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The Strengths and Pitfalls of Google Classroom Application to Gen-Z Students' Learning Hybridity

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Abstract. Inarguably, learning and teaching activities should go hand in hand with the development of socio-cultural changes of the students. In the current circumstance, learning should not be any more carried out through a mere physical activities in classrooms, digital technology that has been occupying the Gen-Z students' lives is highly suggested to be utilized as part of the teaching activities. This descriptive study seeks to address the strengths and pitfalls of Google Classroom application to reading and writing classes that the Gen-Z students encounter in the IAIN Purwokerto context. The purposive sample of this study is the second year students of *Tadris Bahasa Inggris* major who take reading and writing classes. The data, which are generated through questionnaire and interview methods of collection, are presented in a descriptive report showing the students' perception on the hybrid learning activities imposed to them.

Keyword: *Learning Hybridity, Google Classroom, Gen-Z*

Abstrak. Tidak dipungkiri lagi, aktivitas belajar dan pembelajaran harus sejalan dengan perkembangan sosial dan budaya siswa. Dalam konteks perkembangan saat ini, pembelajaran seharusnya tidak lagi hanya dilakukan dalam aktivitas di ruang-ruang kelas, penggunaan teknologi digital yang telah menyibukan kehidupan siswa Gen-Z sangat disarankan untuk menjadi bagian dari aktivitas pembelajaran. Penelitian deskriptif ini bertujuan untuk menyajikan keunggulan dan kekurangan penggunaan Google Classroom yang dihadapi oleh para mahasiswa kelas *reading* dan *writing* di IAIN Purwokerto. Sampel purposif penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester tiga program studi *Tadris Bahasa Inggris* pada kelas *reading* dan *writing*. Data yang diperoleh melalui metode questionnaire dan wawancara disajikan dalam bentuk laporan deskriptif dengan menunjukkan persepsi mahasiswa terhadap aktivitas *hybrid learning* yang diterapkan di kelas mereka.

Kata kunci. *Hybrid learning, Google Classroom, Gen-Z*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's students live fairly different from students of - say - ten to twenty years ago, the years when their teachers might be pursuing thier college degrees. The sophistication of digital technology has been surrounding them since these digital natives were born, their daily activities starting from waking up to going to bed are accompanied and assissted by digital technology, many of their needs such as money transfer, grocery shopping, learning assistance, socializing, even dating are fulfilled more efficiently, acurately, and quickly by the digital devices of their hand-reaching distance, as easy as tapping their finger tips on them (Santosa, 2017; Striprom, Rungswang, Sukwitthayakul, & Chansri, 2019).

On one hand, the sophistication provided by the digital technology enables this group of generation do multiple tasks at the same time, one can order foods, pay bills, transfer money, and listen to music while not moving his body from the comfortable seat writing his academic paper, a condition that was not possible to be done some ten years ago. On the other hand, this sophistication leads them to be seemingly dependent on thier electronic devices. In other words, the joy of getting infinite information and satisfying services without pausing their book-reading, paper-writing, movie-watcing, video game-playing, or else get them attaced to their digital technology devices like smartphones and tablets. One would be very idle when waiting in a que and his smarthone is not in his hand.

This phenomenon has been analysed by many experts, numerous theories regard this generation to some nicknames, Dudeney and Hockly called this generation as digital native, which mean a generation that was born while the digital technology was there in assissting human life, meanwhile, their parents are digital immigrants since they were born without the existance of the technology and that they have to learn, adjust,

and catch up with the development (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). Other theory regard them as Millennials, which mean people born in mid 1980s to early 2000s, they are easily adaptable to new technologies widening their knowledge and networks, that is why millennials tend to jump from one job to another (Harmanto, 2012; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Schooley, 2005) Last but definitely not least, “GenZ” is coined to refer to those born in 2000 to present time, which mean generation living with information technology, internet, social media, and so forth, they do not know how to live without them (Santosa, 2017).

In defining the term GenZ, the historical division of the last 70 years generation by Lancaster and Stillman is worth investigating, as stating that the generation born between 1946-1964 are regarded as “The Baby Boomer”, the name was coined to refer the large number of babies born in that span of time. “Generation X” is entitled to those born between 1965-1980 which is characterized by hard-working, independent, but sceptical. The next generation, born between 1981-1999, are called “Generation Y” when people started to enjoy the advancement of information technology, however some are not comfortable and are even technophobic¹, many parents and teachers are of this group. Finally, “Generation Z” or “GenZ” is given to generation born in 2000-present, they are characterized to be comfortable and confident with information technology, they do not know how it is to live without it, today’s students are regarded to this generation (Lancaster & Stillman, 2003; Schooley, 2005).

To realize successful teaching session, teachers nowadays are ought to refresh their strategies and innovations² to fulfill the needs of Gen-Z students. The existing teaching techniques together with all its up-to-date modification should keep going hand in hand with the social and cultural changes of the students. Regarding to the current social development namely the utilization of digital technology in almost all spheres of students’ life, teachers are suggested to also use this technology in their teaching activities as addition to the physical classrooms. Google Classroom as a product of digital industry providing numerous benefits to facilitate virtual learning is suggested to be used in the teaching activities. Google Classroom is another application for education added by Google in 2014, is a free web-based learning platform, it helps simplify teaching activities from creating materials, distributing them, and grading the learning results, it could synchronize the G Suite for Education to all G Suite services, like Google Docs, Gmail, and Google Calendar. Google Classroom is paperless and time-saving, it eases the users in creating classes, distributing assignments, communication, and staying organized. (DiMaria, 2016; Iftakhar, 2016)

Applying Google Classroom means giving more space to the students’ learning autonomy outside the classroom, this is termed by many experts as “Hybrid Learning”. Hybrid learning is a new style of learning which enables students to learn online in addition to the traditional face-to-face classrooms, it is aimed to improve the educational experience for the students so they can benefit from the best features in-class teaching and online learning (Doering, 2006; Ramalho Correia & Mesquita, 2011). In short, this teaching-learning style fits the characteristics of GenZ, that is why the authors tempted to apply it to their students.

Students of *Tadris Bahasa Inggris* (TBI) major specifically those of the second year taking reading and writing classes are born around the year of 2000, they are regarded as the Gen-Z based on Lancaster and Stillman’s theory of generation division. As observed by the lecturers, they are so much attached to internet accessed on their smartphones, laptops, and tablets. Upon this observation, some lecturers tempted to utilize Google Classroom as addition to the physical sessions in the classroom. This study in particular is aimed to examine the strengths of this teaching technique as well as the pitfalls experienced by the students, also their perception to this technique.

The research questions of this paper are therefore formulated as follow:

1. How is the students’ perception to the use of Google Classroom?
 2. What are the strengths of Google Classroom felt by the students?
 3. What are the pitfalls of Google Classroom encountered by the students?
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2. METHOD

The data of this study are responses of the student-sample to the questionnaire and interview given to them (Merriam, 1998). They are collected through an e-questionnaire using Google Form consisting of fifteen questions which are implicitly grouped into two sub-topics, the first one is on students' overall perception on how important it is to catch up with the development of digital technology in regards to the learning activities, the second sub-topic is on the students' experience in using Google Classroom as part of their learning hybridity in reading and writing classes. Finally, one open question following the questionnaire is provided as written interview. The questionnaire was formulated by among other referring to some related studies (Al-Marouf & Al-Emran, 2018; ROSSYTAWATI, 2018). Second year students (3rd semester) amounting to 135 persons taking the courses of Critical Reading and Essay Writing are picked as the purposive sample of this study. This purposive sampling method is picked by the authors to gain more authentic and useful learning results in the classes they teach.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basically, students were aware that the best response to the fast development of information technology is by following it, by applying any sorts of "internet of things" in their lives. The majority of students (40%) replied strongly agree to question 1 on whether it is important to catch up with the current development of Information Technology (IT), some of them (33.3%) agreed and many of them (26.7%) were in the state of neutral. Nevertheless, none of them refused the statement, 0% disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Meanwhile, most students did not show as much positive responses as to the question 1 to question 2 on whether learning activities should be integrated with IT, only 13.3% strongly agreed with the notion, most students (60%) agreed, and big amount of them (26.7%) were neutral to the statement, none of them refused, 0% disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Google Classroom that had been utilized by the authors in carrying out their classes provoked pros as well as cons among the students. Many expressed their fondness as saying that they are more motivated to accomplish the tasks on time, but not a few of them told their negative attitudes toward it stating that the device and internet network caused a lot of technical problems in submitting their tasks, they wanted to return to the traditional way of submission.

3.1. Strengths of Google Classroom Application

3.1.1. Punctuality

Since Google Classroom is operated by computer and internet, punctuality is one of its features that cannot be negotiated. An unfortunate fact is, students tend to do assignments in the end of the time given, in other words, they tend to accomplish their task when the due date is around the corner. Then, they make excuses for their late submission with tons of reasons, the traditional way of task submission allows students to beg for excuses to their lecturers, but through Google Classroom, missing the deadline means missing the deadline, their submission will be marked as "missed". Considerable amount of student (50%) agreed that Google Classroom enabled them to accomplish their tasks more quickly, 22% of them strongly agreed and 21% of them did not say (neutral). In term of efficiency, the percentages of students feeling it was efficient (agreed with the statement) and those feeling neutral (could not state their feeling) are almost even, 36.8% and 35.1% respectively.

3.1.2. Flexibility

Google Classroom offers flexibility, it can be accessed in times and places of its users' favour. Compare it with the traditional means of lecture and task submission, where students are obliged to be present in a specific time and place. Isn't it the signature-feature liked by the GenZ? Doing their needs without moving their body to other places. As much as 49.1% of the students enjoyed Google Classroom's flexibility (agree), 24.6% are in neutral state. However, the percentage of those really enjoyed the application is only 21.1%, even more, some students (5.3%) did not enjoy the application. Other data revealed that most students (43.9%) agreed that Google Classroom meets their mobility need, 36.8 of them were neutral, 15.8% strongly agreed, and 3.5% disagreed. To sum up, many but not most students enjoyed the flexibility of Google Classroom, handful numbers of the students did not enjoy it, whatsoever.

3.1.3. Practicality

Apparently, several lecturers have already been applying Google Classrooms to their classes at IAIN Purwokerto. Through Google Classroom students are able to organize their tasks, like checking how many tasks are assigned to them in total, how many are done and how many are left, they are also reminded by the app if the due date of a certain task is approaching. Most student (49.1%) agreed that Google Classroom is helpful in organizing their tasks, some (24.6%) could not say their position (neutral), many (21.1%) strongly agreed, while little amount of them (5.3%) disagreed.

3.1.4. Learning Autonomy

Through Google Classroom, students are trained to have autonomous learning skill, it is to know their needs and how to fulfill them, they are free set up their time and place to download, search, read, and submit the tasks given to them. Most students (47.4%) felt that Google Classroom trained them to be autonomous, many could not state their feeling (38.6%), some (12.3%) really felt that, and small number (1.8%) did not feel it.

3.1.5. Vast range of resouces

Google Classroom could be connected to vast range of learning portals on internet. Numerous EFL/ESL websites providing materials, excercise, quizzes, and games could be connected to Google Classroom. If wished, lecturers/teachers could always connect those portals with their appropriate topic of learning to Google Classroom.

3.2. Pitfalls of Google Classroom Application

Even though most students expressed their positive attitude toward the use of Google Classroom in their classes, several pitfalls were also expressed in their responses. Only few students stated that they did not have trouble in using Google classroom, 21.6 % of them reported to not encounter any problems in applying Google Classroom. Meanwhile, most of the students (32.4 %) stated 'neutral' to the statement that they have trouble in using Google Classroom, several number of students 24.3 % agreed to the notion and also 21.6 % of the students very agreed to this notion. Thus, the results indicate most of the students owned up the pitfalls of using Google Classroom application.

Specifically, several students' difficulties in applying Google Classroom were revealed in this study. Mostly students were trapped in the technical problem of using their device in running the program. In particular, the Internet network caused them difficult to access the Google Classroom and even difficult to submit the assignment. Because of the Internet connection problem, the students conveyed that when they were attaching the assignment, they felt fearful of failing to submit the assignment. The other effect of network problem is the difficulty in downloading the materials that made the students taking much time to learn the materials. This findings does not support the notion that the students have high reliance of the use of Google Classroom due to the ease of use and usefulness (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018) and refuses the statement that students are satisfy with of Google Classroom's thus show it is effective as an active learning tools (Shaharane, Jamil, & Rodzi, 2016). The internet connection is a basic requirement of e-learning. This is in line with (Nagele, 2019) who suggests that as long as there is Internet connection and from any devices, Google Classroom gives several benefits such as it uses paperless and it can be accessed anywhere and everywhere. As the results, these issues are as obstacles in the students' learning process using Google Classroom and even the objectives of the learning cannot be achieved successfully due to the aforementioned problem.

Furthermore, some students had the difficulties in understanding the materials since the teachers only provided the materials and tasks without much instruction. The other reason is that the lecturer sometimes did not give the directions of doing assignment clearly, so that the students felt challenging to understand what they have to do in the assignment. In these situations, the students were strived for learning by themselves as autonomous learners, and yet some of them were still not organized to the situation. This aim is in line with (Nagele, 2019) who proposes Google Classroom is for creating active learning which are student-centered, collaborative, and meaningful. Similar with (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018) and

(Hemrungrote, Jakkaew, & Assawaboonmee, 2017) Google Classroom can enhance the students' self-directed learning (SDL) cognitive skills in chosen courses. Accordingly, the role of Google Classroom as an effective tool in active learning cannot be achieved as a result of the students' problems in self-directed learning.

4. CONCLUSION

GenZ or Generation Z, who are our students today are confident and comfortable with information technology utilization in their everyday life, teachers who are predominantly digital immigrant have to catch up with them. Google Classroom as one of the development of information technology could be used to deliver materials in addition to the traditional physical classrooms, training students' learning hybridity thus optimizing their learning autonomy. In its application at IAIN Purwokerto, most students enjoyed the assistance of Google Classroom, as training them punctuality and learning autonomy. However, it should be admitted that most students did not feel comfortable and confident with the use of this application, they encountered pitfalls such as technical problems in their devices, internet network, and lack of instruction.

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