WECHAT AND THE FACILITATION OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, TEACHER-SUPPORT AND STUDENT-REFLECTION: THE NZCEL EAP SCENARIO

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OUTLINE

• Literature review
• Ethical considerations
• Case study and methods
• Key aspects analysed
• Findings
• Conclusions
AVAILABLE LITERATURE

• Luzon (2018) – Constructing academic identities online – research group blogs

• Jiang & Wei (2018) -University of Queensland- (TBLT) framework to gauge learners’ perceptions on incorporating a Wechat task allowing students learning Chinese to link up with Chinese students across the campus.
AVAILABL LITERATURE

• Liu (2014) - use of Wechat in ESP (in a paper titled ‘English for policing’) training courses –
  purpose of improving students’ interests, motivation and efficiency of vocational field training.

LITERATURE UNDERPINNINGS: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM (SC)

• Emphasis on active learning as opposed to passive
• Learning perceived as a socially constructed phenomena
• In this pilot study Wechat was used for:
  • student-driven, enquiry-based & promoting collaboration
MAIN AIM

- Evaluating Wechat as a tool for collaborative, supportive and reflective learning
- Roles of students & teachers (academic identities)
- Purpose for posts

Why Wechat?

- Mobile phone apps - LMS doesn’t allow for the speed of information dissemination
- Students have their mobile phones - at their fingertips!
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Course teacher - a researcher on the project
- No access to any data until course grades were submitted
- Re-iterated that the focus was the use of the Wechat app.
  – informal dissemination of information
CASE STUDY & METHODS

• NZCEL Level 4 Academic course
• Final EAP course prior to entering mainstream subjects
• Data gathering tools

Wechat posts
Survey
Interviews
KEY ASPECTS ANALYSED

• Most posts categories: academic or non-academic
• Questions:
  • Direct Qs to teacher vs. Open Qs to class group
  • Solicited vs. Unsolicited information
• Students and teachers
• Visual aids in posts
FINDINGS: Wechat POSTS

• One class: 19 students and two teachers

• 873 posts

• Over 18 week semester (essentially 16 weeks)

• 130 unsolicited from the teachers
## FINDINGS: Wechat POSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Non-academic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Qs direct to the teacher</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Qs open to class group</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. St. providing unsolicited information</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Providing solicited information</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# FINDINGS: WeChat Posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual aids</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Non-academic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint slides</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screenshots</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos (people)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## FINDINGS: Wechat POSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Number of posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health information, encouraging comments, attendance</td>
<td>62 (Humour) 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you and emojis</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy birthdays and congratulations</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS: Wechat POSTS

ACADEMIC IDENTITIES:

• Mainly eight students tended to provide unsolicited information

• Less proactive students – majority of the emojis and thank you messages

• Three students strongly mentoring and providing personal guidance
If you felt comfortable using WeChat, can you say why you think you felt comfortable using the app?
- To organize the group easily
- We have lots of friends
- I can talk to my classmates and teachers anytime
- Do not need to wait the response with using traditional E-mail
- Because it is easy to assess video chat, share moments, talking
ISSUES: THOUGHTS

• Get students to vote on which app they want to use.

• Let them know that it tends to be used for social aspects as well.

• It was really useful that we insisted on an English only policy in the group - inclusive
CONCLUSION

- definitely continue to use an app. - but revisit the choice of app.
- students seem to enjoy having this additional communication source.
REFERENCE LIST


THANKS!

ANY QUESTIONS?