

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates on the background of this study, the research questions, the purpose of this study, the scope and the significance of the study, as well as some definitions of important terms in the study and the organization of the thesis.

1.1 Research Background

Technology has played an essential role in human life, and education is one of the sectors that is affected greatly by its advancement. In the process of teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the use of technology has shown positive feedback throughout the decades. For example, Timucin (2006) did a case study on the implementation of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). It was done due to the students' attitude toward the English class, where they said it became boring. The implementation of CALL then resulted in positive feedback from the teachers and students. This shows that technology can affect the students' views on learning. Moreover, for almost the past two years, online learning has been the only way for the education sector to keep going. Due to the pandemic, students and teachers have no other choice but to do the teaching and learning process using video conference applications like Zoom or Google Meet. There have been challenges in doing this online learning, including the lack of pedagogical knowledge on how to teach in an online class environment and the lack of knowledge in online assessment (Widayanti & Suarnajaya, 2021; Gustine, 2021).

In addition, social media has also been a crucial part of making the teaching and learning process to carry on both before and during the pandemic. Text-messaging services like WhatsApp have been used by teachers to communicate with their students to distribute and discuss some reading materials for example. Even though nowadays technology is used more frequently, it was also used before by teachers to innovate a more interesting way of teaching. For example, Mayora (2009) studied how YouTube could help students develop their writing skills. She wanted to encourage authentic writing in the EFL classroom by using Youtube. She then proposed two concepts for featuring Youtube in the EFL context. The first one is an instructional implementation of video comment tasks for contexts with easy

access to the internet and the second one is the one with no access to the internet. This is quite helpful since she did not only offer a solution for the teachers with good facilities but also for teachers and students in rural areas where internet access is relatively scarce.

However, this particular view of how technology or social media has been used for teaching and learning is categorized as formal learning. Some other students, especially EFL students, have also been using social media outside the school to practice their English intentionally or just try to communicate with their friends. This side of learning can be categorized as informal as the students are not bound to teachers' guidance or expectation. Bahrani et al (2014) explained that informal language learning occurs outside the classroom setting unconsciously and incidentally through interaction with the native speakers or exposure to authentic language input through technology. Even though informal language learning is considered unstructured, it is the most extensive way of learning everyone can do (Rogers, 2004). In addition, Schugurensky (2000) mentioned some types of informal language learning and one of them is tacit learning or socialization. It is when the learners use their target language to communicate with other people, for example on social media, during their daily social activities. This type of learning is not intentional, and the learners are not aware of the learning process. While implementing this, learners are far from the restriction of the classroom, and this is convenient for EFL students because when they learn it this way, there is no pressure, and they would be able to take all the time they need to be familiar with the language. Not to mention that during this covid-19 outbreak, it has been difficult for people to communicate with each other in person and all the formal teaching and learning process has been done online using Web 2.0 technologies and thus making it even more relevant for the learners to also find a way to keep practicing their English skill online as well.

Web 2.0 refers to websites and applications that enable people to interact, create and share information. Web 2.0 includes social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram, microblogging services like Twitter, wiki sites like Wikipedia, video sharing sites like YouTube and Dailymotion, and blogs like Blogspot and WordPress. As mentioned before, technologies have played their part

in education as web 2.0 technologies have aided teachers in the teaching process. However, it does not only benefit the teachers but also the learners in an informal situation as they have used the web 2.0 technologies in their daily life activities. The technology of web 2.0 makes it possible for the learners to not only gather information from reading or watching but also engage or participate actively in order to acquire or develop new skills. In an informal situation, learners' choice is important as it is them who know what they want to learn and how they want to do it. They also learn at their own pace with the goals that they have set themselves. Web 2.0 technologies make this more convenient for them to learn something on their own.

Also, social networking sites provide the opportunity for the learners to create and share their knowledge with others as well as promote interactive communication and this leads to informal collaborative learning. The learners are able to learn together with other people who also share the same interest. Song & Lee (2014) stated that social media have been seen as a popular tool in informal learning as it provides its users to learn from anywhere, at any time and with anyone and they can also determine the pace of learning on their own without feeling pressured (Song & Lee, 2014). EFL students may be able to use this opportunity to practice their skills especially in speaking. This is because, to master speaking skills, the students need to practice speaking the language frequently and have enough exposure to get used to the language. Liando (2012) stated that the media like television has influences on introducing English through cartoon films. Not only that, with the advancement of technology, people today are exposed to various kinds of information through the internet and since social media mainly use English, they somehow are acquainted with the language from there as well. This means EFL students can get more exposure to English by using technology like social media. Therefore, since there have not been many studies focusing on the informal side of English learning, especially the ones involving social media, I decided to conduct a study to collect some stories from EFL students who have practiced their English speaking skills in an informal setting by using social media called Discord.

Discord Application has recently been used to interact with people worldwide and learn many other languages including English. One of the features

of Discord is the ability to create an online community based on the users' interests. It could be a study group or even an online class. English House (EH) is one of the language learning communities (or "servers" as discord users usually call it) that offers the members the opportunity to learn and practice their English together with other members from many places. For example, they make use of the voice chats feature to talk with each other about any of their interests while listening to music or participate in a special event like poetry reading to help build creativity or confidence in their spoken English. Therefore, the result of this study was expected to produce an account that could show the process of informal English speaking practice on the aforementioned online community on Discord so that it could be considered to be an alternative choice to help EFL students practice their speaking in.

1.2 Research Question

In this study, the researcher formulates the research questions as the following:

1. How is the process of speaking practice in an informal setting experienced by the EFL students in the English learning server (EH) on Discord?
2. What are their opinions on the speaking practice experience in an informal setting on Discord?

1.3 Aims of the Study

This research aims to find out in detail about the experience of EFL students who use the voice chat feature in an English learning server (EH) on Discord Application to help them practice their speaking skills and thoughts about the experience.

1.4 Significances of the Study

It is understood that the practice of speaking by the EFL learner has usually done in formal settings, in a classroom with the teacher's guidance. However, this research helps to find an alternative way for this by gathering stories from EFL

students when they practice speaking skills on Discord. The results of this study are expected to be helpful for:

1. Increasing awareness of an alternative way to learn speaking skills in informal settings.
2. Providing references in support to ensure a successful learning process in the EFL context, especially speaking skills.
3. Developing strategies to use social media in learning speaking skills.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research only intends to find out in detail how the English learning server (EH) in Discord can help EFL students practice English. The expected result only involves a detailed account of the EFL students who have used the application for some time, and the account involves information on how the features in the application especially in the server, help with the informal English learning process.

1.6 Research Terminology

To avoid misunderstanding the terms set out in this study, I provided some definitions related to the study, as follows:

1. Informal Settings

In this research, the informal setting has a pretty similar meaning to informal language learning, where language learners interact with native speakers in the target language, use different technologies at home or work, watch a movie, or listen to music or song just as an entertainment which can lead to language learning (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). The informal setting in this research is the speaking practice in Discord. Also, the types of informal language learning are based on Schugurensky (2000), which are self-directed, incidental, and tacit learning.

2. Discord application

Discord is a voice, video, and text communication service used by over a hundred million people to hang out and talk with their friends and communities (Discord.com). In this research, Discord is the media used by the participants to practice their speaking on a particular server.

3. Server

Server is the term used to describe a virtual forum or community on Discord, allowing users to create many text-chat rooms or voice-chat rooms. These chat rooms are usually called channels. (Discord.com). In a server, members can communicate with the others using features like voice chats, text chats, video chats, screen-sharing and media sharing in various channels. In this research, EH is one of the servers on Discord which focuses on English learning. It has many voice and text channels which were separated based on different categories. EH was the research site of this research.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

The organization of the present study is arranged as follows:

Chapter I Introduction includes the background of research, research questions, aims of the study, significance of study, the scope of study, and the research terminology.

Chapter II Literature Review includes the theories of the research variables, which are informal learning, factors affecting speaking skills, the role of social media in education, Discord, and the previous studies.

Chapter III Methodology includes the research method: research design, research site, research participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter IV Finding and Discussion include the research findings and discussions, which are participants' background in English learning and English skill, EFL learners' learning challenges, the process of speaking skills on the English learning server, EFL learners' learning techniques, students' views on the experience of speaking practice in affective, behavior and cognitive perspectives, the informal language learning experienced by the EFL learners, factors affecting speaking ability, and the main aspects of speaking skills experienced by the EFL learners.

Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestion include the conclusion of the research findings and the recommendations for the following research.