Chapter 10
A CALL-Mediated Course to Enhance EFL Pre-Service Teachers’ Engagement

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ABSTRACT

It is important for students to be engaged in any given course. For EFL pre-service teachers, being engaged in a course is essential because they can benefit linguistically, cognitively, and pedagogically. The present chapter presents a CALL-mediated course that was able to enhance EFL pre-service teachers’ engagement by using Edmodo as its learning platform. Also, this study explores the contributing factors that a CALL-mediated course has towards their engagement. Three EFL pre-service teachers agreed to voluntarily participate in this exploratory study. Through in-depth interviews, they described their engagement and factors affecting their participation. The findings reveal that the EFL pre-service teachers were highly encouraged and inspired to utilize Edmodo and adopt the activities designed for the course. Obstacles and challenges encountered by EFL pre-service teachers are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In light of student-centered learning, engagement is believed to have a significant role to the success of students’ learning as it is closely related to students’ achievement, attention, retention, motivation, and instructional success (Beer, Clark, & Jones, 2010). When students invest their time, effort, and energy to their own learning, they will likely be more successful in learning than those who do not. For this reason, many university administrators devote a great amount of time and money to design an active, student-centered teaching and learning environment (Laird, Shoup, & Kuh, 2005) that will enhance student engagement by choosing suitable programs, implementing appropriate teaching methods, and providing engaging learning aids.
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Many EFL teachers struggle to maintain student engagement with their lessons, yet they must continue seeking the best instructional strategies that support student engagement in learning both within and beyond the classroom. Thus, improving student engagement is a significant challenge. The importance of student engagement is addressed by Kuh (2003; 2009) and Taylor and Parsons (2011). They state that student engagement can improve students’ learning, lead to student success, and promote life-long learning. It is imperative that student engagement is maintained and improved. One of the examples of these actions is to make use of CALL in the teaching-learning process.

In the development of EFL learning, CALL has not only been referred to as computer-mediated language learning. In addition, this area has also developed to a broader inclusion of technological hardware (Bulger, Mayer, Almeroth, & Blau, 2008), software (Zaini & Mazdayasna, 2015), digital devices, and the Internet (Alabbad, Gitsaki, & White, 2015; Nakamaru, 2012). While many educational institutions around the world have offered fully online courses—including EFL courses—to their students, many others have made efforts to integrate CALL into their face-to-face class meetings. This chapter uses a CALL-mediated course, which utilized an online learning platform to encourage student participation inside and outside the class. Online learning platforms are believed to be able to help EFL teachers enhance their student engagement by reshaping the way they teach (Barkley, 2010; Jarvis, 2005) Not only do online learning platforms help EFL students reinvent themselves, it also enables them to work collaboratively with their friends and solve their problems independently with little help from their teachers (Morgan, 2008).

For EFL pre-service teachers, being able to engage in a CALL-mediated course might be useful for the future when they have to teach EFL students in a similar course. In addition, actively participating in such a course will enable EFL pre-service teachers to make sense of problems that might come up during the teaching learning process and find possible solutions. Using EFL pre-service teachers’ voices, the current chapter seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the activities in the CALL-mediated course that enhance EFL pre-service teachers’ engagement? and (2) What are the contributing factors that affect EFL pre-service teachers’ engagement in using Edmodo?

EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN INDONESIAN CONTEXTS

There has been a high demand for EFL teachers in Indonesia because English is the main foreign language that has been taught in Indonesia for decades. Many EFL teachers in Indonesia have started to shift their paradigm from traditional views of English language teaching to the economic value of English (Manara, 2014). By this, Manara (2014) means that Indonesian EFL teachers have thought about the economic benefits that students can obtain from learning English in today’s globalized Indonesia. Manara’s research implies that integrating CALL in English classes can be one of the solutions to improve the role of English in Indonesia.

EFL pre-service teachers are typically prepared to teach in school contexts, both private and public. A typical EFL class in Indonesia may contain 35-40 students, which is considered quite challenging for many EFL teachers to accommodate. As a result, promoting meaningful interaction among EFL students that can lead to academic engagement is quite a challenge (Brooks & Thurston, 2010). Unfortunately, most EFL pre-service teachers in Indonesia receive minimal exposure to engaging language classroom activities when they were still at school. As Masduqi (2014) asserts, Indonesian students do not generally expect interactive activities in the classroom due to their cultural philosophies “to obey and to follow”