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Enhancing Speaking Skill among Students in ESL Lesson through Instagram

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Abstract:

Speaking skill requires readiness from learners in engaging to the situation given with the language knowledge they have learned. Hence, this component in language acquisition is mostly regarded lightly by many second language learners who are not ready to use the second language in speaking lesson. Unfortunately, this has made the learners incompetent with the second language even though there are many who garner better skills in writing, reading and listening. In order to enhance readiness among the learners in using the targeted second language, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is seen as a medium that could help learners to increase self-esteem in using the language orally. The aim of this paper is to investigate how social media, Instagram, could assist to enhance students' readiness in speaking English during ESL lessons. 30 students of age 11 and 16 years old had been selected from two schools in Malaysia to see their readiness to speak in English during speaking lesson through a survey using questionnaire. The post-survey result reflected improvement in their confidence level to speaking English and MALL could help to increase students' self-esteem to use the language orally. In conclusion, this finding could give a new option in conducting speaking activity during ESL lesson.

Keywords: ESL classroom, speaking, language learning, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Instagram

1. Introduction

Teachers are always being individual when planning and designing lessons where the curriculum has always become the main resource. The planning would begin with setting the objectives, planning the tasks and activities to preparing the material. Being a concerned teacher, he or she would always want the students to be able to achieve the set targets but some students may lack in one skill than the others. Speaking skill is considered as the production skill where students should be able to produce meaningful utterances to convey messages or to get information. Speaking could be one of the most difficult skills for students to acquire since it needs a great amount of practice and exposure. It has been supported by Kusnierek (2015) that speaking skills require communicative and cognitive skills to be applied simultaneously. In Malaysia, speaking skill is assessed in two public examinations at the secondary level. Hence, preparing students for the assessment has become the focus for English language teachers throughout the country. Multicultural society would bring advantages to students in developing proficiency in English language but this situation is likely to happen to students from the rural area or from the area which are largely occupied by the Malays (Mat & Yunus, 2014).

Utilizing technology into a speaking lesson is hoped to encourage the students to speak in English and erase the mindset that English is a difficult language. Hashim et.al (2017) suggested that mobile devices could be possible tools in enhancing the learning of the language instead of using computers. Thus, researchers had chosen Instagram, a communicative social media platform, to help increasing students' confidence level through video recording as it could provide an authentic experience to students (Aloraini, 2018). In addition, Aloraini (2018) also mentioned in his study that having students to do tasks on their smartphones using mobile app showed increment of tendencies for them to finish the task and taking in social media into speaking lesson is one mean to meet this demand by blending mobile app in learning activity to assist students to acquire the language through collaborative task with peers (Mondahl & Razmerita, 2014). Due to that reason, the researchers have decided to integrate mobile app in enhancing students' speaking skills where they would be comfortable to use the language among their own where errors would not be pointed out publicly. The researchers' personal observations reveal that Malaysian students are drawn into Instagram, a social media application that supports images and videos. Hence, the researchers have used Instagram as a tool for speaking activity in ESL lesson

to 30 students of age 11 and 16 years old. Therefore, this paper aims to observe a) students' readiness to speak in English and b) the effectiveness of using Instagram in boosting students' confidence level to speak in the English language.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Readiness towards Language

Foreign language learning provides a different unique experience to every learner. Two foreign language learners who learn the language at the same time in the same environment would have a different attitude towards the language. It could be caused by readiness and attitude towards the targeted language. This has been supported by Leong and Ahmadi (2017) that students are reluctant to use the English language because they face psychological obstacles where they are lacking in encouragement which leads to low self-esteem.

Effective communication skill is important as it would help students to exchange ideas and thoughts which would be beneficial to their study, work and social life (Choi, 2016) but getting students to speak by volunteer and spontaneously is a difficult task as it requires students' confidence and motivation to do so. From researchers' personal observation on their students, they would stop using the language when their friends belittled them for making mistakes. Due to the situation, many of them would request to be placed with peers of their proficiency level because they are ashamed to their friends who are better in the English language. This could happen probably due to students' limited vocabulary and tend to make mistakes in sentence structures which make them feel silly for committing such mistakes (Choi, 2016). Those problems shy them away from speaking activities such as public speaking and oral presentation. Therefore, finding a strategy that would provide remedially and support to students who are not proficient in the language is important in order to motivate and encourage them to speak in English.

2.2. Speaking Skill

A student needs to communicate in order to deliver a message or to relay information. This is where a language is needed so the other party would be able to comprehend the message or information. The Malaysian education system has long supported the citizens of Malaysia to be bilingual or multilingual. Bilingualism and even multilingualism are common among the people of this country. Ministry of Education (MoE) always includes bilingualism programmes in their agenda and the ministry has high hopes on students where they want the students to be nurtured by positive school experience in second language acquisition, hence, when they leave schools, they would possess world-class knowledge and skills in the language and able to compete in the global market (MoE, 2013). In order to be able to market the students internationally, it is important to go back into the classrooms where most of the students first learn the second language (Hashim, Yunus & Embi, 2016).

A lot of second language learners always measure their success in acquiring the language from their speaking skills and the ability to speak in the targeted language (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017) and that makes teachers concentrate on certain aspect of oral interaction through varied activities such as turn-taking or by having group work where students could communicate and collaborate while using the language. However, as put forward by Suliman, Nor & Yunus (2017), English competency and proficiency has always become a talk in Malaysian education system. This is because many students are still not proficient in the English language despite been learning the languages for eleven years in primary and secondary schools. It is assumed that non-native English learners preferred to converse in their respective mother tongue instead of the targeted second language as well as translating English sentences into their mother tongue (Lee, Yunus & Embi, 2016) which has made speaking skill receives the least attention from second language learners. Some students, however, put some effort by preparing scripts and memorize the scripts before presenting their ideas. When they have something important to share with their friends, they tend to use their mother tongue as most conversations occur spontaneously. This could be because they are more comfortable using their mother tongue or their first language or sometimes the students feel difficult to grasp for words in English to express their thoughts and constructing sentences in the English language. Hence, in Malaysia Education Blueprint, Ministry of Education or MoE encourages teachers to be creative in planning speaking lessons that would be helpful for students to improve their speaking skills in the second language so students would have more opportunities to use the language with peers and teachers.

2.3. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

The English language is taught as the second language in Malaysia. Hence, the Malaysia Educational Blueprint was developed in order to provide our students with skills that would enable them to acquire the language successfully. This has been clearly mentioned in 6 students' aspiration that bilingual proficiency would be one of the focuses in assisting students to learn the English Language. With the fast in technology, the way we live, work and learn also experience changes. Despite the demand for workers has declined, the need for service and knowledge workers has grown. However, creative and innovative workers are limited. The developments introduce challenges to educators and policymakers. The world is changing socially and culturally thus it affects the key challenges for learning and schooling to meet the requirement at the workplaces. Because of that, academia is working hard to see how they could use technology tools in the classroom as many professional fields were influenced by the introduction of new technologies and an educational field is not left behind.

Hashim et al (2017) recorded in their study that Mobile-assisted Language Learning or better known as MALL had begun in the 1980s with the research first conducted by Twarog and Pereszlenyi-Pinter (2018) using a telephone to assist language study. Rapid changes are seen in teaching methodology with the assistance of these new technologies as they are

closer to students' interests (Aloraini, 2018) and MALL could be carried out either as a formal or informal lesson as long as students have access to the devices. Meanwhile, according to Mondahl and Razmerita (2014), one of the challenges in teaching students of the 21st century is to cater their attachment to the digital world as they are drawn into mobile apps instead of being academically minded. They want to learn to meet the society's demand and they are mostly result-oriented. Therefore, creating learning environments that require active participation, problem-solving and collaboration among peers would lead to better learning outcomes. Hence, taking in technology in assisting speaking lesson during English as the second language (ESL) classroom would encourage students to speak. Many empirical studies have been carried out and many of those showed advantages of using technology in the language classroom (Aloraini, 2018). The portability of mobile devices would give a new shape to speaking lessons as it is more personalized to the students as well as to allow students to have access to language learning materials at all time (Hashim et al, 2017).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Design

The design for this study is a survey where the researchers used a questionnaire to collect data. The selection of the participants was carried out in a primary and secondary school where the researchers are teaching. This survey was employed in those schools to enhance speaking lessons using Instagram. 30 students were chosen based on convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was decided based on students' availability to Instagram account as well as their accessibility to the internet. From these 30 students, we classified them according to their ages which are 11 years old and 16 years old. As to align with the research objectives, we came out with a questionnaire as an instrument in order to assess their confidence level in speaking.

3.2. Procedures

Students were selected based on the convenience sampling which the researcher as a teacher asked the students who have internet accessibility. The selected students were given a questionnaire to assess their readiness in speaking before the activity was conducted. Then, the students conducted their speaking activities on Instagram according to the topic given by the teacher. Students were required to post one-minute videos on Instagram related to each task. Lastly, the students were given a questionnaire after completing the task. The questionnaire was given to investigate what the students had learned while accomplishing the tasks as well as their perception towards the tasks.

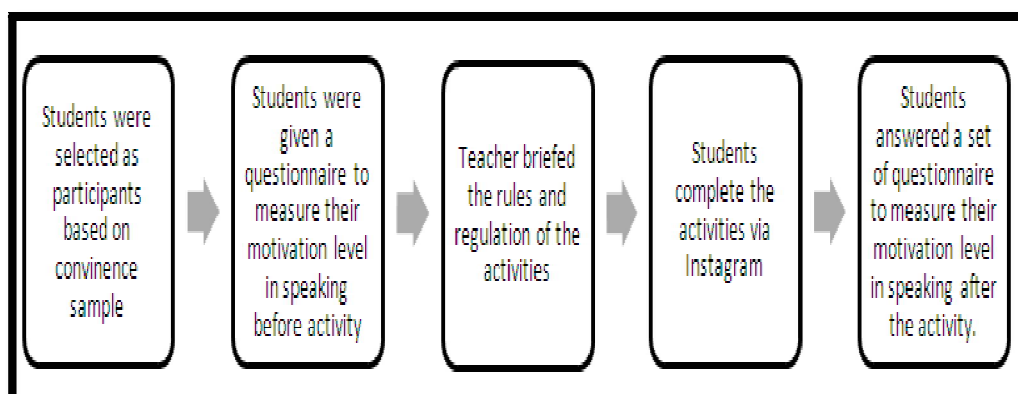


Figure 1: Procedure of the Study

4. Data Analysis

The main data collected was based on questionnaire assessment which was distributed before and after the activity. A comparison was made between before and after the activity among primary and secondary students. The questionnaire consisted of 6 items using a 4-Likert scale to report degrees of the agreement which strongly agree (4) and strongly disagree (1). The data from the questionnaires were statistically analyzed using percentage distribution. More data would be discussed further on the findings and discussion.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Students' Readiness to Speak in English

The findings of the students' readiness in speaking skill in ESL through the utilizing of Instagram would be discussed based on the questionnaire before and after the activities. Students were asked to indicate on a four Likert scale questionnaire to show their agreement or disagreement with statements in acquiring the speaking skill.

Options	Primary		Secondary	
	Before	After	Before	After
Very good	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)
Good	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (20.0%)	3 (20.0%)
Average	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)	6 (40.0%)	6 (40.0%)
Weak	7 (46.7%)	7 (46.7%)	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)
Total	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)

Table 1: My Level in the English Language is

Based on the findings in Table 1, it has found out that there are the same percentages in the level of English language among students of the primary and the secondary schools before and after the activities. As English is the second language, it cannot be tremendously improved over one month as the proficiency in using English takes time to be developed.

Options	Primary		Secondary	
	Before	After	Before	After
Strongly agree	8 (53.3%)	3 (20.0%)	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)
Agree	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	7 (46.7%)	1 (6.7%)
Disagree	3 (20.0%)	4 (26.7%)	3 (20.0%)	9 (60.0%)
Strongly disagree	2 (13.3%)	6 (40.0%)	0	4 (26.7%)
Total	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)

Table 2: English is Difficult for Me

Table 2 shows that students' perceptions towards the language had changed after they had used Instagram in speaking activity. There is a wide gap in agreeing that English is a difficult language to be acquired and learn for. For example, the figures of data in Table 2 concerning the primary school students who considered English is difficult had decreased from 53.3% to 20.0%. It is the same with the secondary school students which indicated the decrease percentage from 33.3% to 6.7%. Therefore, it reflected that students had changed their perceptions towards the language after using the application of Instagram for speaking task. The use of Instagram enhanced the students' interests and readiness in learning the language particularly in speaking though it seemed to be difficult in the beginning.

Options	Primary		Secondary	
	Before	After	Before	After
Strongly agree	0	0	0	0
Agree	0	1 (6.7%)	0	2 (13.3%)
Disagree	2 (13.3%)	8 (53.3%)	13 (86.7%)	12 (80.0%)
Strongly disagree	13 (86.7%)	6 (40.0%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)
Total	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (10%)

Table 3: I Always Speak English at Home

As English is the second language in Malaysia, it is rarely used at home. Most of the students either in primary or secondary schools did not speak English at home. It is reflected in Table 3, whereby the majority of the students strongly disagreed with the statement. There was a small percentage of the students agreed that they speak English at home after the activity was done and not before that were 6.7% came from a primary school student and 13.3% came from two students of secondary school. They put some effort trying to speak in English at home.

Options	Primary		Secondary	
	Before	After	Before	After
Strongly agree	1(6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)	3 (20.0%)
Agree	0	2 (3.3%)	2 (13.3%)	10 (66.7%)
Disagree	0	8 (53.3%)	8 (53.3%)	2 (13.3%)
Strongly disagree	14 (93.0%)	0	4 (26.7%)	0
Total	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)

Table 4: I Am Confident to Speak in English

Table 4 shows that 6.7% of primary and secondary students strongly agreed to speak in English confidently before the activity was conducted. 0% of primary students agreed and disagreed to speak in English confidently. Meanwhile, for secondary students, 2% and 8% agreed and disagreed respectively to speak in English confidently. 93% of primary students strongly disagreed that they were confident to speak in English before the activity. For secondary students, there was no student strongly disagreed to speak in English confidently.

Options	Primary		Secondary	
	Before	After	Before	After
Strongly agree	2 (13.3%)	5 (33.3%)	3 (20.0%)	5 (33.3%)
Agree	1 (6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)	8 (53.3%)
Disagree	2 (13.3%)	3 (20.0%)	8 (53.3%)	1 (6.7%)
Strongly disagree	10 (66.7%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (20.0%)	1 (6.7%)
Total	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)

Table 5: I Always Eager to Respond to my Teacher in English

The results appear in Table 5 shows that the majority of the students, 33.3% and 53.3% from both groups are always eager to respond in English. Whereas, both groups show a decreasing percentage which gives difference 6.7% and 46.7% for both disagree option and 53.4% and 13.3% for strongly disagree option. Among those participants, we found the increasing of a number on the strongly agree and agree with options which indicate there is an improvement in student's interest to speak for both groups of students.

5.2. Effectiveness of Using Instagram in Boosting Students' Confidence Level to Speak in English

Options	Primary		Secondary	
	Before	After	Before	After
Yes	1 (6.7%)	12 (80.0%)	4 (26.7%)	13 (86.7%)
No	14 (93.3%)	3 (20.0%)	11 (73.3%)	2 (13.3%)
Total	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)

Table 6: I Found that Instagram Helps to Boost my Confidence to Speak in English

Table 6 indicates that majority of the primary and secondary students, 83.3%, agree that Instagram helps in boosting their confidence to speak in English after participating in the activity. However, 33.3% of them do not consider Instagram could boost their confidence level to speak in English.

6. Discussion

The results of this study significantly show that using Instagram is effective in enhancing students' speaking skill in ESL lesson. This is because using Instagram as a tool will prepare an active learning environment that is more interesting and effective for both teachers and students. It would be helpful for students to acquire a second language as students would have more opportunities to use the language with peers and teachers. In the meantime, teachers would

play the role of facilitator and assist the students to achieve their goals. It suits with the mechanism of 21st-century learning which focuses more on student-centered activities that are aligned with Malaysia Education Blueprint, Ministry of Education or MoE which suggested a few strategies like project-based learning and group-based work.

As English is the second language mainly acquired at school, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) highlighted that students are hesitant to speak in English due to psychological factors where they do not receive motivation which leads to low self-confidence. Therefore, a majority would request to be placed with peers of the same proficiency level because they feel inferior towards their friends who are better in the language. Thus, Instagram as a tool would be able to engage the students to actively interact with their friends using English as well as to motivate them to learn English through social media.

The result of the questionnaire analysis reflected that the majority of students had positive attitudes towards using Instagram in speaking activities. MALL has a great impact on motivating and creating opportunities for students to interact, some of which have been identified by Zaki & Yunus (2015) in their previous research. The perception of the students towards the language itself had changed after the activity in which as well boost their confidence level to speak English as shown in Table 2 and Table 4. It can also be identified from the figures in Table 6 which indicates only 3 students from the primary school with the percentage of 20.0% and two students of the secondary school with 13.3% who are still not confident enough to speak in English after using the application of Instagram. This was due to low self-esteem which may take time to be overcome.

7. Conclusion

The availability of a number of mobiles among students with the application of Instagram meant that students had access to work on the tasks given even outside the classroom. However, the study by using Instagram as a platform for enhancing communication skill among students has certain issues such as internet availability and network stability besides the limitation to leverage engagement in developing communication skills among students. Since the study has also been conducted in a secondary school, it has some barrier for the students who stay in the hostel. In addition, some of the students in primary school did not own mobile phones. Teachers as facilitators provide the gadget by lending them to the students to be used at school under the teachers' supervisions while some used their parents' mobile phones as to take part in the speaking tasks at home. Thus, the learning process is not restricted mainly in the classroom which promotes an autonomous learning environment. Other than that, this activity is a continuous learning process which conducted virtually and it required both parties, students and the teachers, to have a good internet connection. Some review of related literature have highlighted ideas in order to successfully conduct this study on the following ways 1) topics given must be more relaxing and spontaneous, 2) teachers must take roles and get involved in the activities too and 3) enhance the students to speak by expressing ideas and feelings virtually in their videos.

In conclusion, communicative activities which require group discussion through Instagram were found to increase students' readiness to speak in English where they need to interact and support each other by freely expressed and shared ideas among them. Throughout this activity, students were also managed to hold the discussion even though they were seen agreeing and disagreeing in justifying thought or opinions but in the end, they come to a consensus. Therefore, Instagram is one of the best platforms to instill students' braveness to communicate in the English language and successfully convey their messages in a proper way. Besides, we can persuade the students to use social media towards a positive way rather than wasting to the negative aspect. It is no doubt to conclude Instagram is an effective tool for students' interactions especially in the discussion of task-related activity. Instagram can be the best medium for communication as well as for wider engagement in the learning process. Thus, mobile learning via Instagram seems to be an ideal tool for such transactional learning and it is found as a crucial platform in the age of information and communication technology.

8. Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings and the conclusion of this study, it is recommended that applying social media in language learning would encourage students to learn to use the language independently as they would find social media is a platform that promotes fun learning, such as Instagram. This would also encourage collaborative learning if students were given tasks to be completed in a group. Therefore, language learning would not only occur in the classroom but also outside classroom where this could be assigned as a follow-up activity after school hours.

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