

E-learning Implementation in Foundation English Class: Learners' Perspectives and Learning Achievement

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Abstract—Due to a relatively large class and limited opportunities for students to practice their English skills, Schoology e-learning platform was implemented in foundation English class in the first semester of academic year 2015. The study started after the formative test and lasted for seven weeks. The subjects were 56 first year students registering in Foundation English I course at university level. Quizzes on English grammars and vocabulary from the lessons were posted twice a week. Website links of related English grammars and lessons were posted every week. Students were also encouraged to post and share their group presentations (PowerPoint) on the contents and useful vocabulary of the outside reading of the course. Questionnaires with rating scale statements and open-ended questions were distributed to the students to express their perspectives on Schoology implementation. Scores from formative test and summative test were compared to investigate students' learning achievement. Results show students' positive attitudes on the use of Schoology e-learning platform at high level ($M=3.93$) as well as the positive perception of Schoology as a language learning tool ($M=3.86$). The implementation helps improve students' learning achievement as indicated by a large number of students (94.64%) with higher scores in summative test.

Index Terms—Foundation english, learners' perspectives, learning achievement, schoology e-learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

English language is a compulsory course for Thai students in all education levels. Although Thai students have started learning English in kindergarten level, most of them are not able to use English language properly. Thai students have limited opportunities to practice their English skills. The students, therefore, just practice their English only in classrooms and teaching is relatively challenging for teachers as well [1]. At university level, the large classes with mixed-ability students influence both language learning and teaching [2]. Out-of-class activities should be implemented to provide opportunities for students to practice their English skills.

In the 21st century, autonomous learning should be promoted. Shifting the emphasis from teaching to learning can create a more interactive and engaging learning environment for teachers and learners. The role of the teachers will change from knowledge transmitter to that of facilitator, knowledge navigator and sometime as co-learner.

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Learning by doing will implement integrated skills for learners [3]-[5].

The study, therefore, will promote students' engagement in learning via Schoology, one of social media in the field of online learning platform. The teacher will, then, act as a facilitator for students to accomplish their extra tasks outside classroom.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Schoology e-learning program is relatively new to teachers who may be digital immigrants. This section provides the definition and its functions as well as the research studies about this social media as a learning tool.

A. What is Schoology?

Schoology is one of Social Learning Networks (SLNs) gaining popularity in the field of online learning. From its webpage (www.Schoology.com), it explains that "Schoology is an online learning, classroom management, and social networking platform that improve learning through better communication, collaboration, and increased access to curriculum and supplemental content." Features on Schoology are as follows: Course, Group Discussion, Resources, Quiz, Attendance and Analytics.

Schoology is free and allows for teachers and students to interact online in a user friendly and secure environment. Moreover, the design of Schoology is parallel to that of Facebook in which conversations take place, messages are sent, statuses are updated, and information and other media are shared within the group network [6]. It was pointed out that

"Schoology helps meet literacy goals by keeping relevant the ways we teach and the ways students are expected to learn... Instead of forcing conversations to take place in our classrooms that rely so much on old ways of teaching and learning, we can incorporate our teachings into this new digital age. Students can interact with one another, as well as their teachers, outside of the classroom in academic ways, emphasizing the bridge between academics and real life situations and helping students to be more involved in their schooling." [6]

Therefore, Schoology is chosen as a learning activity for foundation English in this study.

B. Schoology in Education

Schoology has been chosen as a learning and teaching tools. The program has also been used as a research material in educational studies. Related studies can be found as follows:

TABLE I: RESEARCH ON USING SCHOOLGY AS A LEARNING AND TEACHING TOOL

Authors	Courses	Results
Lee Kean Wah et al, 2013 [7]	Blended Learning	Schoology approach has facilitated the students in their learning through the interaction with the teacher and classmates, and the resources that were provided. Students also responded that the BL approach has positive "impact" in their motivation in learning, by being encouraged to learn.
S. Biswas, 2013 [8]	Supported Classroom Management: Curriculum Review	Schoology was concluded that teachers can use the Schoology website to manage everyday classroom practices with a goal of improving students' learning. Schoology enables students to monitor their own learning process and makes students responsible for their own understanding and thinking. Schoology was highly recommended as a supportive and advanced tool in classroom management and successful teaching.
R. Khoii, N. Ahmadi, & M. Gharib, 2015 [9]	Reading Strategies	Control pair and experimental pair were chosen. Experimental pair had to upload their summary assignment presentation on Schoology then these assignments were collected and scored by instructors and discussed in the chatroom. After the 7-week treatment period, the experimental pair had significantly outperformed the control pair in terms of their use of reading strategies.
A. S. Sicat, 2015 [10]	Business Writing	Traditional teaching seems to be more favorable than the use of Schoology. However, statistically evidences show 'very significant' difference in the Pre-test and Post-test ratings of the experimental group. Overall, the findings revealed that the Schoology has shown a potential in enhancing the proficiency of college students in Business Writing.
M. Coyle, 2015 [11]	Earth Space Science	Schoology was used as a platform for students to complete the survey with rating scales in the study. Results show that a strong majority of students (87%) believe that having control of their learning is beneficial to them as students. Students are more motivate to learn when they are offered choices in the classroom.
JW. Nugroho Joshua, S.Kom & M.Si, 2015 [12]	Information systems and informatics engineering	Schoology learning has a significant role of giving learning motivation and is a highly influential variable on learning achievements of students.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There are three research questions in this action research as follows:

1. What are the students' perspectives towards the use of Schoology e-learning platform?
2. What are the students' perspectives towards learning activities outside classroom?
3. What are the students' perspectives towards Schoology as a language learning tool?
4. Can Schoology help improve students' achievement in foundation English course?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Subjects

The subjects are 56 first year students (28 males and 28 females) enrolling in Foundation English I (subject code: 01355111), which is a compulsory general course for undergraduates at Kasetsart University Si Racha Campus, Thailand. Students enroll in the compulsory Foundation English Courses I, II, or III according to their English language scores of Ordinary National Educational Test (O-Net). Students with the O-Net scores in English language 0-30 points have to start with Foundation English I course. The English O-Net scores indicate that these students are less capable at English language and have to start from the beginning English course at the university level.

B. Instruments

There are three instruments for the study. Schoology application, questionnaire, and scores from formative test and summative test.

- 1) Schoology: One of social media that can be used as a learning tool outside the classroom. A group course was created with an access code and used as the channel to offer extra exercises for students to do in their free times as well as to communicate with the teacher outside classroom. Links of English grammar websites were provided for students. Online parallel quizzes were posted as extra activities to the class lessons. Limited duration of the quiz availability was set to promote students' active engagement. Immediate responses and shown answers were set on the program to motivate students. Students' presentations (PowerPoint) on outside reading of the course were also posted on Schoology platform to be shared with their classmates.
- 2) Questionnaire: Open-ended and close-ended questionnaires were distributed to the students to administer at the end of the course. The questionnaire attempts to evaluate students' attitude toward the use of Schoology as the corporate learning activity for their English class.
- 3) Scores from formative test and summative test: These tests were administered to all students registering for Foundation English I course. Formative test of the course was done prior to this action research while the summative test was conducted later. Scores of the both tests are in percentages and used to compare the achievement of the students.

C. Data Collection

The study was conducted after the formative test in the first semester of the academic year 2015. The teacher created a group of 56 students on Schoology. The experiment lasted seven weeks (21 October - 11 December, 2015) and covered the last three units of the course. Three questions at a time with limited duration of availability to complete the activities were set. Each unit consisted of six grammar questions and six vocabulary questions. Grammar questions were posted on Tuesdays and vocabulary questions were on Fridays. Teacher also posted English grammar lessons and shared English language learning pages and websites every week. Group presentations (PowerPoint) on outside reading of the course were also posted by the students. The presentations summarized the story of the assigned chapters of the reading together with useful vocabulary. At the end of last class (Week 15), questionnaires were distributed to students to express their attitudes toward the use of Schoology as a corporate learning activity to the course.

D. Data Analysis

The returned questionnaires were analyzed according to means and S.D. The data obtained of close-ended questionnaires were interpreted according to the following levels:

Strongly disagree (the lowest) = 1.00-1.80

Disagree (low) = 1.81-2.60

Moderate (medium) = 2.61-3.40

Agree (high) = 3.41-4.20

Strongly agree (the highest) = 4.21-5.00

The responses of open-ended part were analyzed to evaluate whether they are positive or negative attitudes toward Schoology as the learning activity in their English class.

V. RESULTS

The subjects are between 18-19 years old which are considered as digital natives. They were born around technology [13]; therefore, they are familiar with computer programs and digital media. Moreover, the results of on the questionnaire show that 22 students or 39.3% spent 2-4 hours a day on the internet every day while 17 students or 30.4% spend 5-7 hours and the other 30.4% spend more than 8 hours a day on the internet. This means that they spend a lot of time on the internet daily. Personal computer (PC) and smart phones are normally used by the students (85.75%) to connect to the internet. However, smart phones are preferred (91.1%) to do the learning activities on Schoology.

Results to answer the four research questions were collected from 16 statements with 1-to-5 rating scale in Part One and five open-ended questions in Part Two.

1. What are the students' perspectives towards the use of Schoology e-learning platform?

To investigate the students' perspectives towards the use of Schoology, five statements in Part One were distributed and the statements are:

S1: Schoology is easy and convenient to do exercises.

S2: Doing quizzes on Schoology on a smart phone is easy.

S3: You like submitting and receiving immediate results.

S4: You are satisfied in joining the studying group on Schoology.

S5: Schoology is suitable for a learning and teaching media.

Students reported their opinions on the use of Schoology as shown in Table II.

TABLE II: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF SCHOOLGY

Statements	n	Mean	SD
S1	56	3.79	0.780
S2	56	3.86	0.903
S3	56	3.84	0.949
S4	56	3.93	0.828
S5	56	3.79	0.889

It can be seen that all five statements obtain the mean scores at the high level. The mean of S4 is the highest mean (=3.93) whilst S1 and S5 have the lowest mean (=3.79). It can be assumed that the students can do the learning activities on Schoology.

Responses to the first open-ended question in Part Two were analysed to answer the first research question. The question is:

Q1: Do you think Schoology is an appropriate program for learning outside the classroom? How is it?

It was found that 47 students agreed on the appropriateness of Schoology in learning. Twenty four students gave the reasons on the convenience of the program, the easy access, and the immediate response of the program. Student number 6 mentioned the modern communication. Three students, numbers 14, 40, and 45, explained that they could review the English lessons out of class on their preferences. However, there was one student (number 47) said that the program was not appropriate and could not help understand the lessons.

2. What are the students' perspectives towards learning activities outside classroom?

Five statements were to be rated on their perspectives towards learning activities outside classroom. They were:

S6: Corporate learning activities help to learn English better.

S7: Doing quizzes outside classroom on Schoology can help understand the lessons.

S8: Learning activities on Schoology allow you to participate the lessons all the time.

S9: You are glad to do learning activities on Schoology.

S10: Joining the Schoology group is suited for autonomous learning outside the classroom.

The responses of these five statements are reported in Table III.

TABLE III: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNING ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE CLASSROOM

Statements	n	Mean	SD
S6	56	3.61	0.867
S7	56	3.68	0.936
S8	56	3.73	0.774
S9	56	3.86	0.773
S10	56	3.80	0.724

Mean scores of all five statements are at the high level. S9

has the highest mean at 3.86 while S6 has the lowest at 3.61.

There was one open-ended question in *Part Two* asking students about their attitudes toward online quizzes and other out-of-class activities. It was:

Q2: Do you think quizzes and activities outside the classroom help you have more understanding in English language?

Forty one students mentioned that quizzes and activities helped them have more understanding in English language. Fifteen students explained that quizzes and activities helped in reviewing and practicing more English skills. Four students (numbers 13, 40, 48, 49) said that the activities promoted their autonomous learning. They were eager to find the meanings of English vocabulary on the tests and group presentation activities. Student number 43 pointed out that the immediate responses and answers of the tests were useful for learning. However, two students (numbers 47 and 51) mentioned that they have little more understanding of the lessons and student number 17 said that the activity did not help understand the lessons.

3. What are the students' perspectives towards Schoology as a language learning tool?

Six statements were for students to rate their opinions on Schoology as a language learning tool. The six statements are:

S11: Joining the Schoology Group motivates you to learn more English lessons.

S12: Posted external links to English lessons pages are useful in learning English.

S13: You have learned and corrected your English mistakes after joining the Schoology Group.

S14: Activities on Schoology help you interact with teacher outside the classroom.

S15: Activities on Schoology help you perform better in class.

S16: Activities on Schoology encourage sharing information and knowledge.

The findings on this part are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOLY AS A LEARNING TOOL

Statements	n	Mean	SD
S11	56	3.54	0.953
S12	56	3.86	0.943
S13	56	3.80	0.862
S14	56	3.71	0.889
S15	56	3.77	0.894
S16	56	3.75	0.792

From the table, it can be concluded that the majority of the students agreed on the use of Schoology as a language learning tool. The means of S11-S16 could be interpreted that they were agreed with the high level. S13 has gained the highest score (=3.86) and S11 has the lowest score (=3.54).

Three open-ended questions were also asked concerning students' perspectives towards Schoology as a language learning tool. The questions were:

Q3: What do you think about learning English as a member in the Schoology group?

Q4: Do you think Schoology create better relationship

between the teacher and you?

Q5: What would you like to recommend on using Schoology in Foundation English course?

Findings from the three questions are summarized as follows:

For Q3, twenty students perceived that being members in the group course was useful. The activities in the group were joyful and fun to do. Three students (numbers 13, 18, and 27) said that they liked English better. Seven students (numbers 15, 26, 35, 40, 43, 47, and 53) mentioned that learning as a group helped review the lessons and increase English knowledge on grammar. Student number 6 pointed out that being a member in a group work was fun as the members helped each other to find the meanings of English vocabulary.

Answers for Q4 can be concluded that thirty students agreed on better relationship with the teacher on Schoology. Thirteen students indicated that it was convenient for them to contact with the teacher at any time and they could talk to the teacher more and directly. Student number 35 said that it was a way to get to know the teacher better. Student number 52 also pointed out that the teacher could give additional information outside the classroom. However, for four students (14, 37, and 47), Schoology does not have any effect on the relationship with the teacher as they could not meet face to face.

Most of the students did not reply to Q5. Only four students (numbers 3, 13, 27, and 40) mentioned that it was good to use Schoology. Three students (numbers 17, 26, and 51) said that they had problems of using Schoology program for some time.

4. Can Schoology help improve students' achievement in foundation English course?

To investigate on the students' achievement, scores from formative test and summative test were compared as shown in Table 5.

TABLE V: STUDENTS' SCORES ON FORMATIVE TEST AND SUMMATIVE TEST

	Numbers of students	Percentage
Higher	53	94.64%
Equal	-	-
Lower	3	5.36%
Total	56	100%

Table V shows that Schoology can help improve students' achievement in the course. Most of the students earn higher scores (53 students or 94.64%) in summative test. Of the increased score percentage, the highest increased score is 34% while the lowest increases score is 2.5%. Only three students or 5.36% has lower scores in the summative test. The lower scores are -0.667, -2.833, and -16.33.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it can be concluded that Schoology e-learning platform is an appropriate learning and teaching program outside the classrooms. The majority of the students were satisfied in using and learning from the program although it was new to them and they had never used the

program before. The fact that it is available on smart phones makes the program easy accessed and convenient for students to do the activities and to communicate with the teacher. Quizzes and activities on e-learning platform can help students have more understanding in English language. Students have to review the lessons before submitting the answers of online quizzes; and by this way, they have gained more understanding in English grammar. E-learning helps promote students' achievement as indicated by their higher scores in summative test. The majority of the students (53 out of 56) performed better in summative test and gained higher scores. Only three students earned lower scores.

In conclusion, Schoology can encourage students' motivation and create positive attitudes towards learning activities outside the English class. It can also increase interaction and relationship between teachers and students. Using e-learning activities to the regular lessons helps and creates effective learning and teaching environment. However, some technical problems of the program were reported by students that they could not submit their answers to quizzes and their scores were not recorded and shown on the program.

Overall, the action research shows increased student engagement when technology is used. The implementation of Schoology e-learning can motivate students and has a positive effect on students' learning outcomes. Immediate feedbacks in online quizzes lead students to have more drive to excel. Limited time and deadlines in performing each task help encourage students to search for further information on the lessons.

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