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Contextual Clues PowToon for Flipped Classroom

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Abstract: Reading is an important skill to master but many English for Second Language (ESL) students are facing difficulties particularly in the area of contextual clues. The challenge in teaching contextual clues is that the current teaching method has lost its way to cater students' interest in reading. In line with the latest revolution in teaching and learning method, the emergence of PowToon has helped to ease the process of teaching reading skills. Its features which include captivating graphics, lively animation, concise content and attractive background music will help the learning process to be more interesting. Using PowToon as flipped classroom material, students view the language content in mobile phones outside the classroom session which allows them to enjoy meaningful language classes at their own pace. In addition, it assists the students to familiarize themselves with the content before attempting various activities to enhance knowledge while receiving support from lecturers during classroom session. Accessible to everyone; online and offline, this product is user friendly and suitable to be used in language classes with limited technology support. This evolution in teaching pedagogy will also encourage paperless teaching aids in language classrooms. Hence, this blended learning strategy aims in increasing students' engagement in reading and improving the outcomes of learning process.

Keywords: Contextual clues, Flipped classroom, PowToon

1. Introduction

Reading skill, as well as listening skill, is one of the most important skills in English language learning as it is known as receptive skill. This skill allows the learners to receive input in the target language before they are able to produce or use the language themselves either through speaking or writing activities. Nevertheless, many language learners find themselves lacking in the ability to comprehend what they read which eventually results in failure to become proficient English language users. This worsens when the intricate learning process of reading comprehension skill is taught using approaches or methods which neither fit learner's level nor interest the learners. In this case, learners would find that learning comprehension skill is difficult and this demotivates them into learning even further (Parilah & Empungan, 2015). The absence of suitable teaching method that is engaging to the learners is seen as a pressing matter and this calls for an urgent need for an appropriate teaching approach which should cater the 21st century education and its learners (Marzilah & Sharifah Nadia, 2010).

Recent development in teaching pedagogy has showed an increasing application of information and communication technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning process. This is parallel to government's



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vision through the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which specifies a maximum usage of ICT for distance and self-paced learning in order to expand the capacity and allow for more customised learning (Ministry of Education, 2012). Technology-integrated teaching and learning activities is viewed as an enhancement tool that permits students and teachers to increase classroom productivity by allowing students to do preparation on their own ahead of their physical class. This should enable them to be more prepared, more responsible and more attentive to the teaching and learning process in class afterwards. Among other applications which have been identified as the most helpful tools to enhance language learning are PowToon, Prezi, MS PowerPoint, SlidesShare and Adobe Flash (Avsar, Aliabadi, Aliabadi & Yousefnezhad, 2016).

On another note, the usage of videos to facilitate teaching and learning activities has also increased in the recent years. According to Kaltura (2015), video is becoming an increasingly popular educational tool to enhance teaching and learning process due to its fun and multifaceted properties. Not only video is seen as a textbook replacement as it would help in content delivery, it also opens up avenues for more innovative learning approaches such as e-learning, distance learning and the increasingly popular flipped learning. Using video in flipped-style classroom would ease the teaching and learning process for both students and teachers. Flipped classroom model in its essence flips the usual classroom style whereby the learners learn the course concepts outside of the classroom on their own while class time is reserved for more active learning which involves discussion on the topic that they have learned through the video, answering questions and providing feedbacks (Ramírez, Hinojosa, & Rodríguez, 2014).

To facilitate the learning of the course content outside of the classroom, PowToon application software is one of the most used tools as it is one of the presentation applications that promotes a high level of engagement for user community (Alexander, 2016). PowToon allows users to create animated presentations which are rather short. Besides that, users can apply various interesting techniques such as adding in rhyme, repetition, catchy music and relatable characters into their videos (Powtoon, 2016). The pedagogical value on this type of video is further confirmed by Guo et al. (2014) who found that shorter video which included instructor's voice explaining to them about the concept in each slide engaged the students to learn more because it displayed a more personal touch of interactive process. In relation to the finding, this technical paper investigates the effectiveness of using PowToon video as a blended learning strategy through flipped classroom approach in facilitating teaching and learning and how it fares in helping the students to achieve better reading comprehension skill.

2. Problem Statement

Reading comprehension is one of the activities conducted in classroom to assess the students on the ability to read and understand the meaning of text. Proficient readers have the ability to comprehend words effortlessly which suggests that text comprehension could be improved by enhancing the reader's vocabulary and utilizing a number of reading strategies. Often learners have problems to comprehend reading texts due to their inability to understand the context. This may come as a result of unfamiliar words from the text. In relation to this, Ahmad Azman and Rafizah (2012) named contextual clues approach as a good reading-improvement strategy to improve reading comprehension skill. Contextual clues strategy helps readers to find the meaning of unfamiliar words by looking at the context of how it is used and then guessing the most possible answer to the unknown words (Sri Rahayu, 2015).

Nevertheless, ESL students are facing many difficulties in English reading skills particularly contextual clues. This has resulted the students to become very weak readers. Inability to use the correct strategy to help the students improve comprehension makes them lose motivation and becomes uninterested in doing reading activity. Another challenge in teaching contextual clues is that the current technology-integrated teaching method has lost its way to cater students' interest in reading. As asserted by



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Wickramasinghe and Upeksha (2016), giving lectures can bore students especially if the lecturer reads PowerPoint slides in a monotone way. Hence, it calls for an urgent need of teaching method that stimulates a more attractive and innovative teaching and learning environment. It was also found that the average attention rate for students in lecture-based approach was only 5 percent while the attention rate soared to 20 percent in a classroom where the instructor used audio-visual approach (Wickramasinghe & Upeksha, 2016). In addition, students were very much interested to having video recording of lectures as compared to other teaching methods (Wickramasinghe & Upeksha, 2016). On top of that, Ahmad Azman and Rafizah (2012) asserted that the best learning approach for contextual clues activities is that the learners complete the activity and receive immediate feedback. As such, it is crucial that teachers employ and conduct innovative teaching tools like PowToon in their classroom activities as a blended learning strategy for a more fulfilling and interesting teaching and learning experience.

2.1 Objectives

The aim of this project is to fulfill the following objectives:

- 1) To provide an alternative method of delivering supporting materials in the teaching and learning of reading skills.
- 2) To assess the perception of student towards the usage of PowToon as supporting learning materials.
- 3) To evaluate the behavioural intention of students in using mobile phone for flipped classroom approach.

3. Methodology

This project involved 304 UiTM diploma students enrolled in English reading course (ELC151). Contextual clues reading materials were designed using PowToon software and sent to the respective students through WhatsApp messenger along with a set of questionnaire. The students were required to watch the animated presentation and subsequently fill in the questionnaire through the given link (refer Figure 1). The questionnaire comprised of items with 5-point Likert scales (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree) to investigate the perception of students towards Powtoon and their behavioural intention towards flipped classroom approach. Descriptive analysis was conducted to evaluate the objectives of this study.



Figure 1: PowToon video through WhatsApp application



4. Results

A total of 217 students completed the questionnaire with a response rate of 71.38 percent. Demographic analysis revealed 163 female students (75.1%) and 54 male students (24.9%) were involved in the study. Majority of them (193 respondents) were 19 years old (88.9%), 13 students (6%) were 20 years old, 9 students (4.1%) were 18 years old and 2 students aged 21 years old (0.9%). About 103 respondents were enrolled in Computer Science & Mathematics course (47.5%), 37 respondents from Business Management and Art & Design courses (17.1%) respectively, 23 respondents from Information Management course (10.6%) and only 17 students from Accounting course (7.8%). In addition, 211 students (97.2%) responded that they have used mobile phone for learning purposes while only 6 students (2.8%) had no experience in using mobile phone as a learning tool. Table 1 depicts the demographic profile of the study.

Table 1: Demographic profile

Characteristic	Group	Cases	Percentage
Gender	Male	54	24.9
	Female	163	75.1
Age	18 years	9	4.1
	19 years	193	88.9
	20 years	13	6.0
	21 years	2	0.9
Course	Computer Science & Mathematics	103	47.5
	Business Management	37	17.1
	Art & Design	37	17.1
	Information Management	23	10.6
	Accounting	17	7.8
Mobile phone for learning	Yes	211	97.2
	No	6	2.8

As presented in Table 2, the perception of the students towards PowToon as a method of flipped classroom material was also analysed. Majority of the students agreed that PowToon presentation slides enabled them to focus on the lesson (77%) and understand the lesson better (77%) since the slides were prepared with organized text (75.5%) and comprehensible content (80.6%) with appropriate font (76.9%), text length (68.6%), coloured image (83.9%), animation (77.8%), understandable explanation (73.2%) using appropriate voice aspects (73.2%). The highest mean value (4.10) indicated that students were attracted with the images in PowToon presentation slides which assisted them to apprehend the lesson especially when they have the opportunity to watch the video on their own before or after the lesson as practiced in flipped classroom situation.

Table 2: Perception towards PowToon

Item	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Text font sizes are appropriate	Disagree	4	1.9	3.92
	Neutral	46	21.2	
	Agree	167	76.9	
Text length is appropriate	Disagree	3	1.4	3.82
	Neutral	65	30.0	
	Agree	149	68.6	
Colour and animation enhance text readability	Disagree	4	1.9	4.01
	Neutral	44	20.3	



	Agree	169	77.8	
Image increases understanding	Disagree	3	1.4	4.10
	Neutral	32	14.7	
	Agree	182	83.9	
Text increases understanding	Disagree	3	1.4	4.02
	Neutral	39	18.0	
	Agree	175	80.6	
Voice explaining content is easily understood	Disagree	7	3.3	3.91
	Neutral	51	23.5	
	Agree	159	73.2	
Contents are well organized	Disagree	2	1.0	3.96
	Neutral	51	23.5	
	Agree	164	75.5	
Slide presentation captures attention	Disagree	3	1.4	4.01
	Neutral	47	21.6	
	Agree	167	77.0	
Slide presentation increases understanding	Disagree	5	2.3	3.95
	Neutral	45	20.7	
	Agree	167	77.0	

On top of that, the study also investigated the students' behavioural intention in using mobile phone for flipped classroom approach as depicted in Table 3. Most of the students reported that they predict (71.9%) and plan (68.2%) to use mobile phone in their learning activities. In addition, the highest mean value (3.94) denoted that the students enjoyed using mobile phone for learning purposes as they are presented with PowToon presentation slides in the form of flipped classroom approach. Subsequently, they would recommend their peers to perform the same practice (67.3%).

Table 3: Behavioural intention towards mobile phone usage

Item	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Mean
I predict I would use mobile phone in learning practices.	Disagree	6	2.8	3.92
	Neutral	55	25.3	
	Agree	156	71.9	
I plan to use mobile phone in learning practices.	Disagree	8	3.7	3.84
	Neutral	61	28.1	
	Agree	148	68.2	
I would enjoy using mobile phone for learning purposes.	Disagree	7	3.3	3.94
	Neutral	58	26.6	
	Agree	152	70.1	
I would recommend others to use mobile phone for learning purposes.	Disagree	9	4.2	3.82
	Neutral	62	28.5	
	Agree	146	67.3	

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The development of PowToon contextual clues for reading comprehension material was found to fulfill the needs of students towards attention grabbing learning material since majority of the students were in favour of PowToon slide presentation. The features of PowToon video through organized text, comprehensible content, appropriate font and text length, coloured image and animation, including understandable explanation by the lecturer have made the students become more focused with the learning material which assisted them to comprehend the lesson better. This is supported by Alexander (2016) who asserted that PowToon encourages high level of user engagement especially if the video contains instructor's voice description of the lesson (Guo, Kim & Rubin, 2014).



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The study also found that most students used mobile phone in their learning practices which was parallel to the vision of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 as to maximise ICT usage in self-paced learning. Subsequently, the approach of flipped classroom is supported with the usage of mobile phone which facilitates the student's active learning beyond the classroom environment (Ramírez, Hinojosa, & Rodríguez, 2014).

This project suggests the need for further research which could investigate the impact of flipped learning to students' learning practices especially focusing on language skills. In addition, future research could also be conducted on other forms of technology supporting flipped classroom such as external video content (YouTube), animated video (GoAnimate), learning management system (Canvas) or social networking (Twitter).

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