The Survey Research on the WeChat of the English Learning of College Students

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Abstract. WeChat is widely used by college students, many of whom are very eager to take participation in learning activities based on intelligent terminals. This paper survey the application of LEA, an English learning WeChat developed and operated by Xi’an University of Technology. The modules in LEA are reviewed and some improvements are advanced. The result shows that it is very suitable for college students to carry out English learning activities, and the application of WeChat in college English teaching is of great significance.

Introduction

Mobile learning, has become one of the most important information dissemination tools in the era of mobile internet. A wealth of studies have shown that mobile learning has positive significance in improving students’ English learning and promoting the teaching methods as well[1]. At present, the application of WeChat, the public platform which integrates the functions of social communication and group management, is in its infancy in education. Bai pointed out that “WeChat has a wide prospect in higher education, while several key issues need to be solved in its application in this field”[2]. Liu stated that the overall influence of WeChat in education and technology is relatively low. As to college foreign language teaching, relevant researches are mainly focused on assisting reading teaching with the help of WeChat public platform[3]. For example, Jia introduced the design principle and implementation method of flipped classroom for medical English reading based on WeChat and micro communities and also discussed the difficulties and solutions in the practice of flipped classroom teaching[4]. S.Y. Park explored the impact of WeChat on English reading teaching by pushing reading materials to students through mobile phone and providing students with a reading environment by means of smart phones using[5]. However, the device is full of potential to apply in other fields of English learning.

In 2016, a Wechat named LEA(Learning English Always) was developed by a university, in which covers some functions of English learning including listening and reading mainly. The names of three modules are View, Listen and Voice, respectively. To study the users’ acceptance of English learning APP and to further improve the function of the LEA, researchers surveyed the usage of this WeChat in College students with the questionnaire.

Design of Survey

This questionnaire is divided into two parts, including the basic information of students and the usage of LEA in English learning with the forms of both selective questions and open questions. Self-administrated questionnaires are used in this study. Respondents are required to fill out the questionnaires in Sojump (a questionnaire website) on mobile phone based on the actual situation and then submit it. After successful submission, the relevant data will be automatically uploaded and stored in the background of the Sojump. The objective variables in this questionnaire are: the personal information of the respondents, including gender, grade, major and so on. Subjective variables include: usage frequency and the spending hours of each time of LEA learning, frequency of viewing content pushed by LEA, respondents’ evaluation of each module of LEA and the necessary improvement.
Preliminary Survey and Revision

Before the formal questionnaire is determined, it is necessary to test and revise the questionnaire at the very beginning to ensure the practicability, integrity and scientificness. To do so, fifty-five college students are randomly selected. With analyzing the results of the survey and asking for the opinions of the respondents, the questionnaire is polished by revising unclear and incompletely options and choices.

As indicated above, there are 19 questions in the formal questionnaire which contains two parts. One is the personal information of students; the other is the usage of LEA in English learning. Questions in this part are divided into six dimensions. There are single-choice question, multi-choices question and open questions, in which Likert Scale is applied with five levels.

Survey Process

The participators are college students from Xi’an University of Technology, covering freshman, sophomore, junior and senior in various majors. After they completed the survey by their mobile phone, 282 pieces of results are gathered and the basic information is as Table 1.

| Attribute name | classification    | Number | Percentage |
|----------------|-------------------|--------|------------|
| Sex            | Male              | 158    | 56.03%     |
|                | Female            | 124    | 43.97%     |
| Grade          | Freshman          | 5      | 1.77%      |
|                | Sophomore         | 270    | 95.74%     |
|                | Junior            | 2      | 0.71%      |
|                | Senior            | 3      | 1.06%      |
| Major          | English Major     | 7      | 2.48%      |
|                | Science and Engineering | 241 | 85.46%    |
|                | Economic Management | 34    | 12.06%     |

Data Analysis

According to Table 1, the majority of the users of the LEA are sophomores. According to the survey, 95.74% of sophomores are using LEA. Considering that the sophomores are currently in the stage of CET-4 preparation and they devote their energy and most of time to English learning, for the content of LEA is related to the CET-4 examination in a large sense. So they have the highest attention to LEA and the degree of usage also is higher than other students in other grades. Therefore, there is a need to explore different demands of different grades and to implement various functions for different needs, so as to attract students to use LEA to learn English and enlarge the user group of LEA.

The frequency and Duration of LEA application present in Fig.1 and 2. Up to 47% students seldom utilize it to learn English, and about 30% students use it several times each week. And most of them(60%) spend less 10 minutes in browsing the Wechat, which imply that the content is not enough to attract their attention. Therefore, the frequency and duration of each use of LEA among students are generally low at present.
There are three modules in LEA and the survey results show that students are fond of listening comparatively. Up to 62% students enjoy the section of ‘What does the teacher say?’ for the reason that they believe it is useful to help them pass CET-4. At the same time, 44% of them think the module of Voice is helpful even the editors designed several activities to increase the interactive. Moreover, 39% participators regard the module of View is useful for their English learning.

Findings and Suggestions
Based on the data analysis, the main conclusions are as follows:
Although the data show that only a few students who check carefully at the LEA, and most of them rarely look at or only read what they are interested in, 33.69% of the students are satisfied with most of the contents of LEA, 33.26% of the students think some material are useful while some are not. It is indicated that the satisfaction of LEA content is high, which is helpful to their English learning.

The Functions of the Voice Module Need to be Improved
The most attractive feature of the Voice module is the Dubbing Talents, which require students imitate some film dialogue and post them to present. However, there are still some deficiencies that need to enrich the offline activities of the Dubbing. Morning Call needs to increase the push of standard pronunciation. The learning hall of CET-4 that students can use it to communicate and discuss to learn English is too simple, which can increase the functions of CET-6,IELTS, TOEFL and so on.

The Content of Listen Module is Unitary and lack of interaction
Most of students think this module is helpful for listening, but only the content of CET-4 listening is very simple and needs to be enriched. At the same time, there is a little interaction with users, which can be achieved offline interaction through teaching classes or related functions can be set up in the backstage of Wechat to increase online interaction between users and the public platform of Wechat.

The View Module is the most Popular, but it still Needs to be Enriched in Subject
The View module has the highest proportion of students in the most commonly used module and the most attractive module, which attracts the most attention of students. However, the theme is
relatively scarce at present, so it needs to increase various popular types of subjects to meet interests of different students.

The Overall Evaluation of LEA is High

According to the survey, 49% of the students are satisfied with LEA, and 13% of the students are very satisfied. In addition, 44% of the students think the Voice module is very helpful and 10% of the students say it is greatly helpful; 41% of the students think the Listen module is helpful and 10% believe it is very helpful; 39% of the students think the View module is helpful, while 12% consider it is extremely helpful. It shows that the students believe the three modules are useful and helpful to their English learning. Therefore, we can conclude that students are satisfied with LEA as a whole and recognize the help LEA in their English learning.

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