

How Motivated Are You: The Students' Constraints in The English Chat Group

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One of several ways to assess students' communicative competence is by putting them in an unrehearsed situation where they can survive using the language for communicating. Some high motivated students would do voluntarily outside the class with their mates and succeed in upgrading their communicative skill; other students who belong to the low motivated ones may feel unconfident and are afraid to make mistakes and so choose to remain silent. Those two kinds of students, the high and low motivated students, are found in the class of Intensive Course at the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University. As the competence of the course is for the students to be able to use English to participate in social and academic life, the four skills are given integratedly combined with self-study and other activities that can enhance the students' communicative competence, one of which is through the medium of Facebook. Facebook provides a resource for a group where people can limit the members, and has a lock system for other people outside the group for not being able to see or read the group's status and comment. Such condition may be useful for low motivated students who feel unconfident with their communicating skill as well as for high motivated students to develop their skill more. Though some efforts of encouraging students to join a chat group has been very common nowadays, the study on the motivation and the constraints the students face in communicating in Facebook has not yet been many. Meanwhile, such a reflection is needed by teachers who plan to have an online session in their class to especially help the low motivated students. Therefore, this study aims at finding out the constraints of learning English through a chat group in Facebook faced by the high motivated students and low motivated students. This study belongs to a qualitative research and the subjects included sixteen first semester students who took the Intensive Course class. Those students bounded in a chat group created by the lecturer of the course. The data were collected through questionnaires. The result of the study reveals that both the high motivated students and the low motivated students face quite similar constraints in learning English through a chat group in Facebook. The constraints cover the areas of message organization, sustaining conversation, vocabulary, grammar, and choosing topic.

Keywords: motivation, students' constraints, English chat group

Introduction

One of several ways to assess students' communicative competence is by putting them in an unrehearsed situation where they can survive using the language for communicating. Some high motivated students would do voluntarily outside the class with their mates and succeed in upgrading their communicative skill; other students who belong to the low motivated ones may feel unconfident and are afraid to make mistakes and so choose to remain silent and do nothing.

In the Intensive Course (IC) Class at the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University, the students' motivation as well as the competence are heterogeneous. Some high motivated students actively keep up with the gist of the material delivered in the class while some others remain silent. Therefore, this twelve credit course with its competence set for the students to be able to use English to participate in social and academic life is designed to

integrate the four English skills combined with self-study and other activities that can enhance the students' communicative competence, one of which is through Facebook.

Facebook is chosen not only because Facebook has become people current trend lifestyle especially for youngsters, but it also makes the students to learn English joyfully. It is done through the Chat Group in Facebook, a chat room where the members can have a chat without being able to be accessed by the non-members of the group. It will habituate the students with an English speaking environment and at the same time give them a private room for them to freely express and chat on the matters they are interested in. Thus, the low motivated students will feel more confident to communicate, meanwhile the high motivated ones will be able to develop their skill better.

This study focuses on the motivation and the constraints the students face in communicating in Facebook. It aims at finding out the constraints of learning English through a chat group in Facebook faced by the high motivated students and low motivated students.

Literature Review

Communicative Competence

It has been the general consensus for teachers who follow the Communicative Language Teaching as their teaching approach that the final objective of English as second language teaching is to facilitate their students achieving their communicative competence. Communicative competence is defined to be the ability to communicate in a language which comprises of four dimensions: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

As an impact of communicative competence theory on second and foreign language teaching, Lazarraton (Murcia, 2001:103) states that, in terms of teaching oral skill, teachers are expected to balance a focus on accuracy with a focus on fluency as well. Fluency, as proposed by Hedge (Murcia, 2001:104), is defined to be "natural language use" which is likely to take place when speaking activities focus on meaning and its negotiation, when speaking strategies are used, and when overt correction is minimized. In the view of meaning negotiation which has been the core of Communicative Language Teaching, listeners and readers no longer are regarded as passive; they are seen as active participants in the negotiation of meaning. Take for example, in the speaking skill where students are expected to produce some utterances, what happened to the counterpart students are actually performing their receptive parts as they are listening. This way the negotiation meaning may not rely only on whether conversation is conducted face to face but also that which goes through a media as well.

Group Chat in Facebook

Benefitting from the trend of technology, Facebook, invented by Mark Zuckerberg in February 2004, is defined by Ashley in Bodomo (2010: 316) to be a computer-mediated communication (CMC) tool, an asynchronous (delay) communication tool which enables communication (one-to-one, one-to-many) and collaboration over a period of time through a "different time-different place" mode. Furthermore, Bodomo (2010:317) also explains Group as one feature of facebook where users can create new ones or join and participate in existing ones. The members of the group can comment or discuss any matters on the Group Wall

privately or publically. Private discussion means those who become the members will be able to access the discussion, whereas the non-members will not.

Lam in Chapelle (2005: 745) states that the opportunity to communicate through internet, in this case chat group in Facebook, creates motivation to use English with peers. This means that the chat group in Facebook can be used as “the vehicle through which learners can express themselves and receive genuine responses to their contributions” (Chapelle, 2005: 745).

Motivation

Harmer (2007: 98) defines motivation as some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. This is in line with Dornyei (2001: 9) who explains that motivation is the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out. Inferring from this definition, motivation is something innate, it is not observable through physical appearance, yet it is probably able to be observed through interviewing or questioning.

Harmer (2007: 98) differentiates motivation into extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, that is motivation which comes from ‘outside’ and ‘inside’. Furthermore, Stipekin Dornyei(2001:106)mentions that the students motivational baggagescomprise of their beliefs, expectations and habits.

Méthod

This study belongs to a qualitative research. The subjects were sixteen first semester students who took Intensive Course F class at English Education Department of Muria Kudus University in the academic year 2011/2012. Those students joined and participated in a chat group created by the lecturer of the course. To collect the data, the instrument used was questionnaires consisting of two types. The first questionnaire was on motivation of learning English which was an adaptation of Dornyei’s (2010). It was used to identify the high and low motivated students. The second questionnaire was on students’ constraints adapted from Purwaningjati’s (2012) to seek the constraints of learning English through a chat group in Facebook faced by the students.

Finding

The result of the study reveals that there is 44% high motivated students and 56% low motivated students.Both the low motivated students and the high motivated students face some areas of constraints in learning English through a chat group in Facebook. Those areas are message organization, ability to sustain conversation, vocabularies shortage, grammar difficulties, and topic choice.

Message organization here deals with the length of idea one delivers. The result of the study shows that 71% of high motivated students considered it is important to tell length-widely the idea they wrote as they shared opinion in group chat, and 86% of high motivated students

agreed on the reason of doing it was to make sure their friends understood the meaning. Meanwhile only 33% of the low motivated students agreed on the importance of wide-lengthy idea and 44% of them agreed on the reason of why it is so.

In sustaining conversation, it was revealed that both high motivated students and low motivated students liked to agree on the previous comments given by their chat friend in facebook. both high and low motivated students agreed on the previous comments. It means that both parties were using the same technique to sustain conversation, i.e. by agreeing. But, it does not mean they never disagreed. The result shows that 43% of the high motivated students and 55% of the low ones ever disagreed on the formerly comment. However, it is likely that the low motivated students tended to agree on "agreeing" as a technique to sustain conversation than the high motivated students.

When reason of not commenting was traced in to whether or not the member of the group chat faced grammatical problem, both high and low motivated students admitted that they still found grammar as a hindrance in sustaining conversation.

In the area of vocabulary constraint, it was found out that 57% of high motivated students agreed on having trouble with choosing correct vocabularies in updating status, but 28.3% strongly disagreed on vocabularies mistake as a main constraint for giving comment in their group's wall. Meanwhile, 43% of low motivated students agreed also on having trouble with choosing correct vocabularies in updating status, and 28.6% agreed on having main constraint on giving comment too. It seems that both high and low motivated students agreed that vocabulary was a constraint in updating status in IC group chat.

In facing the grammar constraint, only 28.6% of the high motivated students and 11% of the low motivated ones agreed that they had grammar difficulty in writing a comment in the IC group chat. This indicates that most of both high and low motivated students did not find grammar as constraint in learning English through a chat group.

Regarding the constraint in the topic, the high motivated students agreed on changing the topic as away to maintain conversation, but low motivated students somehow disagreed. It was shown as 43% of high motivated students agreed to use the changing of the topic as a way of sustaining conversation, whereas 33% of the low motivated students disagreed with it. As for the topic comprehension, 71.4% of the high motivated students and 11% of the low motivated ones disagreed on not understanding the topic as the reason for not giving comments.

Conclusion

This study concludes that both the high motivated students and the low motivated students face quite similar constraints in learning English through a chat group in Facebook, i.e. in sustaining conversation, vocabulary, and grammar. The different areas of constraints faced by those high and low motivated students are in message organization and choosing topic. Thus, this study suggests the teachers to emphasize more in organizing the message as well as sustaining conversation. The teachers should also expose the students more on reading.

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