internet connectivity can hinder the effectiveness of student learning. Finally, some students also feel comfortable with the Edmodo learning site as a learning tool. They thus consider that traditional face-to-face learning should be complemented with online learning mediated by Edmodo.

As in all research, this current study has several limitations. The participants involved in this study are still very limited. Further, we conducted the research in a very short time and this research did not cover wide geographic areas. Therefore, it is highly recommended for further research to carry out research with a larger scale of participants in a wider geographic area and sufficient time to conduct the research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to extend her appreciation and gratitude to her supervisor for his insight and expertise that greatly assisted this study. Many thanks should go to the participants for willingly taking part in the present study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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