

EDMODO: EXTENDING ENGLISH LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Pungky Wahyu Wijayani
(pungky.wahyu@gmail.com)

Sekolah Victory Plus Bekasi

Eka Yanita Weny
(ekayanitaweny@yahoo.com)

Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Malang

Abstract: The implementation of *Kurikulum* 2013 in Indonesia national education has created a great polemic among English teachers. The problem which most English teachers face is the limited face-to-face teaching periods. The English subject in SMAs now is only taught in one meeting per week. This few in-class teaching session is considered to be insufficient for addressing students' needs to master English. In digital era, bringing digital flipped classroom into ELT will be a good solution not only for students but also for teachers to increase the English teaching and learning experience. Here, we would like to introduce Edmodo as an online website for learning which can be used in flipped classrooms. Edmodo offers various online applications in the form of website that has unique and interesting features for teachers to use in English classes. By integrating Edmodo into their teaching process, teachers are expected to extend the English teaching beyond the classroom. Teachers will be able to tackle the problem in terms of decreasing in-class time to build students' English proficiency. In this paper, we would like to discuss more the implementation, features and strength of Edmodo in teaching English.

Keywords: Internet, ELT, Edmodo

INTRODUCTION

There has been a loud outcry among English teachers in Indonesia since The Minister of National Education put *Kurikulum* 2013 into the practice. The concern lays mostly on the decreasing time allotment for English subject at schools. English has become a subject that students no longer need to learn in SDs. Meanwhile, in SMAs, teachers now only have one meeting per week to teach English. The burden to help students to brush up their English fluency has become heavier due to the limited

teaching hours. Meanwhile, the demand from the globalisation era towards English proficiency remains high.

Since the allocated time in ELT is now limited, teachers need to use the available meetings they have in the classroom as efficient as possible. Having a flipped classroom in ELT classes can facilitate teachers to maximize their English teaching process in the classroom and extend it to outside the classroom. Reversing classroom activities by having students to understand the concepts of the subjects at home while using in-class time to do exercises, projects, or discussions (Educause, 2012:Online) is the basic idea of flipped classroom. By implementing this system, English teachers in Indonesia are expected to have more efficient in-class time to build students' English proficiency. Teachers can customise the idea of flipped classroom based on the condition of the schools and students.

The implementation of flipped classroom needs an appropriate digital tool that can address the learning needs efficiently. Edmodo is the answer to that matter. Walsh (2013:Online) describes Edmodo as:

... a great flipped teaching delivery vehicle. Flipped Teaching requires a platform for the delivery of digital learning materials. Edmodo's secure, mobile accessibility, and the fact that it is free, are just a few of the reasons that it is a great, and very popular partner in the flipped classroom. The ability to have private online class discussions around posted content is a great way mechanism to facilitate post-content-consumption activities like reflection or answering questions you may pose about the content.

To give a general idea, when Edmodo is involved in English teaching and learning process, teachers can give better coverage of English subject. The limited in-class teaching time which is only one meeting per week, will no longer be an obstacle as teachers and students can bring the English teaching and learning experience outside the classroom. The following session will discuss further what Edmodo is and its implementation in the English teaching and learning process.

AN INSIGHT INTO EDMODO

Edmodo is a website which offers educational instructions. It can be accessed on <http://www.edmodo.com>. It is one of social platforms that connects more than 29 million teachers and students around world (Edmodo, 2013:Online). Edmodo is also one of the best means of teacher-student communication. Edmodo totally encourages students to build their online learning environment in wonderful lessons. It also allows teachers to create closed groups and sub-groups in order to work on different things at

the same time according to the subject of learning. Here are some general functions which can be experienced in using Edmodo:

1. Formal and informal learning

Edmodo offers students learning environment by facilitating formal in-school learning as well as informal outside-school learning. At schools, students can experience the learning by accessing Edmodo through their schools' internet service.

2. Sharing project

Edmodo is the best website that has an accurate sharing system. It serves teachers and students sharing program to create teaching and learning process.

3. Updated and free material

Edmodo can be operated as a tool to explore online materials which are needed by both teachers and students.

4. User-friendly feature

Edmodo's features and layout have some similarities to those of Facebook's. It offers some facilities to create learning network and workshops. It allows its users to share comments and opinions as well as uploading materials. School community members who are familiar with Facebook will feel at home when they access Edmodo.

5. Safe and secure

Edmodo has a strong security system in each of their programs or applications. Teachers will feel safe to let their students browse or search any materials such as pictures, videos, or documents without being worried about pornographic content or vandalism. It is also safe for the privacy of teachers or students' accounts in Edmodo groups because it will notify the users automatically if their accounts are being blocked.

Various educational applications are offered in Edmodo, and every application has its functions and special features. Interactive learning activities are emphasized in Edmodo features. Both teachers and students can make use of those applications to enhance their teaching and learning experience. The followings are some applications which can be operated by students and teachers:

For	Application	Activity
Students	<i>Role Playing</i>	Students can perform role play by using video chatting
	<i>Peer Reviews & Critiques</i>	Students in small groups can post their work to their group for peer review and feedback.
	<i>Writing Projects</i>	Students can express their ideas and opinion by doing writing project in group.
	<i>Foreign Language Practice</i>	Students can practice their language skills, as well as spelling and grammar, through conversations.
	<i>Book Clubs</i>	Students can read and discuss novels among themselves.
	<i>Cultural Exchange Projects</i>	Students can enrich their knowledge about other cultures in the world by connecting their classroom with other classrooms around the globe via Edmodo groups.
	<i>Sub-Hub</i>	Students can stay connected with their teacher when their teacher is out of the classroom through some activities.
	<i>Mobile Learning</i>	Students can install the Edmodo mobile app and make learning be interactive anytime, anywhere.
Teacher	<i>Workshops</i>	Teachers can set up an Edmodo group for their next workshops to discuss ideas and share content before, during, and after the workshops.
	<i>Backchannel Discussions</i>	Teachers can create real-time discussions and extend learning beyond the classroom walls by hosting a backchannel in Edmodo.
	<i>Planning Committees</i>	Teachers can create groups to help committee members collaborate in the lesson planning process.
	<i>Professional Learning</i>	Teachers can join an Edmodo Community to connect with other educators around the globe and share resources, exchange ideas or get advice.
	<i>Alumni Groups</i>	Teachers can keep in touch with students and help them stay connected with each other by creating an Edmodo Alumni group.

Source: Edmodo, 2014

In addition to the applications mentioned above, Edmodo also facilitates teachers to conduct online assessments. Teacher can use the Edmodo quiz builder or poll feature to assess students' learning during or after a unit of study (Edmodo, 2013:Online). Quiz builder is an application for the teacher to make a quiz based on the lesson that their students have learned. Poll feature is an application to conduct online assessment.

On a case-study research done by Pop (2013), Edmodo Assignment feature was analysed to be used as a media of e-portfolio of EFL student productions and progress.

Pop (2013:337) states the background of the research is because in Edmodo “e-portfolios of writing, speaking and listening contributions, which would be otherwise rather difficult to assess in real time by the teacher, can be uploaded on the platform and contribute to a fine, more objective assessment process”. In the research, the e-portfolio of four activities covering speaking, writing, and listening was made available online through the Edmodo assignment feature. The feedback given by the students and teachers involved in this research was positive towards e-portfolio through Edmodo. The result of the case study done by Pop (2013:340) highlights the positive remarks made by the students on Edmodo’s features used for their EFL activities. The teachers involved also commented on the benefits they experienced in terms of organising students’ assignment submission. Pop (2013: 341) concludes that by using Edmodo “written, speaking, and listening productions, which would be otherwise difficult to process and assess in real time, contributed to a finer, more formative and reliable assessment process”.

Edmodo in Indonesia Schools

The computer users with Internet connection in Indonesia have been increasing year by year. This positive development is also shown in education field nowadays. Most schools have been equipped with computer laboratories as well as internet connection which enable teachers and students to enhance their educational needs and interests more easily. Edmodo itself has been utilised as a helpful learning tool in many schools across this country. In Malang, for instance, Edmodo has been introduced and integrated to maximise the teaching and learning process done by the school community of SMKN 12 Malang.

The Strengths of Edmodo in English Language Teaching

As an educational free platform, Edmodo carries within itself many strengths which are beneficial for education. The strengths can be seen from two points of view, those of students’ and of teachers’.

1. For students

In a classroom where students have different proficiency levels, different learning styles can be conducted through Edmodo. Students are encouraged to not only be active but also play as actors. They can create, design, and develop their own learning. There are some advantages for students:

1. *Distance learning*

As Edmodo is accessible anytime and anywhere, students can experience the distance learning in which the materials to be learnt are not restricted to in-class learning time only.

2. *Independent learning*

Students can learn how to be independent learners. They will try to overcome their own problems without a teacher beside them.

3. *Critical Thinking*

Students are able to develop their critical thinking though virtual classroom. It means that when they are curious with a certain topic, they can directly find the related references in open sources (websites, blogs, and forum).

Another research done in Thailand (Kongchan, 2008) shows that Edmodo has been a successful tool to create a learning network. Kongchan's study (2008:Online) aims at investigating how teachers can make use of Edmodo as an online classroom community and to run a workshop on Edmodo for other teachers. In this research, 3 online classes were set up via Edmodo for the students to work online concurrently with their in-class meetings in one semester. The result indicates that the students strongly agreed that they could use 7 functions of Edmodo quickly and easily. The students also strongly agreed that they liked and enjoyed using Edmodo features such as doing quizzes, submitting their work, getting feedback from the teacher, reviewing the lessons posted by the teacher, posting their work to class, studying the work posted by their classmates, and voting for the best work of their classmates. By delivering open-ended questions of the questionnaire, the students reveal that there should be a function for students to send a message, file, or link to their individual classmates. The result of the research questionnaire is shown as follows:

Technical aspects	x	SD	Features	x	SD	Level
Log in and log out quickly	4.36	0.65	Like using Edmodo	4.46	0.63	Strongly agree
Register easily	4.28	0.72	Enjoy using Edmodo	4.35	0.70	
Easy steps of doing quizzes	4.28	0.76	Pleased with doing quizzes	4.35	0.74	
Load and page quickly	4.31	0.68	Like submitting work and getting feedback	4.30	0.66	
Never fail	4.42	0.66	Like reviewing lessons posted by the teacher	4.33	0.67	
Attach a file easily	4.36	0.65	Pleased with posting their work to class	4.33	0.68	
Submit/post easily	4.38	0.71	Pleased with studying their classmates' work	4.23	0.69	
Post messages/files quickly	4.30	0.67	Enjoy voting	4.33	0.70	
Vote easily	4.14	0.77	Happy with consulting the teacher personally	4.20	0.82	
Download quickly	4.16	0.64	Like having an online class via Edmodo	3.94	0.82	

Table 1. Opinions towards using Edmodo

Source: Kongchan, 2008:Online

2. For teachers

It is also important to note that Edmodo is a collaborative tool for teachers to control their virtual classroom. There are some advantages for the teacher:

1. Sophisticated teacher

Teacher can enhance and develop their skills in using technology. Edmodo's friendly features and interface are not overwhelming for non-digital-native teachers.

2. Innovative teacher

With Edmodo, teacher can be innovative by creating their own virtual classroom through its interface feature. Teachers will be skilfully challenged to be lifelong-learning teachers in terms of technology development.

BRINGING EDMODO INTO ELT

In a class where technology is used as a media to deliver the learning objectives, there is an obvious shift of teachers' roles. Implementing technology-based instruction promotes student-centred classroom in which teachers' roles as the only knowledge provider are decreasing (Erben at al., 2009:81). The learning autonomy grows better through technology-based instruction, which in this case is through Edmodo.

Preparation for Implementing Edmodo in ELT Classes

When ICT is involved into the process of English language teaching and learning, there are several important points which may determine the success of the learning. All parties (stakeholders, school leaders, teachers, students, and parents) must be involved and cannot overlook these following points.

1. Providing support

Most teachers' response when it comes to implementing technology-based instruction into their teaching process is related to their limited knowledge of digital literacy. In order to cater these needs, the school community can do the following activities: sharing responsibility to cross-teach the digital skills among academic staff and students and providing IT support for both teachers and students (Trinder et al., 2008:51). Peer mentoring also helps to reduce the anxiety in using technology in the classroom (Sivakumaran & Lux, 2011:159). Considering that Edmodo's layout and design are quite similar to Facebook which is popular and widely used in Indonesia, teachers and students will face no major difficulty in mastering Edmodo.

2. Setting up the courtesy policy of BYOD

Today's students are digital natives, meaning that they tend to constantly engage with their gadgets. As Edmodo needs to be accessed through these gadgets, teachers and students firstly need to design courtesy policy of BYOD (Bring Your Own Device). The basic idea is to make sure that students are engaged and stay focussed on their English learning and not to be distracted, instead, by other things that are not related to their learning needs. Distraction which can be constant due to the connectivity to the outside world can be overcome through policy making (Al-Okaily, 2013:6). Setting up clear policy or rules on the first meeting or the first day of school is crucial for the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Wong & Wong, 1998:141). The courtesy policy needs to cover time-management and inside as well as outside classroom control. Erben et al. (2009:83) state that students must be trained to work effectively in different types of learning environments which includes IT-integrated learning experience. To make the policy work, teachers and students need to rehearse it and consistently practise it throughout the academic year. Teachers and students also need to revisit the courtesy policy regularly and see whether some adjustments are needed to help the English teaching and learning work more smoothly. Integrating Edmodo will get easier as time goes by.

3. Clear instructions and expectations

As teachers will use Edmodo to mediate the English learning process, teachers need to have clear instructions and expectations of the activities that the students need to conduct. With clear instructions and expectations, students will practise their autonomy learning skill and be responsible to their own learning achievement. On this, Wong & Wong (1998:143) state that “the most successful classes are those in which the teacher has a clear idea of what is expected from the students and the students have a clear idea of what the teacher expects from them”.

Procedures in Integrating Edmodo

In order to be able to use Edmodo in the classroom, there are several steps that both teachers and students need to do first. Those steps are as follows:

1. Signing up as Edmodo users

The first thing that both teachers and students need to do is to sign up for free Edmodo account. Teachers and students choose the fitting option “I am a teacher” or “I am a student” respectively to fill in the form. This step will be followed by checking the confirmation step done through email. One thing that teachers need to keep in mind is that they have to register first as Edmodo users before asking the students to create their own accounts. This is related to the group code which will be explained below. When teachers have managed to register themselves, teachers then can guide the students throughout the process step-by-step to reduce confusion.

2. Creating groups

Once teachers complete the signing up process, they need to create groups. Groups are beneficial to distribute notes, assignments, or quizzes, as well as to provide a way to communicate and collaborate (Giacomantonio, 2013:Online). Separate group for each class, period, or even activity group can also be created by teachers. When teachers create a group, they will be given a unique code for that group. Students will need to use this code to create their Edmodo account and enter into that group.

3. Uploading materials and assigning activities

After creating the groups, teachers then can start using Edmodo. They can upload materials to Edmodo’s library which can be automatically accessed by the students. Teachers can also post other activities for the students to do. When teachers upload assignments for students to do, teachers can also set the due date or dateline

through digital notifications. Through the timestamps, teachers can directly see students' submission or who miss it. Once the due date passes, teachers can grade and students can see their grade automatically.

4. Making it as an English-only platform

As Edmodo here is used to boost students' English proficiency, teachers and students must come into an agreement to only use English on Edmodo. Thus, teachers post instructions and any materials in English only, and students are free to post or ask anything and make comments as long as they are in English (Mearns, 2012:Online).

5. Giving responsibility to check Edmodo daily

To maximise the English learning process, students need to be given the responsibility to check it daily (Mearns, 2012:Online). To gently push this point to be students' habit, teachers need to start posting information or English related materials on to the groups. As Edmodo has been widely used worldwide, Edmodo provides its application to be installed in other gadgets. Thus, teachers and students can also install Edmodo application into their smartphones and tablets. This step makes Edmodo more accessible to all parties anytime, anywhere.

6. Involving parents

One of the best features of Edmodo is that it invites parents' involvement. Education does not rely on the hands of teachers and students, but also the parents. Parents can also sign up through "I am a parent" option. Parents can see their children learning process which include all the activities, assignments, and also achievements. Parents' involvement means a lot to students' successful learning objectives.

7. Making connections with other teachers

Edmodo enables teachers to connect with other like-minded teachers around the world. Teachers can share experience and resources, give advice, ask questions, as well as exchange ideas through Edmodo's Community button (Giacomantonio, 2013:Online). This facility promotes the chance for teachers to be lifelong learners as well.

CONCLUSION

Making use of Edmodo as a powerful learning tool in ELT can bridge the gap between the teachers' limited in-class meetings and the students need to have English proficiency in Indonesian educational context. The accessible Edmodo and its easy-to-use features can facilitate English learning activities outside the classroom to support in-

class learning experience. Once teachers and students get the hang of it, the limited face-to-face English teaching hours in Indonesia will no longer be a major obstacle.

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