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Exploring the use of MIM in online flipped BIPA classrooms in South Korea: a pragmatic review

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a b s t r a c t

This study is aimed to examine to what extent a mobile instant messenger (MIM) is effective in online flipped BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) classrooms in enhancing learners' pragmatic competence on complementing and suggesting acts. The participants of the research are students in an undergraduate introductory course on Indonesian language in South Korea. In the online flipped learning approach, learners are exposed to the lecture contents prior to the sessions and the MIM is used for group discussion during the online sessions. Questionnaire distribution and participatory observation are used as techniques to collect the data. The results reveal that using the MIM helps them understand the course concepts better and helps them involved in an interactive and collaborative learning environment. Learners perceive that the MIM is useful in the learning process. In their small groups, learners perform appropriate speech acts, i.e., complementing and suggesting, to their peers.

Introduction

Flipped (or inverted) learning is a form of blended learning in which the traditional instructional cycle is inverted so that lecture contents are moved outside the classroom allowing for more practice and interactions inside the classroom (Strayer, 2012). In this digital time, it has become a model well accepted in the educational technology as it benefits learners in many ways.

The flipped learning (FL) method is a relatively new model of instruction that has the potential to alter the traditional way of delivering the learning material to achieve more effective learning outcomes. This approach is said to transcend physical constraints such as time and space and allows learners to study the lesson at any time, any place and at any speed. Since classroom time is not used to transmit knowledge to learners by means of lectures, the teacher is able to engage with learners by means of other learning activities such as discussion, problem solving, hands-on activities, and guidance. In-class activities in a flipped learning design include group discussion and individual activities (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). These one-on-one and small-group discussions get learners to a deeper level of comprehension and understanding. Today, the concept of the flipped classroom has been implemented in many different disciplines such as foreign language learning, math, social sciences, humanities, etc. in schools and universities around the world (Hao, 2016). With the amount of screening time learners have these days, flipped learning fits the need very well.

Flipped learning has many advantages over traditional learning. Stone (2012) lists some advantages of flipped learning in higher education. First, it develops the life-long learners, in which learners learn the content before attending the class helps them to develop and apply different learning strategies. Learners watch videos in their own pace and continuously self-assess their knowledge. Second, there is an increased engagement in the learning material. In the traditional learning environment, the class time is devoted to the delivery of learning material, which limits the time for active interaction of learners with the learning content. In the flipped learning environment, learners are encouraged to be active participants in the learning process by interacting with the learning material, asking questions, and receiving personalized and instant feedback. Third, there is an enhanced interaction between learners and peers and/or teacher. Flipped learning activities can remove barriers between them, which in turn enhances the interaction. The teacher becomes a facilitator of the learning process rather than being dominant all the time.

Among those studies on the flipped learning, Koh's (2018) and Lee & Wallace' (2017) studies are done in the South Korean contexts. Those studies show that learners enjoy the learning environment and that learners in the flipped class perform better and show higher achievement than those in traditional classes do. Koh's study on the use of application books in a flipped learning setting shows that learners are able to (1) listen to the lectures presented in the device multiple times, (2) learn anywhere regardless specific places for learning, i.e. classroom, (3) manage their time effectively, (4) submit results of tasks from anywhere anytime, and (5) practice on their own using the menus in the application books.

In addition to using multimedia such as application books and video in a flipped learning classroom, making use of a mobile instant messenger is worth to consider. The mobile instant messaging (MIM) gains its popularity in higher education as teachers integrate the tools in their class (de Bakker, Sloep, & Jochems, 2007; Lauricella & Kay, 2013). Considerable studies are also done on the use of these tools in language learning (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009; Levy & Kennedy, 2005; Zhang, Song, & Burston, 2011), ICT (So, 2016), and classroom management and discussion (Hou & Wu, 2011; Jeong, 2007). MIM is preferably used as it is free to be downloaded and used across platforms, including Android, iPhone, Windows Phone as well as personal computers (Mac or Windows), that users can seamlessly synchronize chats onto the most convenient device. Besides, users can share a variety of media, such as text, emoticons, photos, videos, documents and location with an individual or a group.

They can also use the built-in camera on their smartphones to capture real-time events and share immediately with others. Group chats are also made easy (Yang & Hew, 2017). In a foreign language classroom, the use of MIM helps learners learn foreign languages in all skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking, encompassing various linguistic topics such as vocabulary, grammar and syntax; all of which support their communicative competence.

As one of the components of communicative competence, pragmatic competence is essential for foreign language learners. It is the ability to use linguistic resources to convey and interpret meanings in real situations, including those where they encounter problems due to gaps in their knowledge (Littlewood, 2011). Bardovi-Harlig (2013) describes pragmatic competence as the study of "how to say what to whom when." With these descriptions, pragmatic competence is performed in both oral and written, using any appropriate speech acts.

One of the speech acts that can possibly occur in group discussion is complimenting acts, which has been a fruitful research area for many years. Compliments are appreciative expressions which accredit someone for something valued positively by the speaker, and even the whole speech community (Holmes, 1986). In the group discussions, complimenting act may be performed as a one-way or two-way pattern. By one-way pattern means when a speaker compliments others, while a two-way pattern means the act is done when the speaker compliments each other.

The reference to the complimenting acts in Indonesia comes from the work of Ekawati (2020). In Indonesian, this speech act can either be explicitly or unexplicitly delivered to compliment people, conditions, and activity by using performative verbs. It may appear in an intimate context that makes it possible for the speaker to perform the act. Speakers use positive adjectives such as *pintar* (clever, smart), *bagus* (good, well), *hebat* (incredible, awesome), and in some cases combine them with qualifying word such as *sangat* or *sekali* (very). They deliver their utterance directly to the listeners. In the explicit complimenting act, the mode is exclamative and the words convey their literal meaning. In a direct unexplicit complimenting act, speakers do not use performative verbs. Even though they might use words showing compliment, speakers usually comment on a more general situation instead of directing their utterance to the other participant in a conversational setting. Unlike in the explicit complimenting act in which the mode is more exclamative, in the unexplicit complimenting act the mode is more declarative. Below is the example of an indirect unexplicit complimenting act.

Saya bahagia sekali karena dalam dua bulan ini ada tiga tulisan mahasiswi kelas ini di *Kompas Kampus*[1]. Selamat ya, Fadhila, Anissa, dan Inggar. Bagus sekali.

[I am very happy to learn that in the last two months there are three articles written by students from this class that are published in *Kompas Kampus*. Congratulation, Fadhila, Anissa, and Inggar. That's awesome.]

(Ekawati, 2020: 54)

In the example, the complimenting act is shown by the expression *saya bahagia sekali,* which indirectly shows that the students did something good and positive and this made the teacher happy. This indirect unexplicit compliment is accompanied by her direct unexplicit compliment *bagus sekali* at the end of the utterance.

Another speech act that might emerge in the small group discussion is suggesting, both asking and giving suggestion. Suggesting is the act of mentioning an idea, possible plan or action for other people to consider (Rahardi, 2005). It is included in the imperative speech act, expecting the other party to do the action and the combination of words that might be used are *bagaimana kalau* (how about) and *mengapa tidak* (why don't).

The above-mentioned speech acts might also occur in an online setting. In an online flipped learning approach, learners have access to the learning materials prior to the learning session, which is

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[1] *Kompas Kampus* is a column in *Kompas*, a leading daily newspaper in Indonesia, for student writers.

delivered online. During the learning process, the use of an instant messenger application is preferred since, unlike real-time video conferencing which allows teachers in one group at a time, the MIM allows teachers to join all small groups at the same time. By integrating such tools, learners learn either within their own groups or with other learners in the whole classroom setting and interact with each other and with teachers. Within those small groups, they can perform their communicative competence, just like in their offline class. They express their opinions, give responses to others' thoughts, compliment, and ask and give suggestions.

Research on the implementation of flipped learning with various areas of interest were done considerably, however integrating the flipped learning practice with a messaging application focusing on learners' communicative competence of complimenting and suggesting in Indonesian language are not many to be found. To fill the gap, the research is aimed to investigate the use of *KakaoTalk* as a mobile instant messaging application in an online flipped learning approach to effectively enhance learners' communicative competence in an introductory course on Indonesian language.

The research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

(1) to what extent integrating the use of mobile instant messenger in an online flipped classroom helps the learning process,
(2) how learners perceive the use of the application in group works in terms of student-student and student-teacher communication, and
(3) how are complimenting and suggesting acts are portrayed in small group discussions.

Method

The present study was carried out in Seoul, South Korea, where most smartphones users, regardless of gender and age, use *KakaoTalk*. *KakaoTalk*, launched in 2010 as mobile instant messenger (MIM), has the strongest position in the mobile industry in the country. It has become a key stone for the mobile industry growth in Korea by providing mobile platform ecosystem. Today *KakaoTalk* becomes the leading application in the mobile industry and is inseparable from the lives of Korean users (Han and Cho, 2015).

This study involves 28 undergraduate learners. As many as 14 learners with ten (71%) females and four (28.6%) males; aged 20 to more than 25 years old join the online class and their 14 counterparts are in the offline class. The online class serves as the experimental group with twelve learners (85.7%) majoring Malay-Indonesian language and two (14.3%) taking the language as their second major. Most of them are at the elementary level, with the current level of Indonesian of A1: 6 (42.9%), A2: 5 (35.7%), B1: 1 (7.1%), B2: 1 (7.1%), and C2: 1 (7.1%). Only one of them, whose level of Indonesian is C1, is familiar with the flipped learning method and joined another flipped class prior to this study. The rest (97.05%) have no experience in such a learning environment. The control group is the offline class with 10 (71%) learners taking Malay-Indonesian language as their first major and the rest taking it as their second major. Similar to those in the online class, the participants in the control group are also at their elementary level of Indonesian with the following distributions: A1: 7 (50%), A2: 5 (35.7%), B1: 1 (7.1%), and B2: 1 (7.1%). None of them is acquainted with the flipped learning method.

The online flipped learning class is delivered real time through Webex video conferencing app. In addition to the textbook, an application book containing the lesson materials is installed on learners' and teachers' device prior to the lecture time. All the lessons and exercises are available in the app book, integrating all four language skills, i.e., reading, listening, writing and speaking.

The instant messaging application, i.e., *KakaoTalk*, is used when the learners work in their small groups. Small grouping with three-to-four learners is chosen as the design of the classroom since it is believed that small groups of learners provoke greater involvement and participation than larger groups (Harmer, 2015). They are small enough for real interpersonal interaction, yet not so small that members

are over-reliant upon every person. Putting learners into groups increases the amount of talking for individual learners. Unlike pair work, personal relationships are usually less problematic and there is a greater chance of different opinion and varied contribution than in pair works. It encourages broader skills of cooperation and negotiation and yet is more private than work in front of the whole class.

A questionnaire with open and closed questions is advised to the participants (see Appendix). It is expected to get the data on the learners' view on the use of mobile instant messenger (i.e., *KakaoTalk*) in the learning process. At the end of the session, there is a post test for both classes. A participatory observation is also done where the teachers have the chance to follow the discussion in the small groups in the first hand. The discussions in the online class are done in the *KakaoTalk* and those in offline class are done in person and recorded using a voice recorder. Data from the questionnaire are then counted by percentage and described; and data from the observation are sorted out and analyzed.

Result and Discussions

This part of the paper presents the results in the following orders: the score of the post test for both control group and experimental group, the participants' perception on the use of *KakaoTalk* during the learning process, and how complimenting and suggesting act are performed in the group discussions.

Does the MIM Help the Learning Process?

The score of the post test for both control group and experimental group is shown in the following figure. The flipped learning approach was used in the online class, while the offline class was delivered conventionally by only using the textbook. There were no videos for learners in the offline class that are accessible prior the learning process.
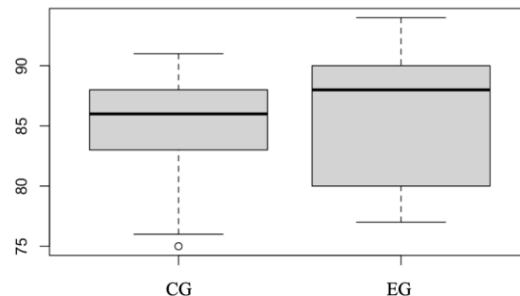

Figure 1. Post Test Score of Control Group (CG) and Experimental Group (EG)

With the same number of participants (n=14) for both control group and experimental group, the interquartile for experimental (online) group is larger than those of control (offline) group with higher mode, mean and median. The control group (CG) has one outlier with the score of 75, while the experimental group (EG) had none. The t value of the post test score from CG and EG is 0.77306, with the degree of freedom (df) of 25.573 and p-value of 0.4466. The t value shows that the score for the EG is higher than that of the CG. The highest score for the post test in the online class is 94, which is higher than the offline class with the maximum score of 91.

Learners' Perception on the Use of MIM in the Learning Process

The use of multiple platforms is administered in the experimental (online) group therefore the questionnaire, which is written in English, is distributed to the EG group only. The result of the questionnaire reveals that most of the participants (78.9%) in the online class think MIM useful in the learning process and the rest 21.4% perceive it as not significantly helpful. All participants welcome

the idea of collaborative learning and positively engage in small group discussions with 85.7% acknowledging that the small grouping helps them a lot and prefer having their teachers be in their groups. Working in small groups help them to be more focused on specific items is pointed out by 87.7%, mentioning that the brainstorming and sharing the idea is very useful. Using multiple platforms in the online learning sessions helps them understand new grammatical items (50%), vocabulary (28.6%), and difficult concepts (21.4%) better. All of them say it helps them feel at ease, comfortable, and less stressed during the lecture time.

As many as 78.9% say that having the teachers in their group makes the teachers spent more time for every learner and makes it possible for them to ask something they do not understand and help their language skills improved and their grammatical error corrected instantly. Two learners (14.2%) say that getting feedback from the teachers is very useful and five learners (35.7%) emphasizes the feedback timing. The words *immediate, directly, immediately, quickly*, and *anytime* in the following responses indicate that the urgency of feedback in terms of time is a crucial issue. All pseudo-names in this paper are presented in initials.

(1) I can get *immediate* feedback and answer from the professor. (CHS)

(2) We can communicate with them [teachers] *directly*. (SID)

(3) We could get answer *immediately* if we have a question. (SHK)

(4) I can ask question *quickly* and takes correction. (HJB)

(5) I can ask for help *anytime*. (JSY)

Complimenting and suggesting acts in small groups' discussion

The participatory observation to the EG group reveals that learners work collaboratively and learn from each other. The following samples from the group discussions show their complimenting acts. Excerpts (6) shows one learner compliments her peer in a direct unexplicit way. She directs her utterance to her peer, implying he can do the assignment well.

(6)

CHS   : Maaf. Saya baru belajar di tahun ini.
                [Sorry. I just started this year.]

SJ   : Tidak apa-apa. Kamu bisa!
                [It's okay. You're doing well.]

Excerpt (7) below shows a two-way pattern where both learners are complimenting each other. SID gives compliment to her group members by using *semua* that means all, while SJA replies with *kamu* to refer to SID.

(7)

SID   : Semua sudah bekerja keras mengerjakan tugas ini. Sampai ketemu lagi setelah makan siang, ya.
                [Everyone did a great job for this assignment. See you after lunch.]

SJA   : Kamu juga (sudah bekerja keras).
                [You did too]

Collaborative discussions are also shown in the following excerpt where learners ask and offer a suggestion to their peers. Excerpt (8) shows a learner asks for a suggestion and her peer responds by giving one.

(8)

CSH   : Apakah boleh kita tulis "Punya banyak stasiun kereta bawah tanah"?
                [Is it okay to say, "It has a lot of subway stations"?]

JY   : Menurut saya sebaiknya tulis saja transportasinya nyaman.
                [I think you'd better write that the transportation is convenient.]

HJB   : Bagaimana kalau kita sebutkan juga sarana transportasi lain seperti bus dan taksi?

[How about mentioning other transportation modes such as bus and taxi?]

In excerpt (8), JY gives suggestion using *sebaiknya* while HJB prefer *bagaimana kalau*. Both suggesting acts are appear in the form of interrogative.

Excerpt (9) shows the speaker gives a suggestion and his peer responds with an acceptance.

(9)

GES   : Bagaimana kalau kita masukkan juga informasi bahwa ada taman dengan aneka bunga yang mekar sesuai musim?

[How about adding some information that there is a garden with various flowers depending on the seasons?

HJB   : Oke!

[Okay!]

In this research, the suggesting speech act occurs in every discussion in every group and the preferred response is the acceptance which occurs more frequently than that of refusal.

It is also found that the student-student and student-teacher interaction patterns appear in some forms, as found in Ur (1999), i.e., group work, individual work, collaboration, and full-class interaction. In the small groups, students are expected to work on one problem together by discussing and finding the best answer and result. This type of work necessitates the interaction in which the discussing, suggesting and complimenting occur. There are times for learners to work individually and for them to collaboratively discuss about the work within their small groups. At the beginning and at the end of the sessions, teachers stimulate students' participation in a larger group interaction involving the whole class members.

Conclusions

The flipped learning works well with the online class and integrating MIM in an online discussion promotes active collaborations and interactions. The interaction occurs between learners and their peers and between learners and the teachers. The first research question is answered by the fact that the post test score for the online class (the experimental group) higher than that of the offline class. The learners' perception is shown by the fact that the idea of integrating the MIM into the learning process is welcome by most learners, which, in turns enhances the learning experience to occurs in an amicable and less-stressed atmosphere since everybody in the class is familiar with the MIM and use it on the daily basis. On the occurrence of the complimenting and suggesting acts in small groups, it is shown that the online discussion using the MIM facilitates learners to produce those targeted speech acts.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix
Questionnaire: Opinion survey on using multiple platforms

Dear all,
This is a small survey about the teaching-learning process in my class, about the use of multiple online platforms (*webex, kakaotalk, iTunesU*), in the Indonesian as a foreign language classroom. It is not a test, simply an opinion survey and it is aimed to find out some issues on which I may improve the quality of the process. This survey is anonymous, and your answers to the following questions are highly appreciated. Thank you.

1. You are
   o Male.
   o Female.

2. How old are you?
   o 20 yo
   o 21 yo
   o 22 yo
   o 23 yo
   o 24 yo
   o 25 yo
   o more than 25 yo

3. Is your first major Malay-Indonesian language?
   o Yes.
   o No.

4. What is your current level of Indonesian?
   o Breakthrough (Beginner) – A1
   o Waystage (Elementary) – A2
   o Threshold (Intermediate) – B1
   o Vantage (Upper Intermediate) – B2
   o Effective operational proficiency (Advanced) – C1
   o Mastery (Proficient) – C2

5. For how long have you been studying Indonesian? (Please write in year or month.) _____

6. To what extent that you think it's helpful to use multiple platforms in an online classroom?
   o A lot.
   o Not much.
   o Not useful at all.

7. If you would elaborate your answer to question no. 6, which of the following fits you more? You may tick more than one option.
   o It helps me to understand new grammar items better.
   o It helps me to understand new vocabulary items better.
   o It helps me to understand difficult concepts better.
   o It helps me to feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed.
   o It is not helpful at all.

8. Does the small grouping help you in the learning process?
   o Yes, it helps me a lot.
   o Not much.
   o It does not help me.

9. Do you prefer having the professors in your small group?
   o Yes.
   o No.

10. If your answer for question no. 9 is Yes, please elaborate the reason. _____