

# Engaging Students' Experiences and Practices through Computer-Mediated Communication in Learning Grammar

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**Abstract.** The development of technology impacts English education in numerous ways. A computer is used by teachers and students to enhance learning in an English classroom setting. The pandemic learning process enabled students to communicate more via Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). Students may connect with others all across the globe via the use of CMC. It serves as a means of communication between people. The benefits of CMC are a significant element in the success of the EFL class. The purposes of this study were to explore the EFL university students' experience and practices through CMC in Grammar learning. This study applied a qualitative approach. The findings of the study revealed that CMC through Human-to-Human fostered a more engaging classroom experience and offered the university students with the opportunity to actively communicate with their lecturers and peers. The students also showed the positive attitudes and could ease the learning experience on the use of low technologies in learning Grammar. The present study recommends engaging EFL students' experiences and practices through learning tools as low technologies.

**Key words:** computer-mediated communication; grammar.

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## INTRODUCTION

When both lecturers and learners participate in the process, teaching English becomes more engaging. It is possible if lecturers apply efficient and comprehensive techniques and instructional material. In the past, lecturers might utilize traditional styles in teaching to get students to pay more attention to instructions. Students in that time had to locate a learning resource to help them enhance their English knowledge. Lecturers instruct students to accomplish tasks in offline ways. Students often do it by writing on a piece of paper.

We are now live in a technological age. The use of technology in the classroom should be tied into the educational process. The use of technology towards its full potential improves the teaching and learning process. Technology can assist lecturers and students in comprehending and applying the learning. Anh (2019) stated that the students showed positive attitudes about using technologies in the language lessons. It may also serve as an encouragement for students who are learning English.

In relating with technological development, educational system is now integrating with the sophisticated technology in form of e-learning. E-learning has emerged to be the primary alternative to conventional face-to-face learning

techniques during pandemic situation (Alam et al., 2021). Lecturers can adapt to the changing developments in the utilization of online and offline teaching strategies. Student needs should be taken into consideration throughout the teaching and learning process at every level of education. It is possible that teaching young learners and adult learners are two completely different entities.

At the college level, the learning source must be used to its full potential in the classroom. College students have a tendency to be distinctive and outspoken. They have their own capacity, and they sometimes present it to course to promote it. Lecturers' role-playing is very essential in this context since it helps them control the lesson. Controlling a class is a difficult task to do well. All lecturers and students need to work together to achieve success. Ideally, the students have to be active in grammar class. However, there are some students do not actively participated in class. In this study, the writers are particularly interested in the implementation of Grammar class through Computer-Mediated Communication.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

During the teaching and learning process, each student seems to have the same opportunities to be involved. The goal of learning is to obtain an

understanding of the subject matter. When lecturers are able to transmit information to students via the use of digital technologies, the students will feel empowered. There are different types of learning resources which lecturers may include into their lessons. They are synchronous and asynchronous mode. In a number of ways, the synchronous and asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) modes are interconnected and distinctive. CMC has evolved into a significant mode of communication as a new type of human connection through computer systems (Zeng, 2017).

CMC development is related to the significant development of information and communication technology. Most of the people communicate through the internet in this digital age. Students may connect with individuals all around the globe through CMC. It is the means through which individuals communicate with one another.

Besides face-to-face communications, CMC is becoming a significant component in learning and teaching settings. Chao et al. (2020) argued that in regard of the fluency, adaptability, and original aspects of creative thinking, computer-mediated communication outperformed face-to-face communication. The computer-mediated communication also had a higher degree of media richness perceptions than the face-to-face (i.e., utilization of numerous signals, linguistic variety, and personalized emphasis of the communication).

People may change the way they communicate depending on their circumstances. They may also investigate the kind of communication to get information. The lecturer could use Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) to enhance students' productive and receptive skills (Garrote, 2018). Furthermore, Sabrina (2020) states that applying CMC in English class can help students in improving their oral fluency. CMC also services into language classes, various types of language learning are being developed. Due to the obvious capabilities of this technology, educational methods in the area of SLA have undergone a significant revolution. The opportunities for collaborative learning that are provided can develop English skills and components.

One of the most familiar tools in CMC used in learning is WhatsApp. Tragant et al. (2020) states that WhatsApp is a very effective method for students' learning since it foster communication between lecturer and students, along with amongst students. Additionally, it facilitates

continuous learning. It belongs to low technology application. In addition, WhatsApp is as a cost-effective interactions, communication, and reminder tool. Collaborative learning, English skill development, and remote learning facilitation were the primary benefits of using this app. WhatsApp established itself as a critical instrument when lecturer and students used it as a teaching and learning strategy during the lesson (Mabaso, 2021).

WhatsApp is very important in learning context. Communication between people on WhatsApp makes this application widely used in the higher education. Both lecturer and students can communicate actively through this application tool. Human-to-human interaction in WhatsApp makes the learning process more effective because the interaction between lecturer and students is well established. The majority of students stated that utilizing WhatsApp helped them develop social skills and confidence, as well as foster good connections with their peers and lecturer (Alghamdy, 2019). It also supported by the menu of emoticons and emojis. Emojis are graphical representations that users may use in electronic media to express how they feel about a topic (Gupta et al., 2021).

## **METHODS**

### **Research Goal**

The research goals were to explore the students' experiences and practices through CMC in learning grammar. This study applied qualitative approach.

### **Sample and Data Collection**

The participants of this study were the two classes from the second semester students of English Education Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Muria Kudus. The data of this study were the students' experiences and practices through Computer-Mediated Communication in learning grammar. To collect the data, the writer used observation and interview as the instruments of the study.

### **Analyzing of Data**

The writers analyzed the data through data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In the grammar class, the students communicated through Computer-Mediated Communication. From the class observation, the

writers examined the teaching and learning grammar class. The lecturer and students applied WhatsApp during the class. The summary of the students' experiences and practices are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Summary of the Students' Experiences and Practices through CMC in learning Grammar

Activity	Notes
Academic information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Delivering the materials</li> <li>2. Explaining the materials</li> <li>3. Giving the feedback</li> <li>4. Evaluating the students' works</li> </ol>
Collaboration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaborating activities among the students in the class</li> <li>2. Working in small groups</li> </ol>
Motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Giving support and motivation in academic context</li> <li>2. Giving support and motivation in non-academic context</li> </ol>
Greeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Giving every day greeting</li> <li>2. Showing condition</li> </ol>
Enjoyment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Giving jokes</li> <li>2. Sharing photos and videos</li> <li>3. Showing emoticons and emojis</li> </ol>

Then, the writer interviewed some students to get the supported data on engaging students' experiences and practices through Computer-Mediated Communication in learning grammar.

The interview aimed at exploring the students' perspective on the strengths and the weaknesses of WhatsApp. The result of the interview can be seen in the following table 2.

**Table 2.** The Strengths and the Weaknesses of WhatsApp

The strengths	The weaknesses
Easy to use	Too much chats
Active communication	Missed information
Can send the learning materials	Low participation and interaction
Can send the text and voice notes	
Low bandwidth	

The objectives of the study were to explore the students' experiences and practices through CMC by using regular WhatsApp and WhatsApp Group in learning grammar. From the result of the observation, the lecturer and students used WhatsApp for certain usage, namely academic information, collaboration, motivation, greeting, and enjoyment. The significant process in the grammar learning was dominantly by conducting academic matters. Both the lecturers and the students actively communicated by using CMC through WhatsApp. They applied Human-to-Human Communication. In delivering the materials to the students, the lecturers shared the information in form of word, power point, video, etc. Then, the students downloaded the materials to study. Besides that, the lecturer also explained the materials to the students. She also checked the students' understanding by calling names and

asking them to answer some questions. In addition, the lecturer also gave feedback to the students. Among the students discussed the learning materials actively. If there were students didn't participate in the discussion, the lecturer encouraged them to be active. In giving evaluation to the students, the lecturer also communicated via WhatsApp Group. The lecturer and the students shared the ideas related to the tasks.

WhatsApp also can be used for students' collaboration. Collaboration is a technique to improve critical thinking skills and cooperation among students. Collaborative activities can strengthen relationships and increase student abilities. From the results of observations in class, students collaborate in two ways, with all friends in the class and with small groups. In the whole class, the students did collaboration together,

while in small groups, they could communicate with each other intensively via WhatsApp so that they get a better understanding. In addition, the implementation of WhatsApp as part of learning activities may help to encourage active learning and improve collaboration before and after lectures, as well as during lectures (Dahdal, 2020).

Through CMC in form of Whatsapp, the grammar learning could run well. It could be seen from the high students' motivation. The lecturer gave support and motivation not only related to academic context but also non-academic context to the students. For example, in academic context, the lecturer gave rewards to the students who actively participated in the discussion. However, in non-academic context, the students often gave support to their friends to be relaxed during pandemic situation.

In every meeting, the lecturer always greeted the students. Most of the students responded actively. The existence of lecturer and students in virtual classrooms made lecturer to push them to be more active in learning. To foster relationship between lecturer and students and among students, providing health information and wishes for education and a brighter future become a great chance to support and motivate each other. Students can also show the conditions they are currently facing.

Furthermore, the lecturer and the students also used WhatsApp for enjoyment. Enjoyment is also a part of activities during the virtual class. It is very important given in class considering the pandemic period. All lectures were delivered via online mode so that sometimes students felt bored and needed offline learning in class. Based on the field observations, lecturer and students in the grammar in written discourse class always gave jokes to activate the class atmosphere. Lecturer and students also shared photos and videos where other students could provide comments using English which could improve their English skills.

Nowadays, many people especially young students use emoticons and emojis to communicate. Students assume that emoticons and emojis can represent interactions between people. So they are can be used in CMC. Sampietro (2021) states that the uses range from social media marketing to improving chatbot interactions by effectively replicating a human's usage of emojis to indicate or react to hilarious comments. Furthermore, the usage of emoticons is essential in CMC since they allow for better emotional expression when no context is

available (Aldunate & González-Ibáñez, 2017).

After doing class observation, the writer also interviewed some students. The students informed the strengths and the weaknesses on the use of WhatsApp. The strengths of WhatsApp are related to easy use, active communication, can send the learning materials via text and voice notes and low bandwidth. Lecturer and students could use WA easily. They could also use the WhatsApp web version. The features on WA were also simple to use so that students could communicate with their friends easily. Most of the students stated in the interview *"It's easy to use and simple. I like it. It is very useful in the discussion in learning grammar"*.

The use of WA as a medium in CMC was very helpful in learning grammar. This was reflected in the activeness of students in responding and discussing topics in learning grammar. Students were very enthusiastic about expressing their opinions using English, while if there were mistakes, the lecturers and other students could inform the mistakes so that they could be justified. The students mentioned that *"Communicating via Whatsapp helped me improve my English skills. I can communicate with my lecturer and my peers actively"*. It is in line with the previous study that WhatsApp encounters had a substantial effect on the students' language learning context by reducing their speaking anxiety (Han & Keskin, 2016).

In learning grammar, lecturer and students could communicate through text and voice notes. Voice notes are used when the lecturer needs to provide a rather lengthy explanation and clarification on the topic being discussed to make it easier for students to understand. One of the preferred advantages of WA was low bandwidth. Lecturer and students did not need a lot of internet data in learning grammar. They could also interact and communicate directly via WA so that learning was more active. Most of the students stated that *" I like using Whatsapp in learning grammar because it didn't need much internet data"*.

Otherwise, the weaknesses of WhatsApp are too much chats, missed information, and low participation and interaction. In the pandemic situation, the lecturer needs to apply interesting learning technique to attract students' attention in the class and to create an active atmosphere. One of the media that can be used is using Whatsapp including Whatsapp Group. On the other hand, Whatsapp also has weaknesses. Students stated that when using Whatsapp Groups in learning

grammar, too many chats often occurred. When the lecturer greeted students, almost all students responded and answered the greeting. This makes the Whatsapp Group full of almost the same responses and answers that were repeated. As stated by the students during the interviewed “*too much chats sometimes make me confusing*” In the Whatsapp Group menu, there is no menu that can classify chats with one another so that the chats can be organized well.

The second weakness when using CMC Human-to-Human via Whatsapp Group is missed information. The number of chats in one time period causes missed information. For example, if the lecturer explained the learning material and there were several questions from students, sometimes there were questions that were not answered because of the accumulation of chats. This is a weakness of the Whatsapp system which cannot classify chats into separated parts.

In the use of Whatsapp Group, there were some students who didn't participate in learning activities. It occurred because they were reluctant to participate in the communication and interaction. The student explained that “*I think my friends had already responded to the information.*”

## CONCLUSION

Whatsapp is one of CMC through Human-to-Human that can be applied in learning grammar in the class. The menus on Whatsapp are very simple and easy to use so it is a choice that can be used in learning context. Lecturer and students can easily communicate via Whatsapp. During grammar learning, lecturer and students are greatly helped by the presence of Whatsapp, which can run the grammar learning process. Whatsapp also helps students to improve their English skills and competencies. Additionally, it provides students with engaging experience and offers active communication between lecturer and students. The strengths of Whatsapp make this learning application very useful in the classroom to help the learning process. Students showed a positive response in using Whatsapp as CMC through Human-to-Human which could help creating an effective and fun learning atmosphere in the use of simple technology. Therefore, this present study suggested for the lecturer to use Whatsapp as a low technology to engage the students' experiences and practices in learning grammar.

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