A Portrait of Higher Education Students' Experiences of doing Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) Speaking Practices In Indonesia

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Abstract. *This paper aimed to explore the experiences of higher education students on Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) speaking practices and their personal insight of IDLE influences on their speaking skill. Through this study it is revealed that language learning style on the case of IDLE speaking practice was successfully explained on the practice. This research used interview and participants' observation. For analyzing the data, the researcher used narrative inquiry model including data collection, data transcription and reporting the narrative study. The participants were two undergraduate female students. Both of them have an experience to go abroad and have a lot of online foreigner friends by IDLE. The result explained that participants have different purposes of practiced IDLE speaking and the way they practiced IDLE speaking. These practices also influenced their speaking aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, fluency, comprehension, and pronunciation. This new learning strategy in an informal context helps them as university students to love their process of learning a language.*

Key words*: extramural learning, informal learning, narrative, speaking.*

A. INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, the way of learning in the 21st century is now different. In recent years technology and digital industry developed faster than another branch of knowledge. Nowadays from young generation until old age, they have been closest with digital devices or digital media. Therefore, there is a new form of learning a language in an informal context in this digital era. The new form of language learning in an informal setting is Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE). Lee & Lee (2019, p. 3) state in their study that IDLE explained as "self-directed, naturalistic, digital learning of English in formless, out-of-class environments, and independent of a formal language program. In another study Lee & Dressman (2017) explain that the concept of IDLE (informal digital learning of English) is as self-directed learning, using a range of different digital devices (for example the use of smartphones, MP3, TV, computer and laptops) and resources (like the internet, blogs, KaKaoTalk (Korea's popular social media platform), Facebook,

Skype, online games, and web apps) independent of formal context. This definition of IDLE is very appropriate to digital native, especially higher education.

The digital media devices and technology were as tools for practice and learning a language outside the classroom. Oxford and Shearin (1994) state that the difference between English as a foreign language (EFL) context and English as a second language (ESL) context is that learners usually do not have the opportunity to use the L2 outside the classroom. This Informal digital learning of English (IDLE) was across the border of the difference between both of them. According to the paper by MacIntyre et al. (2003, p. 543), Skehan (1989) said that L2 conversation with a native speaker or a more competent fellow student could be an informal language acquisition context if learners are willing to "talk to learn." It also gives another beneficial besides EFL students get the English environment outside the classroom. It is a chance for them to learn more, especially in another culture. Lee, Lee, and Drajati (2018, p. 1) stated that in this multicultural and multilingual world, it is necessary to understand and use English as an international language (EIL) for effective cross-cultural communication. In the case of willingness to communicate drag the students to create the opportunities to use the language through IDLE practices to know another culture and unconsciously use English as an international language.

This research rises from the issue of willingness to communicate (WTC) that was developed by McCroskey. MacIntyre (2007, p. 564) said that even after studying a language for many years, some L2 learners remain silent and not turn into L2 speakers. They remain silent rather than speak up in their second language (L2). As MacIntyre and Charos (1996, p. 3) state that communication is more than a means of facilitating language learning, it is an essential goal in itself. One must use the language to develop proficiency. The proficiency itself is closest in speaking skill. Some experts such as Brown (2001); Richard and Renandya(2002); Asakereh and Dehghannezhad (2015); Chaney & Burk (1998) in Abrar et al (2018); Logan et al (1972) in Paitung et al (2015) say that speaking means communication, conversation, and it is an indispensable part of everyday life. In the digital era, there are a lot of ways to speak up and to communicate through social media, online games, or web apps. This topic is essential for the EFL learner, especially in Indonesia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that the fourth industrial Revolution should be our tool in

achieving the agenda 2030 and SDGs. This issue used to face the global challenge of the new digital industry.

The previous study of informal digital learning of English (IDLE) was from Lee and Dressman (2017), they found that there is a relationship between the quality of IDLE practices and students' English outcomes. In their study, the participants are South Korean university EFL students. This study suggests that EFL students can achieve high English proficiency with little or no formal language instruction. There are a lot of reviews about speaking in an informal context in Indonesia that concern in higher education students such as "students' personal initiative toward their speaking performance (Liando & Lumettu, 2017). The newest study of IDLE in Indonesia was from Lee and Drajati (2019, p. 168). They found that IDLE activities and affective variables correlated significantly with students' willingness to communicate. As the one and the newest research of IDLE in Indonesia, it concludes that the study as regards IDLE practices in English speaking for higher education has not yet been carried out in prior in this digital era.

Based on the necessity, the study as regards IDLE speaking practices of higher education students needs to be conducted in this digital era of Indonesian society. This article elicits higher education students learning experiences of IDLE speaking practices. Specifically, this study was intended to answer two research questions:

    1. How do university students engage in speaking activities during IDLE?

    2. To what extent can IDLE speaking practices develop higher education students' speaking skill?

B. METHOD

This narrative inquiry method used should have a specific participant. In order to recruit the participants for this study, the researcher collaborates with a lecturer of a university, two higher education students (Dee and Ann) who had practiced IDLE for their daily life. Their average age was 21, and they had been studying English for an average of 13 years at the time of the study English.

They have been chosen under some particular considerations that were they conducted IDLE practices such as an online game, using a lot of social media to communicate with a foreigner, watching English movie, watching video on YouTube and listening music. Both of them have been going abroad (Philippine and India for Dee, Thailand for Ann) to have experience in teaching and traveling, to learn another culture and have friends of some foreigners. They are a close friend. The prospective participants were asked if they were interested in participating in the study. She has a lot of chatting application to communicate with foreign friends such as Tinder, Badoo, Kick, Buzzara, Bottled, WhatsApp, Instagram, Daily Postcard and etc.

This was a qualitative narrative inquiry. As cited in Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik (2014, p. 2), some experts emphasize that the main strength of narrative inquiry lies in its focus on how people use stories to make sense of their experiences in the areas of inquiry whereby it is important to understand phenomena from the perspectives of those who experience them. The purpose is to arrive at a detailed story of experiences and understanding of the entity (the "theme"). The underlying question is "How are the experiences of higher education students in doing IDLE speaking practices and to what extent can IDLE speaking practices help students widen their social, other culture understanding and develop speaking skills". The second question will be answered based on the five aspects of speaking by Brown (2004, p. 157). He mentioned that five aspects of speaking are grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. The researcher used this theory to explore participants' views of their own speaking skills.

The researcher uses the thematic analysis to analyze the narrative data in this research. The model of thematic analysis is proposed by Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 74-77) whereby it contains three activities: 1) repeatedly reading of the data, 2) coding and categorizing the data extracts, and 3) recognizing the thematic headings. In this study, the researcher uses thematic analysis: Multiple case studies to analyze the data. The transcribed data were analyzed by thematic analysis of narrative inquiry. The processes of collecting and analyzing the data are conducted systematically. The core of the data is interview data, which is to know the experiences of the participants. The supplementary is participants' observation data.

To enrich the quality of the study, several strategies were engaged. First, the research instruments, the data collection procedures, and the systematic process of data analysis were prudently designed. It is the way to achieve rigor, trustworthiness and generalizability as Barkhuizen said in his study. Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 89) argued that rigor means the degree to which an analysis is systemic with regard to both the coverage of data and the application of analytical procedures. He also said in the same study (2014, p. 90) that trustworthiness refers to the rather complex of the question of the relationship between the findings of narrative inquiry studies and the underlying the realities they purport to represent. In other pages Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 92) stated that Generalizability is the sense that the study should apply to a wide range of context and make some contribution to theory. The transcription and the finding were presented to the participants for verification.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the narrative inquiry method, the answers to those questions of the research were found from participants' stories, especially their stories of learning through IDLE speaking practices. Polkinghorne (1995) in Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 3), states that the analysis of narratives is the research in which stories are used as data. Their stories come up from the answers of the interview questions. The researcher found the answers to both research questions of Dee's and Ann's stories. The participants have different aims or motivations of practiced IDLE speaking and the way they practiced IDLE speaking. Moreover, IDLE speaking practices influenced their vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. Those will be presented in detail in the following sections.

The first motivation of Dee did her informal digital learning of English speaking practice was to get a foreigner-boyfriend. This motivation rose after watching Percy Jackson Movie and British channel YouTube. It was like a huge motivation for her for the first time. She also did informal digital learning of English speaking to support her hobby and interest. She said that in the interview.

Dee: It is little bit weird because when someone asks me the goal or my aim, first because I like foreign people so I want to have a foreign boyfriend. And I love tourism, traveling, so that is why I tried to use social media, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and etc., to meet someone abroad, had a talk with them.

Ann's first motivation and target to do informal digital learning of English speaking was to be fluent in speaking English. Her first motivation rose after she got an assignment from her lecturer to look for foreigner friends from online applications. But day by day the motivation has been transformed to make a lot of friends around the world. It could be seen in Ann's story according to the interview.

> Ann: My first target a long ago was to get fluent in speaking English but day by day and year by year my speaking was improved. So my target and motivation was changed. Nowadays my target and motivation is to get a lot of friends.

The researcher captures their motivations are to be fluent in speaking, to get a lot of friends, to get a boyfriend from abroad, to meet people that have the same interest and to get help when going abroad. These motivations changed their habit of speaking. Dee and Ann stated in the interview that through IDLE practices made English as a part of their life. It means that they use English every day in their daily life.

Both participants have a different character that influenced the way they practiced IDLE. Dee was more open minded so she opened their communication for all people and she practiced a lot in communication than other form of IDLE practices. Her frequency of IDLE speaking practices more than five hours a day. Dee felt sometimes wasting her time when she spend a lot of time to practice IDLE activity.

> Dee: I am texting, yes. I am video calling, yes. I am phone calling, yes. I am open to have a real conversation by call, or by video call. Because, once someone told me that he came from Australia, a foreigner or native, but the reality he came from Dubai. He was like Indian or was from Pakistan, it was totally different. After this incident I prefer video call.

> Dee: I may say I am open to anything. I like to talk about literally anything, even if it is taboo because I love to know about a new thing, and it makes me have friends in different like different people.

Dee: I sleep eight hours every day so I practices IDLE twelve hours a day. Oh my God I wasted my time a lot. I just realized it. Wasting time. Maybe I practice IDLE speaking on average six hours a day.

Ann was more close minded so she was more selective to accept all people to be a friend and she practiced a lot in watching video or chatting by text than other practices. Her frequency of IDLE speaking practices less than four hours a day.

Ann: For me, the process took a long time to talk to people like that, not directly when I knew him for a week, and then I called. So, it is different from my friend Dee.

Ann: I ever used the application named Kik. I tried it because my friend Dee was using it. I also wanted to try. But after I used the app, it was not suitable with my personality. In Kik everyone was very open and the content inside was so explicit about sex and love. I was not comfortable using it. I choose to uninstall the application at the day I install it.

Ann: There are some limits in my practice in learning speaking to strangers. Well, I am not too open-minded. I mean, I can talk about anything. I mean, I can talk about sex to people but not by voice.

Ann: I communicate with my online foreign friends almost every day. In general I usually practice IDLE six or five hours because just watch YouTube video at least three hours.

The researcher used five aspects of speaking by Brown (2004, p.157). They were grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and pronunciation. This part started from Dee's speaking skills first and then Ann's speaking skills.

Dee's vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation and fluency were improved. Dee's grammar was on improvement through peer learning with her friends' grammar when they spoke English. She was not only correcting herself when she did the mistake of grammar, but also her friends did the same (vice versa). She considered as a "grammar nazi" and "pronunciation nazi" like her friends sometimes called her by those titles too. Dee usually corrected her friends' pronunciation when she heard that her friends' pronunciation was wrong. She also felt that her vocabularies were improved. It influenced to Dee's comprehension and also her fluency on English speaking. She told that IDLE speaking practice made a good habit for her. The habit was talking in English with friends. She said that in the interview.

Dee: Absolutely, yes it improved. I became to be a grammar nazi sometimes. Some of my friends called me grammar nazi and pronunciation nazi because I always reminded them to use correct grammar and pronunciation. It is like irritated when I hear something wrong in pronunciation or structure and I know the correct one.

Dee: IDLE practices improve my vocabulary. I knew more about their language slang from chatting and playing online game with my foreign friends.

Dee: My comprehension also improves significantly. I learn to comprehend what someone says from movies or video and especially through chatting with my foreign friends. It helps me to improve my comprehension so much.

Dee: My fluency improves when I start to talk with my online foreign friends by text, by call and by video call and finally becomes my habit to talk in English with my friends

Dee: I usually improve and practice pronunciation through film. When I was a newbie in learning English I watched movies in English subtitle. I usually look at the actors who speak the words to know how to speak the words and what the words that they speak.

Ann's grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation and fluency were improved. She realized that she made a mistake of grammar when she spoke and then she corrected it. She felt her vocabulary and comprehension were developing through IDLE practices. Ann also learned how to pronounce words through IDLE practices. She considered that her fluency improved when her fillers were decreasing so far. Nevertheless, she also realized that she was not in a good speed yet because of her over thinking before speaking to everyone. She admitted too that she was afraid if she hurt someone's feeling because of her words. It could be seen in her story according to the interview

Ann: IDLE improves my vocabulary. It is because through communicate with others automatically we get new vocab from them.

Ann: It also improves listening skill of course. Especially when I communicate with my online foreign friends helps me to improve my listening comprehension. It is because they use different accent so I must try hard to understand.

Ann: Then I also improve my fluency in speaking and communicating. Even until now, I realize that I am not fluent yet like a native but there is a progress than before. Long time before I practice it, I made a lot of fillers. Even today I still make some fillers but it is decrease.

Ann: I usually improve and practice pronunciation through film. When I was a newbie in learning English I watched movies in English subtitle. I usually look at the actors who speak the words to know how to speak the words and what the words that they speak.

D. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored Dee's and Ann's motivation of doing IDLE speaking practices. The motivations or aims always be improved and be transformed. Both of them said that their motivation was not about learning because on their mind learning was boring. They just did it for fun communication to find more friends in the world but finally they learned a lot. They did not realize it. Moreover, refers to Gardner (1985, 2001, 2010) in Lee and Drajati (2019, p. 170), motivation is positively associated with L2 learning and acquisition. It means that their motivation positively associates with their English speaking level. Dee felt motivated and very excited when her communication was fluent with native. Ann felt happy when she met the topic that she loved it. Both of them felt their English speaking level was improved.

On one more supportive research by Lee and Dressman (2017), they found that there was a relationship between the quality of IDLE practices and students' English outcomes. On their study, the participants were South Korean university EFL students. This study suggested that EFL students could achieve a high English proficiency with little or no formal language instruction. The relationship between IDLE practices and higher education students speaking skills was rising on this research outcome. Dee and Ann realized that their speaking skills were improved through IDLE practices. Actually they were not aware about the improvement because they just did it and they enjoyed informal digital learning of English.

Dee and Ann got different stimulation then internally being motivated to practice IDLE speaking practices. Dee's first motivation rose after she watched Hollywood Movie "Percy Jackson". Nevertheless, Ann's first motivation rose after she got an assignment from her lecturer. All of those facts then in line with Chapelle (2010); Zhao & Lai (2007) in Lai (2013, p. 100) said that technology is expected both to enhance language instruction inside the classroom and to extend language education beyond the classroom. Thus, the role of the teacher is to encourage and support the students to practice IDLE. It is essential to maximizing the potential of technology for language learning. It is like the case of the reason of the first motivation of Ann after she did the assignment

from the teacher. It was just a simple one. The teacher did not ask her to always practice IDLE speaking practice. Her teacher asked her to record the video or audio of her and her online foreign friends. The teacher just gave a door of IDLE speaking practice and Ann just should open the door of IDLE speaking practice and enjoys it.

The general implications of the study are for the higher education students, the English teacher, and Parents. Related to the higher education students' experience in IDLE speaking practice here both are different in the percentage of practicing it. Both participants practiced two kinds of IDLE including receptive and productive informal digital learning of English. Sometimes they could not control the time when they practiced it. They spent a lot of time to practice receptive IDLE such as watching the video on YouTube or watching movies. Not only in practicing receptive IDLE but also productive IDLE such as using social media, chatting or calling with their online foreign friends. Both have a good digital literacy. They used digital media in a right way even sometimes they overtime when using it. The main character of this research is the higher education students but the role of the teacher rose from those experiences.

The teacher introduces and facilitates the informal digital learning of English through their assignment for the students. Teacher wants the students experience and after that the students could find their own motivation to continue this IDLE speaking practice or just stop it as an assignment. Not only the teacher rise in those experiences but also parents. Parents here give a lot of chances and believe in their daughter to do everything that they love in the case of good activities. This research has weaknesses on the limitation of participants and time. For a further research can be conducted under some particular considerations such as using quantitative or mix method research, using another variable not only IDLE but also the correlation between IDLE and students character or motivation, or conducting the research of IDLE in a broader area and another grade of students. As we know that all of the students now used hand-phone as their digital media everyday as their part of life. There seems highly possible to reach the novelty of the research.

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