THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BRING-YOUR-OWN-DEVICE (BYOD) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) PRACTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Technology is now interfering every single aspect of life, including education. Instead of separating technology from education, educational practitioners choose to embrace the use of technology in their teaching process. With the individual ownership of advanced gadgets, the researcher tries to find out the implementation of BYOD concept in English language teaching practice particularly related to the use of mobile phones and laptops in the classroom. A case study approach is applied in this research. The researcher employed purposive sampling technique. The participants were students in two distinguished classes in college level and one teacher who taught the aforementioned students. Online questionnaire was distributed to the students and interview was conducted to 5 students and the teacher. Later, the data will be analysed through coding, reducing, categorising, and verifying the data (Kleinman, 2004). The findings expected will be in terms of the description of activities which utilize BYOD concept, benefits of BYOD implementation in ELT practice, and barriers faced by students during the instructional process.

Keywords: BYOD, ELT practice, higher education, students’ perspectives

Introduction

In this digital era every aspect of life is inseparable from technology use and its progress, including in education sector. As the presence of technology is unavoidable, educational practitioners should embrace technology to explore its beneficial sides for education rather than being exposed to its negative washback.

Involving technology in instructional process is like the two faces of a coin. It presents beneficial washback while at the same time there are some challenges faced by both the teacher and students. Several research findings give a summary dealing with this kind of dilemma. The use of technology, BYOD concept in this case, could increase students’ engagement and motivation, and improve communicative competence yet problems related to internet connection were still found (Hung, 2016). Thus, students proposed that the teacher should have another lesson plan to cope with this kind of problem. Another research examined the implementation of BYOD in the assessment practice in which students agreed that electronic assessment was really helpful to enhance their learning and more than half of participants stated they preferred electronic assessment to the traditional one (Siani, 2017). Nevertheless, participants claimed that assessment which apply BYOD sometimes distracted students to other uses of their devices and that electronic assessment was fine for occasional use so that students would not find it hard when they had to be back to sit-in exam.
Referring to the previous researches described above, the researcher here tried to gain more information on the practice of BYOD in the English language teaching (ELT) context. This research is aimed at figuring out the answers of the following questions.

1. What BYOD-based activities does the teacher create?
2. How do students perceive the BYOD-based activities in English language learning process?

**Theoretical Framework**

Technology invention at the first place means to make life easier, including in education sector. Technology is categorised as high-technology and low-technology (Harmer, 2007). Low-technology refers to those aids like whiteboard, chalk, paper, pen, etc. and then ranges to high-technology which covers stuff like language laboratory, computer, power point, internet connection, etc. Technology progresses so rapidly that nowadays almost everyone is equipped with private gadget, especially hand phone and laptop.

Mobile phone is now possessing various functions starting from a communication tool, means of self-actualisation, to an advantageous gadget for supporting education process. Being a handy microcomputer device, it contains several features and applications which teacher can use in the classroom to support the instructional process (Thomas, O’Bannon, and Bolton, 2013). Just like mobile phone, laptop turns out to be another portable gadget that students often use. Pre-service teachers perceive that laptop has more instructional capacity to support instructional process than mobile phone (Sad and Goktas, 2013, cited in Thomas & O’Bannon, 2013).

As most individuals nowadays own a gadget, the concept of BYOD is then becoming possible to apply in language classroom. BYOD was originally coming from industry setting in which employees were allowed to access resources of the company for the sake of accomplishing their work utilizing their own devices (Hayes & Kotwica, 2013, cited in Hung, 2016). When this concept is decoded in educational area, there is no significant difference from the aforementioned definition. It might only get more specific that the concept of BYOD in education is related to the use individual gadgets, handphones and laptops mostly, to support the teaching and learning process. Unlike in workplace, there is not any obvious regulation or policy regarding the use of personal devices in academic or educational setting (Siani, 2017).

Imazeki (2014) has summed up in his research those advantages and drawbacks of the BYOD implementation in language classroom completed with suggestions for the teacher on how the teacher can act to optimize the use of private device, mobile phones specifically in this research, and minimize possibly negative effect of gadget use in the classroom. Therefore, the researcher puts different focus in this research which is likely gaining deeper information concerning the practice of BYOD in ELT practice.

**Methods**

A case study approach was implemented in this research in which the researcher investigated two classes in a university which applied BYOD concept. Information and data were collected by utilizing online questionnaires with framework based on Mobile Learning Survey by Thomas and O’Bannon (2013). Data from the questionnaire were then sought deeper by interviewing five students who were willing to be interviewed. The researcher also
interviewed the teacher to meet the data triangulation. The interview questions were semi-structured adapted from the previously mentioned questionnaire. Data were then processed through several stages proposed by Kleinman (2004) namely data display, categorisation, justifying the articulation, and carrying out critical analysis.

Findings and Discussion

BYOD Concept in ELT Practice: Mobile Phones

There were 17 students filling questionnaires on the use of mobile phones in ELT context. In that particular semester, they participated in a course named Free Conversation. 88.2 percent of respondents admitted that they own smartphones.

During the course, students were using smartphones to do the following activities.

1. Finding words meaning in both online and offline dictionaries was frequently done by students.
2. Students checked the past form of verbs online.
3. In a chapter entitled “Judging by Appearance” students were asked to find a stranger around campus and take his/her picture. Later, they had to show the picture to their friends and make a description about the object.
4. Another chapter was called “Concrete Jungles”. The teacher asked students to find information on certain places, make descriptions and comparisons.
5. One of the assignments required students to record a video in which they were having a conversation with English speaker(s) about one of the topics they learned in the classroom.

8 out of 17 respondents believed that the use of smartphones in English class gave beneficial washback. One student argued that as she was involved in a speaking-focused class where there was an urge to speak, smartphones helped her to search for information and ideas on the related topic.

“Smartphone is very helpful. I can look for some information through the internet to be able to speak”. (R.1)

Furthermore, this respondent stated that smartphones were really useful to attain effective and attractive learning process as many applications were provided and could prevent students from boredom.

Additionally, due to students’ low vocabulary mastery, smartphones were mostly utilized to access certain vocabulary and meaning of words.

“I know many words from online searching”. (R.1)

“Electronic dictionary is practical. It saves time compared to the printed one”. (R.2)

Despite those positive perspectives, students also argued that some challenges existed dealing with the BYOD implementation. The most stated situation was accessing social media while learning process was in progress. Not only did students get distracted by social media but also by texting. The unstable internet connection became another challenge.

“The internet network is not so good that it becomes a burden” (R.3)
BYOD Concept in ELT Practice: Laptops

Compared to smartphones, laptops are less portable yet ubiquitous. The participants of my research on the use of laptops in ELT practice were in writing class. Everybody in this class owned a laptop.

Some activities done in the writing class are described as follow.

1. As students were required to produce a text in a regular basis, laptops were directly used in the classroom to type texts. The texts then could be directly consulted to the teacher.
2. At certain times, PowerPoint slides were needed for a presentation. By bringing their own laptops, the process became more efficient.
3. When students needed any additional information or wanted to confirm some news, they connected their laptops to the internet network.

Students were positively welcome to the use of laptops in their writing class. One of the reasons was that it saved paper and ink a lot as students could directly express their ideas electronically. A more effective learning process was another reason since personal laptop would make the process more timesaving for each student. A successful instructional process was also probable to happen especially for those who were visual learners because laptops really supported the visual display with the help of projector.

“Laptops can reduce the use of paper and ink. Effective learning process can also take place because we can display visuals so that students will understand the materials more easily”. (R.4)

Another student claimed that the presence of laptops in the learning process helped them to find relevant information by connecting it to the internet network.

“When I make PowerPoint and I need ideas, I can directly search information using my laptop” (R.5)

When students gain advantageous impact from the personal ownership of laptops, some barriers were still present. One main hindrance during the class was distraction from the use of laptops itself. At some points of time when the lecturer needed students to notice him, it was hard to draw their attention once they were focused on their laptops. Another barrier was related to the internet connection. It slowed them down in accomplishing their tasks.

“One of the barriers happens when the lecturer wants to give explanation to students. They tend to not paying attention. They stick to their laptops; typing and seeing laptops’ screens although the lecturer has warned them to be attentive to him”. (R.4)

I can make a conclusion from the findings that in those two particular classes, the lecturer has made serious attempts to make effective use of students’ personal gadgets. Various and innovative learning activities were applied and successfully done to some extent especially when it came to the use of mobile phones.

“The use of smartphones has been very optimal in my class. My lecturer knows very well which topics can utilize phones. Phones are supplementary and facilitating our learning”. (R.1)
“We have not optimized the use of laptops. We frequently use books and speak directly”.
(R.5)

Suggestions can be proposed for the lecturer to manage the class not to be distracted by their own gadgets except for learning purpose. The lecturer should also find other plans if the internet network does not work well. It must also be notified that this research is limited to higher education level, number of respondents, and types of subjects involved. Further research might be conducted to other levels, distinctive subjects, and bigger number of participants.

References


