THE VIEWPOINT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS USING DINGTALK APP FOR ONLINE LEARNING: AN ETHNOGRAPHY CASE STUDY AND PHOTOVOICE

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Abstract

This study investigates how students perceive their English-speaking ability after taking online classes using the DingTalk app. Using an ethnographic case study and photovoice, data from international students who enrolled at a Thai public university were evaluated to shed light on how students rate their use of English in online classrooms. During the pandemic, student activities with online learning emerged as a lived experience, indicating a convergence of student concerns. The primary aspects of these issues include student expectations for the time and space of online learning, self-motivation, and the participation of others, especially international students and the faculty member's ability to communicate effectively. Ultimately, international student engagement is determined by the congruence between the student's expectations regarding these dimensions and the student's overarching educational and personal goals for enrolling in the course.

Keywords*: DingTalk app, ethnography, international students, photovoice.*

INTRODUCTION

Due to the pandemic, second language (L2) educators have been pushed to forgo face-to-face (F2F) instruction in favor of online education (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020). The only method to communicate with pupils is through social media. Apps for social media can be asynchronous or synchronous and serve various purposes. Furthermore, numerous online synchronous meeting tools (SMTs) have been utilized by instructors (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020). Despite a global pandemic, education should be adequate and operate without interruption. Moreover, several international students who could not return home from vacations in their home countries took advantage of time differences and taught online from their homes. Because they have a robust internet connection, they can learn from home (LFH) without worrying about boundaries or restrictions.

Most theoretical courses are now taught online (Yang, 2020) since COVID-19 appears. Otherwise, students can learn from a distance with the help of other team members, whereas team cohesion predicts individual learning (Hwang, 2018; Williams, Duray, Reddy, 2006). However, digital technologies can undoubtedly aid in the fight against the pandemic (Roche, 2020). As a result, many academic institutions that had previously refused to change their traditional pedagogical approach were forced to switch entirely to online learning (Dhawan, 2020).

Many schools and universities had to close temporarily (Dhawan, 2020) and shift their teaching to Internet connectivity. Several challenges have arisen, including inadequate online education infrastructure, the inexperience of teachers (i.e., unequal learning outcomes due to teacher experience), the information gap, and the complex home environment (Yang, 2020). Because, at this stage, social distance is so prevalent, learning opportunities will suffer. In addition, Work from Home (WFH) and Learn from Home (LFH) are the best teaching and learning options. However, digital technologies allow switching between digital spaces, seamless online and offline transitions, and multitasking (Jones & Hafner, 2012; Tour, 2017). As a faculty member at a public university in Thailand, WFH has a brief conversation about teaching and learning in a new semester. WFH can primarily help faculty members run the usual activity, while LFH students support their studies. The best thing is that people don't interact with technology daily; they interact uniquely (Tour, 2017). Technological advances made distance education a reality (Dhawan, 2020; McBrien, Cheng, & Jones, 2009). In addition, faculty members can give their students opportunities to use the language productively, generate meaning-focused output, and interact with other students (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020) using the DingTalk app. The Chinese platform app can help students study in Thailand and learn from their home country.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The DingTalk application is an excellent tool for teaching students with various skills, including technology literacy. Nonetheless, investigating typical forms of digital literacy is difficult (Tour, 2017). After hearing me announce the lesson, my international students may easily predict the next stage in their study. I taught *"Cross Cultural Management"*, and all verbal and written communications will be in English. The DingTalk app enables real-time and asynchronous learning in digital literacy, so students are never confined to their native nation. It will be easier for students to learn with faculty members even if they do not reside nearby. I used DingTalk because it is the only way I can simultaneously communicate with my international students. They can only use DingTalk, and connecting to other applications is challenging. For simplicity, I collected data from only five international students during a Tuesday afternoon class. Moreover, I am currently instructing 129 students from six countries, most of whom are from mainland China.

International students can utilize the DingTalk app to join me in a group chat, view homework in a folder, or leave information. The DingTalk app can record all Chat conversations. If I decide to utilize an online class, they need only enable the online learning button. All international students at a Thai public institution can benefit from ding discussions. An ethnographic case study and photovoice will be utilized to determine the importance of the DingTalk app for international students stranded in their home country. The Researchers developed ethnography to study human society and culture (Minnis, 1985). Even in the 1970s, anthropologist Hymes (1977) asserted that defining ethnography is challenging and elusive. However, there is no lack of definitions today (Hammersley, 2017). Some have referred to the Photovoice approach for qualitative social work class study as a paradigm incorporating these characteristics (Malka, 2020). In addition, Photovoice is a critical technique founded on the ideas of participatory action research (Malka, 2020; Wang & Burris, 1997).

FINDINGS

Regarding the findings, I collected data from students in the virtual classroom. Students from all around the world attend online classes. The DingTalk app and the ZOOM meeting equip each faculty member with expertise. Students in Thailand should utilize the DingTalk app because some international students come home during COVID-19 for safety reasons and stay with their families. First, I captured a screenshot of the DingTalk application to enhance the data collection-based analysis. The explanation was then provided through the DingTalk application.

Figure 1. DingTalk app for synchronous and asynchronous learning methods
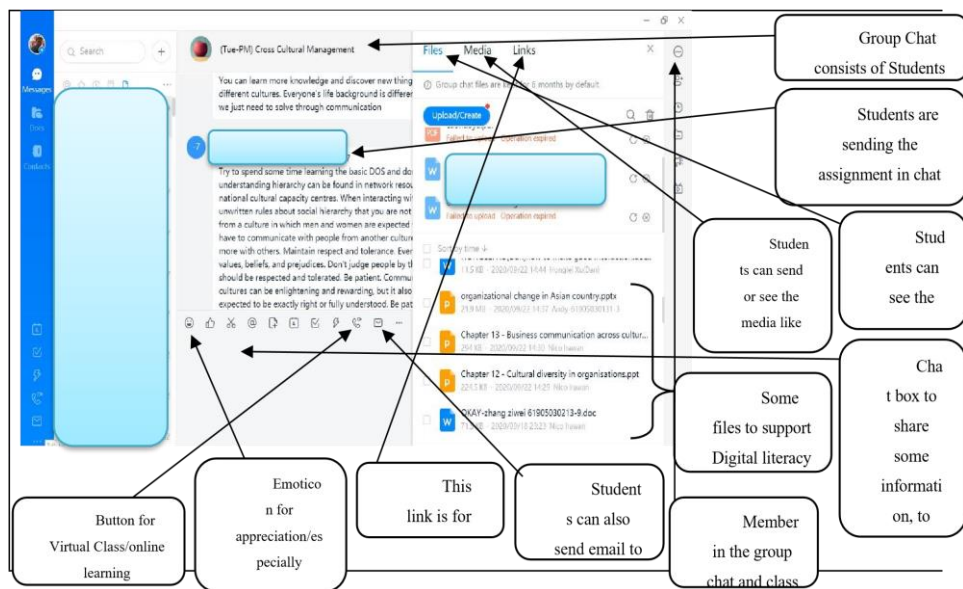
Based on the above screenshot, I can describe how using the DingTalk app as digital literacy practice might enhance students' learning. These programs' structures are virtually identical to those of ZOOM Meeting, Google Classroom, WhatsApp Messenger, and additional extended communication tools. When faculty members utilize the DingTalk app, they can share crucial information regarding teaching and learning flexibly and straightforwardly. Only the DingTalk app can connect in China; thus, Chinese students are assisted in using the DingTalk app. Otherwise, ZOOM Meeting is required to pay registration fees for use by Chinese students. While a faculty member teaches and shares the material, both asynchronous and synchronous modes can be used simultaneously. According to Minnis (1985), a case study is a detailed description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit, such as an individual, group, institution, or community.

Due to the presence of international students in the Tuesday afternoon session, students are expected to comprehend the goal of communication between the instructor and their peers to preserve intercultural communication. Therefore, daily communication must be conducted only in English. Before and after learning with a faculty member, students should check the DingTalk application. This is done to ensure that they have the best possible comprehension when communicating with professors. If they cannot comprehend the lesson in the DingTalk app-based virtual class on *"Cross-Culture Management"*, they are welcome to consult with us. Some students intended to submit their assignments by clicking the file or folder button to reduce the complexity of the folder while the instructor reviewed the submissions.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Data

No	Name	Age	Gender	Country	Nationality	Language use
1	GF	21	F	Thailand	Thai	Thai language and English
2	VV	23	F	mainland China	Chinese	Chinese and English
3	SWY	20	M	South Korea	Korean	Korean Language
4	NNT	20	F	Vietnam	Vietnamese	Vietnamese and English
5	WW	18	F	Indonesia	Indonesian	Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia, and English

Participants' Demographic Data can support the authors in analyzing every participant, especially while studying the subject, by giving the photovoice from their reflection. Finally, students explain the benefits of using DingTalk for learning from a distance.

GF (Thai): I learned about "Cross Culture Management" with DingTalk App in my country in Thailand. I viewed it as learning that allows us to learn things we never knew and understand new because of the COVID-19 situation. Therefore, having to remember to take the online system, the online experience is excellent, but sometimes it takes creativity to learn a subject. (DingTalk, November 9, 2020).

This student also gives the picture an expression in Photovoice while studying from a distance with DingTalk App.

Figure 2: *Taken by GF in Bangkok, Thailand*

Reflection (GF): I feel that taking this course is not a very comfortable subject but a joyful study. I think I will concentrate on doing my best in every assignment and putting the knowledge that I have gained to benefit both. In my future work and present life, I would like to thank the teachers for teaching and providing knowledge that should be known and should be performed for myself and others. I feel happy to be able to study with my teacher every time I study. So, I want to study, and it is because of the knowledge that always makes me want to study with you. (DingTalk, December 3, 2020)

Table 2. *International Students' experiences*

No	Name	Comment and Reflection
1	GF	Making *my online learning successful is essential to pay attention and peer review after school, online, or in class*. Online requires more review or study before entering because online learning is not the same as classroom study because problems and actions are less likely. We must ask if we don't understand learning online. Good materials retrospective. Allowing us to return and look back if we want to review what we've studied, and one thing that's important for successful online learning is managing your time and being aware of your duty because our choices do everything.
2	VV	First, I have to pass this course, so I have to study hard. Second, stressing self-consciousness. Then *I think online courses are very convenient, not limited by the location, and can avoid the risk of being infected with the virus on the road or in school*. In addition, online courses are very convenient and without time constraints. As long as you have a computer or mobile telephone, you can take classes simultaneously, saving time on your way to school. Moreover, online courses can be played back indefinitely, making it convenient for us to watch them again if we lose our minds or don't hear clearly during class.
3	SWY	Because of the coronavirus situation, *although I spent this semester in Korea, I communicated with Thailand's friends and teachers and studied various subjects like offline classes in Korea*. As a result, I think Korea's online digital learning was successful. Many students worldwide struggle with the Corona crisis, but "online learning" is a way to study even in this situation. To learn online, I think you need to communicate smoothly online. Therefore, this topic was very successful in online learning.
4	NNT	Almost a year since *I studied digital learning from my home country, especially online. I've had so many experiences*. Digital learning isn't that bad. However, we can't physically see each other at university. But when we study, and everyone turns on the camera, I feel we're all studying in the same classroom. So first, I could get plenty of time to do a home review and self-study at home. I could also have more time to research my report or assignments.
5	WW	*My success in digital learning, especially online, is being active and developing my innovation skills, and attentive to everything our teacher taught us*. It also helps us to be productive and look forward to learning creativity. Digital learning will help us in the future by applying what we've learned.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Distance education can prepare teachers and students for technology and internet connections by using a social media platform. Faculty members and students can connect planning methods with their learning approach to better understand how this approach is applied in their studies. However, connection and signal can be a barrier to distance learning. Many educational issues can be addressed with new technologies, but if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs, faculty members must learn how to use cutting-edge technology. We should be familiar with innovative and creative teaching techniques when teaching remotely. The key to successfully

implementing distance learning is to create a positive online learning environment and to motivate teachers to learn. The faculty member must inspire students to continue learning in various situations. They can aid in developing pedagogical strategies that engage students in critical thinking (Pytash & O'Byrne, 2014). Students must improve their teaching and learning skills (Sirbu et al., 2015). Although people require an internet teach-learn remote, the Internet is a well-known educational resource (Gleason & Greenhow, 2017). The Internet is currently our primary source of information. Because onesided conversations are the most common type of lecture, students appear to hear and understand, but only passively (Zainuddin & Keumala, 2018). However, a media technology platform allows faculty and students to access and interact with informal face-to-face meetings. In addition, most students found that applying new knowledge to a single topic to improve previously acquired knowledge was more efficient (Yu, 2015).

Encouraging students to create and innovate with computers and other devices will help them overcome screen time boredom. Students may be dissatisfied with their online education without communication and interaction. The same is true for new circumstances. As a result, small group discussions in distance education can reduce student-faculty interaction. Although there are drawbacks to distance learning, students become bored if the system remains unchanged. Faculty members and students should interact intensely and stimulate online learning consistently. However, the faculty member should engage in discussion and questioning to learn how students feel when they cannot connect to the Internet or are forced to view a screen. Finally, students can use DingTalk to successfully study online to read a soft copy of a book.

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