THE USE OF ICT TO IMPROVE TEACHERS' SKILL IN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

By

Suzana Rahman

Swadaya Gunung Jati University

suzana_rahman@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

The utilization of information and communication Technology (ICT) in language learning has been an important and interesting topic both among students and also teachers. There are some suggestions about what to prepare and what activities that can be conducted by teachers in the classroom, especially for teaching-learning of English language that can be applied for all subject. The use of ICT will not only improve teacher's skill, but it will also make teachers more creative in preparing the material that will be transferred to the students.

Keywords : ICT, language learning,

Introduction

During the 1970s and 1980s standard microcomputers were incapable of producing sound and they had poor graphics capability. This represented a step backwards for language teachers, who by this time had become accustomed to using a range of different media in the foreign language classroom. The arrival of the multimedia computer in the early 1990s was therefore a major breakthrough as it enabled text, images, sound and video to be combined in one device and the integration of the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Davies 2011: Section 1).

Then, the development of ICT is getting more and more advanced. It is important to know that the use of ICT will not replace teachers in the classroom, because they are the organizers, facilitators and supervisors. Therefore, it will be a trend for teachers to utilize ICT in the classroom. For this, they also need more knowledge and skills in this field.

The integration of ICT in the classroom will also promote independent learning. Computers and internet have the potential to make learning opportunities more flexible and

interactive. However, as Eva Gyarmathy pointed out that there are also potential problems that need to be anticipated in implementing the integration of ICT in the classroom, such as : lack of learners' interest in ICT, lack of learners motivation in autonomy, poor interaction between learners, low level of learners ICT skills. From the teachers' side, teachers need to improve their knowledge of ICT and skills in operating it. They also must be familiar with the available resources, and consider the feedback to be delivered to the students.

The development of teachers' professional skills must include new pedagogical as well as technical and management skills. Regarding the issue of teacher facilitation in such an environment, the teacher has a key role to play, but there could be a conflict between the aim to create an atmosphere for learner independence and the teacher's natural feelings of responsibility. In order to avoid learners' negative perceptions, Stepp-Greany points out that it is especially important for the teacher to continue to address their needs, especially for those of low-ability learners.

Background

The use of ICT is getting more advanced , but teachers are not really familiar with the utilization of ICT due to the lack of their knowledge in operating it, especially for teachers in remote areas. The central attention of the government is only given to the implementation of ICT for the schools that are located in big cities. A clear example was the opening of RSBI (Rintisan Sekolah Berbasis Internasional that did not work for so many reasons both external and internal factors) and so many private schools using international curriculum . In this case, the use of international curriculum can be regarded as one of indicators as an effort to get the optimal use of ICT in the learning process across the curriculum. To achieve this, teachers should be encouraged to implement the ICT into the classroom.

The Objectives

The objective of this paper are :

a. To encourage teachers of English to improve their teaching skills by integrating ICT into the classroom.

b. To encourage teachers of English to be more creative in delivering or transferring their knowledge to their students. so that the students will get the best result because they are facilitated by not only the best teachers but also provided with sophisticated technology.

Preparation

What should be prepared to integrate ICT into the Language Classroom. Based on England

National Curriculum cited by Davies in his paper as cited in Priowirjanto & Aritonang's paper , there are five general teaching requirements related to the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum:

a. Pupils should be given opportunities to apply and develop their ICT capability through the use of ICT tools to support their learning in all subjects.

b. Pupils should be taught techniques for skimming and for scanning written texts for information, including those from ICT-based sources.

c. Pupils should be taught how to redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, including the use of ICT.

d. Pupils should be taught about different countries and cultures by working with authentic materials in the target language, including some from ICT based sources (for example : handwritten texts, newspapers, magazines, books, satellite television, texts from the internet).

e. During the stages c and d, pupils should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through producing and responding to different types of spoken and written language, including texts produced using ICT; and using a range of resources, including ICT, for accessing and communicating information.

Those requirements mentioned above are applicable and should be fulfilled and also implemented in the classroom under supervision of the related institution. It is clearly be seen from those above requirements that the needs of teachers who are expert and skillful in the ICT is urgent. Therefore, teachers should also be trained in order to be able to apply the ICT in their teaching and learning process with their students. By teachers training, they will know :

1. What activities can be implemented with ICT in English classroom?,

2. What benefits can be gained by integrating ICT into English classroom ?

Activities Conducted With Ict In The Classroom

Computer and internet have the potential to make learning opportunities more flexible and interactive .These are some common activities that can be conducted in English classroom : pod-cast, student e-mail exchange, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), and web search, making blog, etc. Facebook can also be used for accessing and communicating information. Due to the familiarity of facebook to teenagers nowadays, it will be a good idea to make the utilization of facebook more optimal that is as a media for language learning not only in the classroom, but they can learn and submit their assignment from anywhere and anytime. It also means that it can be used as knowledge sharing. If it is compared

to the conventional assignment from teachers to the students which is paper-based, so that the use of facebook will encourage the students to submit the assignments to their teachers more flexible in time and places. It has been known that facebook has a feature called *notes*. Teachers could use this note to stimulate learners to write and express their ideas, give comment to other students' ideas. Moreover, at the same time they could also learn to appreciate differences among others. It can change the learning environment will become more fun and challenging.

The fact that the price of computers or laptop, and for the smaller one called netbook, and some other kind of gadgets can be found as new innovation in technology, applicable, and really helpful to improve the language learning, but they are not cheap, not everyone could obtain such those things. On the contrary, almost all students have a mobile phone. Therefore, it will be a good idea for students to get access to learning materials which is developed for fun learning. For this the government has ever been conducting a training course to students and teachers in Indonesian and on developing learning material in a mobile phone, it is called Mobile Assisted Language Language Learning (MALL) . Thus, mobile phones can really be useful for improving language learning that can also be regarded as a more effective and efficient especially used in remote area, and most students could obtain those things in a very cheap price.

Based on informal interview among teachers, mostly all activities mentioned above have already been applied by lecturers in our campus. We also make a group to share information using Whats App (WA)/Blackberry Messenger (BBM) and also via Facebook.

Benefit Of Integrating Ict In The Classroom

a. Independent learning

By integrating ICT in the classroom will encourage the students to learn independently or it is also called **self-directed study.** Independency of learner can be regarded as an important capability for language learning especially in distance education. For the learners, it is really important when they will become get used to self directed study, and this will be very beneficial when they join distance learning education or online learning. Self directed study will meet the students' need who are really busy with their activities.

b. Authentic language learning materials

Both teachers and students would be at ease to find various kind of authentic materials for language learning directly and in a very short time by searching from internet. Many interpretation about authentic materials can be found as follows : "Authenticity means that

nothing of the original text is changed and also that its presentation and layout are retained: A newspaper article, for instance, should be presented as it first appeared in the paper.........etc., all contribute the message to the reader" (Grellet 1981:8) in Mishan 2005:3).

Krashen stated that authentic text as "comprehensible input on topics". While Gilmore identified that authentic materials as the language produced by native speakers in a particular language community; the language produced by a real speaker/writer for a real audience conveying a real message; culture and ability to behave or think like the target language group in order to be recognized and validated by them. Thus, the use of various kind of IT that has been mentioned above would make both teachers and learners at ease to find authentic materials.

With access to an internet-connected to computer, they can find a wide variety of free online reading materials, including short stories, books, plays, magazines, references. Those are available on the world wide web.

c. **Improve creativity**

Based on the writer's experience in teaching speaking, the writer has the opinion that the use of ICT in the classroom not only enhances the importance of "interaction" between teachers and students, but also improve teachers' and students' creativity. Following the syllabus of Speaking IV, all students have to perform story telling performed individually for their first assignment. In this case some students take authentic materials by browsing from internet but some others create their own story completed with their pictures and the students starring themselves and play the roles as the main characters of the story. The students use Power Point to present the story. Pictures can be seen as follow :

Integrating ICT in the classroom encourage the teachers to be more creative. Some teachers have used

electronic book, so that they are not necessary to bring so many books when they are on duty. As suggested by Usep S., a lecturer in our campus who has great skill in IT, the writer has applied Padlet in teaching Semantics. By using this padlet, the classes that are allowed to read and the time can be scheduled as needed. Its function is similar with teleconferencing that can be used interactively . It is really beneficial either for students or teachers who could not attend the lecture. Another benefit is the students are not necessary to purchase the book, because they are able to use their mobile phone.

d. Cooperative learning and Communication interactively in natural way.

This day, the use of cooperative learning is very popular to be conducted in the classroom through email discussion for improving students' writing ability. It is known that English writing is the most difficult skills for learners from non-English speaking countries, including Indonesia. Improving the teaching writing could be done by integrating technologies into the classroom discussion and supervised by their teachers through email, facebook or blog. Wood (2000: p 120) notes that when children using computers collaboratively, they worked together more than they normally would to write stories, search the web, or create multimedia presentations (cited in Holum & Gahala; 2012;p 1). While, for speaking, as has been stated above that improving students' speaking skill can also be done by applying ICT, specially when learners communicate with native speakers come from foreign countries though Internet relay Chat, skype or teleconferencing. Therefore, either errors or mistakes could be corrected directly .

Conclusions And Suggestions
Conclusions

The application of ICT would be regarded as another alternative for language learning that is useful to help teachers and students to be able to conduct interactive communication. Besides, it will also improve teachers' skill and enhance both teachers and students creativity.

Suggestions

The use of ICT in the classroom should encourage teachers to keep up with new innovation of technology that could be applied to improve language teaching and learning.

When all teachers always keep up with ICT, they are expected to become skillful and creative that will transfer the knowledge with new and creative teaching methodology in order to improve the students learning quality.

Cooperative learning through the use of ICT is suggested to be applied at schools, universities in our country, especially to face globalization era.

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About the author

Suzana Rahman earned her Bachelor degree in English Literature from Padjadjaran University and completed Master degree in Linguistics from the same university. After living for a couple of years in Perth with her husband, she returned to Cirebon; and now she is working as a lecturer in the Dept. of English Education, Unswagati (University of Swadaya Gunung Jati). Her teaching and research interest is in language learning especially in Speaking and Linguistics.