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Pilot implementation of Moodle for pre-service teachers at the English Department major

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ABSTRACT

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been a focus in language teacher education as technology-savvy language teachers are in demand. However, initiating CALL implementation might be tricky. In this paper, the author is sharing her experience in starting Moodle as a Course Management System (CMS) at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Muria Kudus. Moodle is a free online CMS platform whose features can serve language learning well; it also can facilitate collaborative learning and problem-based learning. This Moodle project started with research on students' device ownership and technology mastery, faculty member's perception of technology, and technology resources at the university. The project then continued with a pilot program, that was putting three courses on Moodle for one semester. This pilot program was considered successful; thus, the Moodle initiation was considered possible to implement. Later, a workshop and some assistance sessions for the faculty members were conducted to familiarize them with Moodle. At the same time, technical preparation took place; this included installing Moodle, customizing it to the English Department's needs, and creating a student database.

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1. Introduction

Three things might come into our discourse when we talk about Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) technologies. The first one is the importance of stakeholders 'familiarity with the technologies implemented in CALL, as suggested by Chenoweth & Murday (2003). Chenoweth& Murday found that students' expectations will adjust as the campus community becomes familiar with the online language offering. They found that the gap between students.

'Expectation and technology environment's expectation cause students' frustration. Vogel et all (2006) suggest students 'familiarity with technologies and their preferences over certain technologies are influenced by gender. Students 'familiarity with technology is

addressed as their frequency of interacting with CALL technologies and their skills as users of technology.

The second one is that tools/ infrastructures play an important role in CALL technology implementation as suggested by Blin (2004). Blin studied the relationship between CALL and the development of learner autonomy from the point of view of cultural-historical theory. Blin acknowledges the importance of tools: libraries, computers, books, etc. in a language learning system.

The third one is that CALL technologies provide benefits for language learning. Buston (2005) claims that video dubbing project brings a range of pedagogical benefits as they can be taken at all linguistics levels, are not too technology-demanding, and can be conducted both in the classroom or computer lab. Mayaro (2009) evaluated distance language learning instruction. He describes that companion CD-ROM via Moodle, forum discussion and journal postings work well in distance learning instruction. Sotillo (2005) suggests that online chat can be used to work on error correction, and indirect corrective feedback focusing on grammatical and lexical errors. He found evidence of successful learner uptake in online chat sessions.

Now, let's take a look at Moodle. Course Management System (CMS) is a dimension of CALL. One of the CMS platforms is Moodle. There are two other terms apart from CMS that are usually used to define Moodle: Learning Management System (LMS) and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). And, there are two concepts around Moodle: open-source and internet-based courses. More technically speaking, Moodle consists of two main parts: 'resources' and 'activities'. It enables teachers to upload video and audio files or links, engage students in a discussion forum, guide real-time discussion (chat), create quizzes, and create survey questions, create glossaries, create assignments, assign students to collaborative group work.

2. Research Methodology

Moodle is claimed to be accommodating toward Collaborative Learning and Problem-Based Learning. Tiantong and Teemuangsai (2013) did an experiment examining collaborative learning using the student team achievement division technique via Moodle. They found that the student team achievement division technique can be applied through Moodle to enhance learning achievement successfully. Tosun and Taskesenligil (2011) found that the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method using Moodle has positive effects on students; a high quality and interactive setting that was provided throughout the term on Moodle increased encouragement for participation.

Then, Is Moodle new in Indonesia? Not really. Many educational institutions use Moodle as their CMS. In fact, Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest number of registered Moodle sites; there are 1803 sites registered on Moodle.org. Can Moodle be successfully implemented in Indonesia? It seems so. A study by Linawati, Sukadarmika, and Sasmita (2012) finds satisfying outcomes of Moodle implementation at Udayana Univeristy.

Where to start?

From this point, I will call the Moodle implementation initiative a Moodle project. So, if we want to start a Moodle project, where to start? I believe that the best way to start is by finding information regarding CALL at the English Education Study Program that involves the students, the faculty members, and the University management. Starting the program with

an accurate set of information about the current situation will save us a great deal of resources: time, money, and human resources. This stage of finding information can be considered as situation analysis or current state evaluation.

Specifically, what information to find in this stage? It is to find information about whether or not the students have access to devices, their frequency of using CALL technologies, their perceived technology mastery, the faculty members' opinion on technology in general and implementing CALL in specific, and the existing resources in the University.

3. Findings

In our particular Moodle project, a survey of students and interviews with faculty members and the university management were conducted in January- February 2012. The results of the survey show that 83% of the students own laptops, 57% own PC/desktops, 39% own smartphone, and only 1 % own I pad/tablets. More than half of the students have access to the internet at home, and most of those who do not have internet access at home can access it somewhere else. In other words, most of the students have access to at least one device, most of them have internet access, and they frequently use CALL technologies. The survey also shows that the students have high perceived mastery; on average, they responded 'very well 'when they were asked how well they can operate some CALL technologies.

From those findings, it can be concluded that students in the department are ready for CALL implementation. In other words, we can predict that there will be a minimum gap between the students' expectations. The school technology expectation when Callis is embedded in the curriculum, can minimize the students 'frustration as also suggested by Chenoweth & Murday (2003). The result also shows that search engines, Facebook, MP3 players, word processors, mobile devices, online chat, YouTube, email, computer/ online games, audio recording applications/devices, and video recording applications/devices were the technologies whose frequency means are above 2.40, which the highest score is 4.00. This suggests that the students are familiar with those technologies; using them will not be overwhelming for the students. Thus, it allows us to predict that using those technologies in the learning activities in the department is possible. It also allows us to assume that minimal to no training or workshop on using those technologies is needed. The results regarding students' perceived mastery and technology frequency use suggest that students master and are familiar with the basic features of Moodle. Browsers, audio applications, video applications, YouTube, and other CALL technologies which are claimed to be used frequently by the students, are the basic features of the platform.

4. Discussion

The interview results also strengthen the conclusion that CALLand Moodle implementation is visible in the department. The interview results show that all faculty members felt technology could help students in their studies. This is in line with what research found that teachers generally approve of embedding technology in their classroom practices (Albarini 2006; Bordbar 201 O; Chai & Teo 2009; Hodge & Anderson 2007; Kim 2002; Valcke 2007). Younger faculty members are perceived to have more interest in implementing CALL, and motivating them is more visible than motivating senior faculty members. It is also indicated that senior faculty members are perceived to have physical limitations that affect their willingness to be involved with technology implementation. One example mentioned was

that it is more challenging for them to read on a computer screen compared to reading on paper. The interview data further suggests that faculty members felt technology should not be too overwhelming for the students. This means despite their assumption that technology is beneficial for students' learning, they know that technology can also cause distractions.

The result of the interview with the University management indicates that there are sufficient infrastructures in the university to support CALL implementation. The technology support unit is one of the supports. Its existence ensures the availability and sustainability of maintenance and service regarding technology. Moreover, the Internet bandwidth, the servers, the website and e-learning, and the computer laboratories are some of the existing infrastructures which are great potential to support CALL. The result also shows that the University management plans to improve and develop the existing infrastructure.

The pilot project

After collecting the information, a pilot project should be conducted before the real Moodle project. This pilot project will give practical information on what could be the challenge. In our particular Moodle project, a pilot project was conducted involving three courses in the odd semester of 2022-2023. The three courses were Reading III, Listening III, and Writing III. This pilot program was considered successful as there were no significant technical obstacles. Thus, the Moodle project was considered possible to implement at the English Education Study Program in the even semester 2022-2023. The results of the pilot project as well as the Moodle project blueprint were informed to the faculty members in meetings and other informal occasions.

The Moodle project

I would suggest two kinds of workshops for the teachers before starting a Moodle project: technical workshops and pedagogical workshops. The technical workshops prepare the teachers to master the Moodle features, for example how to create a quiz assignment on Moodle; while the pedagogical workshops give the teachers ideas of classroom activities using the features, for example using a glossary for group competition for learning vocabulary. I would also suggest regular round table discussions to share teachers' experiences using Moodle throughout the semester.

Unfortunately, in our particular Moodle project, we could only afford one workshop, due to time constraints. The workshop was conducted to introduce Moodle to the faculty members before the semester started. Most of the faculty members attended the workshop which can be assumed as a sign of their enthusiasm, even though only five faculty members, used Moodle for the course they taught that semester. The workshop provided information about what Moodle is, why Moodle was chosen as the CMS, and where to start in working with Moodle. The workshop also gave technical information about Moodle features, how to upload resources and how to create activities. They were also given usernames and passwords. A manual handout containing screenshot pictures of step-by-step procedures was provided in the workshop.

Later, assistance and support were offered in informal individual consultation sessions, text messages, Facebook groups and Facebook messages. Easy access to assistance and support seemed to be important to keep the enthusiasm among the faculty members. Individual sessions seemed to work better as they could ask questions in a 'less public' setting.

Technical details are as important as other details. Without a solid and strategic plan, it can be messy and time-consuming. Here are the technical details: picking the credible web hosting, customizing the Moodle skin, and Moodle installation, creating a student database, creating the courses, and customizing the course setting. To me, a credible web hosting must have online customer service officers that can be reached 24 hours. Especially for a novice Moodle administrator like myself, assistance from the officers while working with the (-panel is needed. We can also seek technical support and problem solutions from the Moodle forum and community at https://moodle. Org/support/.

5. Conclusion

Last but not least, to end this paper, I would like to give one tip. Keeping everyone updated is important to make any mission successful. I would suggest using the Facebook group to spread information to the teachers involved in your Moodle project. I created one for the Moodle project, and I found it to be effective and efficient as all the faculty members use Facebook and frequently check their accounts. Also, the Facebook group enables us to keep track of who has seen the posting and who has not, and this is very helpful to make sure that everyone is well-informed.

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