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## Students' Experiences of Using Vlogs to Learn English

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### Abstract

There has been a change in the process of learning from a conventional way into the technologically-based way these days. From this change, it is necessary to find out the significance of utilizing technology in learning English from students' perspectives. This study aims to investigate the EFL

students' experiences of using vlogs, as one of the technology products to learn English. In conducting this research, the researchers adopted exploratory study as the approach and employed the hermeneutic phenomenology as the research design. These designs have relations to description and interpretation of the meaning of EFL students' experience. One student participated in this study. The researchers employed the student's reflection as part of the assignment after making vlogs as well as a one-on-one in-depth interview to obtain the data. At this point, two research questions are underlying this study, namely: (1) How are the students' experiences in learning English using vlogs?; (2) What does the student learn from it? From the data analysis, the researchers found several findings in this study. For the first research question, there are three findings found, namely, losing words to say, conveying English language expression, expressing his identity, looking for additional information in English. For the second research question, there are four findings revealed. Those were detailed guideline making, better editing, confidence gaining, and vocabulary improvement.

*Keywords:* MALL; YouTube; Vlog; English learning; students' experiences

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## Introduction

The term Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0 has been becoming a hot topic in Indonesia recently. In this particular era, a lot of revolutions, such as in technology innovations has emerged rapidly to the surface of any aspects of life like in education, because of that, these days, technology has claimed further its role in language teaching-learning through its software or hardware.

Additionally, without a doubt, a lot of teachers have also brought more technology, such as through mobile devices, into their classrooms to facilitate the teaching-learning environment. For example in language learning, using mobile devices in language classroom have revealed several positive outcomes, such as providing access of collaborative classroom activities for group in

speaking, writing, and listening as well as enriching the activities in classroom authentically by using mobile apps or online sites (Godwin-Jones, 2018).

Furthermore, another innovation of technology which has become very popular recently is what is a so-called vlog and YouTube channel. YouTube is an online video-sharing or video hosting, which lets users have access to uploading, sharing, and watching videos (Dean, 2008; Weinberg, 2009). Gunelius (2018) also adds that vlog is a type of blog in which it is full of video content in it. Having a channel on YouTube, people can create vlog content then upload it to their channel. Thus, due to this phenomenon, teachers or learners also possibly can use vlog on YouTube or create their own to get them involved in the environment of the teaching-

learning process. This method can be such a fun way of learning the language. Seeing this fact, it reveals that education also has changed and has brought education to entering its new era, namely Education 4.0. In the age of Education 4.0, it essentially uses technology-based tools and resources to drive education in non-traditional ways. With this era, it allows a lot of activities that teachers can collectively relate to the current real-life situation and condition. Consequently, learners will have the opportunity to be exposed to different kinds of authentic resources. Therefore, this sort of new way of education is essentially positive.

Further, several scholars conducted studies involving vlogs in language teaching-learning that have also revealed several results. A study from Avci and Aksar (cited in Maulidah, 2018) shows that they have found some significances of Vlogs, such as to develop an effective tool to build self-efficacy. Maulidah (2018) also finds out that,

Vlog significantly can increase learners' speaking ability. It can boost students' encouragement by providing a fun and accessible learning process. Also, it promotes a good presentation in students' speaking performance. They will be able to interact in an authentic environment to get a lot of exposure in speaking. Besides, students get a chance to build up their

autonomous learning. Those several things bring students to enhance their progress in speaking ability (p. 15).

Moreover, "involving more vlogging in oral communication class also increases student talk time. More oral communication practice helps students improve mastery of new vocabulary and grammar, decrease shyness while bolstering confidence, and develop fluency." (Watkins, 2012, p. 197)

From those previous relevant research findings and currently available kinds of literature, only a few studies have tried to investigate the experiences of learners when they get vlogs involved in English language learning. Instead, a lot of studies on vlogs tend to focus on revealing its use in language learning to enhance speaking ability. This study, therefore, tries to reveal learners' experiences in learning English when using vlogs as well as to find out what they learn based on their perspectives by describing and interpreting them to have an empathic understanding. With that, the findings will reveal richer information on the significances of using vlogs in English language learning.

## Literature Review

### MALL

The rapid development of innovations in mobile technology has significantly given a contribution to all aspects of human life. One of them is in grasping knowledge. Thus, this allows a lot of people to have broader access to learn the different extent of knowledge like language learning. Such contributions of mobile technology have opened up a new way of learning languages, namely Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). MALL deals with language learning, based on the employment of mobile devices. MALL often offers a way to access learning materials and to interact with teachers and peers, exceeding place and time barriers in a way that has never been possible until now. By using this technology, teachers or students will have the likelihood of teaching and learning languages more fruitfully and interestingly. Several available devices like mobile phones, smartphones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), tablet personal computers (PCs) and laptop PCs, except desktops, can support MALL in carts and other similar solutions (Traxler, 2005). The involvement of all these devices in the language teaching-learning provides students with the opportunity to experience learning

languages every time, and everywhere they are, such as a bus, at home, or in public places.

Moreover, it is the fact that mobile phones, for example, has become part of many learners' life so that they will not find it difficult using it when accessing learning materials. Additionally, the emergence of the internet has also opened wider possibilities of eliminating distances in getting various and rich learning materials from all parts of the world only through mobile technology. As a result, by learning using mobile phones, learners can access varieties of language materials provided by teachers or other sources through self-searching easily.

Furthermore, this sort of language learning based upon mobile is very helpful in conducting activities outside the classroom since these activities let the learning to have a direct connection to the real-world experiences (Kukulska-Humle, 2009). Miangah and Nezarat (2012) also add that such as the advantages of mobile learning is collaborative learning, as this kind of learning is very encouraging. They allow different learners to swap their knowledge, skills, and attitudes through interaction as well as helps learners to support, motivate, and evaluate each other to reach significant amounts of

learning. It means that such a product of MALL is effective for language education.

### **Vlog**

The existence of computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) can be a useful tool to reinforce language learners and achieve the goal of meaningful language learning. One of the profound aspects in CMC is beneficial to achieve the language learning goal is the availability of web-logging, in which it has access to create a vlog (Meskill & Ranglova, 2000). A vlog stands for a video blog and sometimes videocast or vodcast. According to Gunelius (2018), a vlog is also a type of blog with full of video content in it. The name vlog is also employed by video streamers who do not utilize a blog but post scheduled videos through online video hosting like YouTube. However, live broadcasts count as vlogs too available on YouTube and Facebook. As a result, vlogs have gone as a mix of blogging and streaming, with or without the other as long as there are self-made, first-person videos involved.

### **Youtube Channel**

YouTube is an online video-sharing or video hosting, which lets users have access to uploading, sharing, and watching videos

(Dean, 2008; Weinberg, 2009). A channel on YouTube is not only the home for personal accounts but also for business accounts. The difference is the channel for business accounts has access to having more than one owner (Karch, 2019). Having a channel on YouTube means creating vlog contents, then uploading them on their channel. Additionally, the public can express their opinion towards the video uploaded on the channel. Teachers or learners also can use vlogs on YouTube or create themselves to get them involved in the environment of the teaching-learning process.

### **Vlogging in English Learning Classroom**

The era of IR 4.0 certainly has profound impacts on many aspects of life, including the learning system in the English education classroom. It shapes the new face of education. Back then, creativity and emotional intelligence did not belong to the skills that teachers had to master. However, now, teachers are demanded to change the way they teach and think in the classroom. They should be able to develop an innovative and creative learning model that can sharpen their students' critical thinking and do complex problem-solving. Importantly, they have to be able to associate all the aspects mentioned above with technology. Speaking

about technology, one of the technologies utilized by students to enhance their creativity, critical thinking, and complex problem-solving in the language learning process is vlogging. Since the major activity of vlogging involves an oral activity in which students are required to narrate some stories in their life while facing the camera, it is clear that Vlog can be utilized for students to develop their communicative skills. According to Rakhmanina and Kusumamingrum (2017), the vlogging project can help learners develop their speaking skills, communication skills, and also creativity. Dr. Anil (2016) also adds that vlogs help improving students' oral skills because it allows them to practice their English either inside or outside the classroom, and they can get instant feedback from the teachers as well as watch their fellow friends performance in the video. Therefore, it is a very good idea to conduct a Vlogging project in the English learning environment.

### **Related Studies**

Several previous studies have revealed the use of vlogs involved in teaching-learning processes. The first study is "Using Vlog in the Youtube Channel as a Means to Improve Students' Motivation and Confidence to Speak English in Intermediate 1 Level of LB-

LIA Jambi" and the second study is "Stepping up the English-Speaking Proficiency of Hospitality Students through Video Blogs (Vlogs)." Both of the researches above have the purpose of finding out whether Vlogs can enhance students' speaking skills or not. It is different from the research that is conducted by the researcher in which the focus area of the study is to investigate the experiences gained by the students. By investigating students' experiences in vlogging, the result obtained by the researchers will be more prosperous.

### **Methodology**

The study employed a hermeneutic phenomenology study. Phenomenology means that it has a close relation to the description, and hermeneutic means that it has a close relation to interpretation (Manen, 1990). The participant of this study was two students from the English for tourism course at the English Language Education Department of a private university in Yogyakarta batch of 2016. Willy and Gala, pseudonym, were sixth-semester students at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta, majoring English Education Department. Regarding this study, which aims to investigate students' experiences in making

English Vlogs, they were assigned to make a Vlog as a final project in the English for Tourism course. In this case, they made a vlog by using English, with a duration of approximately seven minutes.

The researchers administered an interview guideline, reflection, and vlog documentations as the instrument to collect the data. All the expected data were in the form of written text gained from the reflection and spoken text gained through interviews. In doing the interview, the researchers did a one-on-one in-depth interview. The participants had to fill in a consent form before the interview and in analyzing the data, the researchers employed Creswell's (2012) stages, consisting of six stages namely, collecting and organizing the data, coding the data, making descriptions and revealing the meanings, reporting the findings, interpreting the findings, and validating the findings. The transcribed data were then checked by the participant to convince that the data fit the participants' statements to validate the findings of the research. This process was named member checking to make sure the trustworthiness of the study.

## Findings and Discussions

Following up on the results, the researchers interviewed the participants and found several findings. In regards to research question one: how are the students' experiences in learning English using vlog? They reported that making a vlog to learn English was not easy due to losing words to say, conveying English expression, expressing identity, and looking for additional information in English.

For the second research question: what do the students learn from it? One participant mentioned that he had learned while doing the interview, namely detailed guideline making, better editing, confidence improvement, and vocabulary gaining.

From the interview result and the reflective report, the participant narrated that he was very excited and confident enough to conduct this project at first because he already had the same experiences in making videos. However, he did not realize that the vlog which he made previously was slightly different from the video assigned. In the previous project where he made vlog by his intention, he just needed to record everything without considering many things like the contents, durations, cinematography, as well as the concept of the vlog. Moreover, in his

previous vlog, he did not speak up and show his face. However, in the current project, he had to consider the other way around, such as the duration, contents, and purpose of making the vlog as well as communicating in front of the camera.

Although Willy is an English student, however, it seemed like English still became a threat to him. He got difficulty speaking English during video-recording; because of this matter, he felt overwhelmed. Starting from making guidelines, he was initially not aware of making any guidelines because he thought that guidelines were not important. However, in the middle of the process of recording the video, as he realized that he needed to speak in front of the camera by using a camera, it turned out that he was not able to say anything since he was confused and got shy speaking in front of the camera. Thus, he re-planned to make a guideline for the next video taking to help him deliver the contents.

### **Losing Words to Say**

Like writing a web-blog, to make decent and easy-to-organize writing, being well-prepared by making a guideline or framework for the blog is necessary. It is similar to vlog-recording. The difference is the script or guidelines to keep the contents on track.

Willy, the participant, found some difficulties as he did not make any guidelines. In the following statements, he revealed his experience.

“Frankly speaking, the most challenging experience that I had was in the script/guideline making process, since if we didn’t have script/guideline, we would not know what to say. But in the previous vlogs, we just went with the flow without any guideline to hold, and that led us to the confusion of what we should say. From that moment, we realized to start making not fully script but guideline. With that, we were able to set the sequence of what we should say (though our English was limited) in every part, like in the opening and so on.”

Gala, the other participant, added that “In terms of English language, although we are English Students and it is not our mother tongue. Also, it got worse when we had to speak in front of the camera. So there were times in the video we get stuck and confused. We didn’t know what to say”. It might be easier to speak in English if he did not speak while recording the video. However, since he needed to speak while recording, it made him lose the focus and ended up being stuck and confused.

Moreover, as depicted in Gala’s story above, making a vlog was not as easy as it seemed. There were several challenges that he

faced while making a vlog. Hung (2011) states that the case narrated by Gala in his reflection was an effective barrier. Willy very close to the description conveyed the term of the effective barrier because of effective barriers, according to Hung, is time constraints, discomfort with recording oneself, and some technological and logistical challenges. He adds that, for some people, video of oneself is more challenging than being video-recorded by other people. Video of oneself might indeed become discomfort for some people, especially for those who do not get used to being in videos. They would feel unnatural, strange, and awkward. However, it gets better by the time. The longer one is dealing with a camera, the faster he would feel comfortable.

Furthermore, this discomfort might be related to Krashen's theory (1985) regarding an effective filter hypothesis, which comprises several variables obstructing the process of language acquisition. These variables are motivation, confidence, and anxiety. Similar to the finding above, the factors which made Gala shy, afraid of speaking, uncomfortable, stuck, and confused in front of the camera might be caused by low confidence and anxiety (Zhipping, 2013).

### Conveying English Language Expression

Not having the opportunity to practice speaking in the real-life context is unfortunate. The learners may interact with peers and use the target language as it is necessary to reach the level of proficiency and fluency. Another opportunity nowadays is given by the vlogging platform to practice English. Through vlogging, English learners can practice conveniently without worrying about getting any mean feedbacks, which can demotivate them. In the vlog, learners can freely express any topics using any language. One participant also states the same idea that his vlog allowed him to practice his English skills, such as conveying the expressions of admiration in English. Here is what Gala has stated:

“What I experienced while making English vlog was I got a chance to convey something by using language expression that I had learned when I was still in senior high school. That was my first time going to Sambisari. What I did once I arrived at the destination was I could not stop expressing my admiration for that great temple. What I said was, ‘what a unique temple,’ oh my god, oh my lord, you can see that, what a very beautiful temple.”

As Gala revealed in his interview that vlogging conveyed his language expression. After watching his vlog, the researchers could see how he tried to convey the expression of

admiration. It is an expression that aims to convey admiration toward someone or something. This expression starts with 'how' or 'what.'

### **Expressing identity**

As vlog can facilitate to practice the target language, it is also possible for anybody to use vlog as the medium of showing or expressing someone's nationality. It is in line with the era of world English where there is no need for a Standard English accent like the American accent anymore. Instead, everyone may show their particular accents. One of the participants also shared the same idea. When he vlogged in English, he did not doubt to speak English with his Javanese accent. He asserted that,

"Both of us are from Java, and then although we are English students yet, we remain Javanese, which sometimes when we talk to other people, we tend to speak by using the Javanese accent. As you know, Javanese people are famous for his accent, aren't they? Thus, instead of being shy with our accent, we tried to reveal it by using *blankon*. We did this because we expect many people will watch our vlog and acknowledge our culture and identity."

Based on Gala's Statement, he wants to implement the notion of world English where

there is no standard for the English accent anymore. Not like the old times when people competed in speaking like a native speaker. Nowadays, English speakers from around the world should not feel embarrassed about their real dialects as long as the pronunciation is correct.

### **Looking for additional information in English**

When doing a vlog to a certain place like historical sites, for instance, a little research about the place is necessary as a part of being well-prepared. Some people might do this for fun, knowledge acquisition purposes, or gaining new vocabulary, which is essential. Another way is by reading English descriptions or information boards available. One participant often does those actions while doing a vlog at certain places. Here is what he states,

"As I mentioned earlier, we had never been to Sambisari Temple. Thus, I need to search for information related to the destination. Based on the information, I got experience to know more detail about the temple from the information board and the employers. Based on the explanation from the employees and the information board, I also realized that I needed to filter the information that I got. It is because the information that I read from the internet did not match with the

explanation from the information board and the employees.”

### **What the Participants Learned**

#### **Detailed guideline making**

Talking in front of the camera using the mother tongue alone and using a foreign language might be a pressure for some people. Therefore, in making a video, especially a vlog, considering making a detailed guideline about what to deliver is crucial. Detailed guidelines allow the creator to have sequences of video. With that, vloggers are not going to get confused about the sentences that should come out. One participant agrees as he states,

“After doing the vlogs, I realized that the guideline should be more detailed. If it were more detailed, it would be easier for us to set the sequence of what we should deliver.”

#### **Better editing**

Another lesson that the participants learned is how to create a good video. Furthermore, he learned how to edit videos. Putting in all the clips without cutting them off is not good for the results. Therefore, considering the flow of the video, the transition, the duration of effects can be a great way to edit the video. In the following is his statement.

“The most important thing, in this case, is that we know how to edit video good and not boring video. If we only talk all the time for 7 minutes of video, it will be boring. Thus, we should also know the proportion of editing the video so that it comes out a good result.”

#### **Confidence improvement**

Confidence is essential in language learning since it is the key to express easily and confidently. Moreover, delivering things in a vlog also needs such confidence, and vlog activity can be a great tool to try out exercising confidence. A previous study involving vlog in the classroom in Intermediate 1 Level of LB-LIA Jambi also had proved the significances of a vlog, and one is to improve the confidence of students (Sari, 2017). Willy, one of the participants, mentions that,

“Then, through these vlogs, I started to gain my confidence. The first time doing the vlogs, I was so bad at it. I used to feel like talking in front of the camera was different and weird. But after doing some, it was pretty comfortable talking in front of the camera.”

### **Vocabulary gaining**

In creating a vlog, the first important step is making the guidelines. From that process, people consciously will involve themselves with a lot of vocabulary from many new words or terms from the brochure, information boards, and even from the menu in the restaurant around. Consequently, through exposure, the vocabulary will improve at some point. Willy, the participant, revealed the same issue regarding his vocabulary after doing a vlog. The following is what he conveys.

“In the sense of English, I feel like I gain new vocabulary. It is because when I did the vlogs in tourism places, for example, they usually got information board in certain points, and that was very informative. In the information board, they usually had it in English and Indonesian, and from there, I have gained new terms or vocabulary.”

### **Conclusion and Suggestion**

The findings of the study had answered the research questions. They are: How are the student’s experiences in learning English using vlogs?; and What does the student learn from vlogging? The researchers had three findings in response to the first

research question. First, it was guideline making. One participant stated that his experience was challenging, and making a guideline was one of them. He revealed that a guideline was important and would help him a lot to deliver the content he wanted to convey. Second, it was a language barrier. He revealed that doing a vlog using a foreign language, in this case, was English, and was an issue for him. Third, the editing process. He admitted that he used to record everything that he wanted, but it eventually caused him trouble when it came to editing since he was confused what to edit.

Furthermore, the researchers discovered four findings for the second research question. First, one participant admitted that in making a guideline, it had to be in details and clear, because it eased him a lot while talking in front of the camera. Second, it was better editing. The participant learned that he should not have put all the videos he took while editing them. Instead, cutting off some scenes was a good action to have a better result. Third, another thing he learned was that he improved his confidence constantly. Fourth, it was vocabulary gaining. Getting involved in doing vlogs in several places helped the participant to gain new

vocabulary from the places he visited or employees working there.

For further researchers who want to conduct similar topics as the researchers, it is suggested to conduct a study by using different methods and designs. By using other methods, the result will be richer.

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