INTEGRATING ICT TO EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Teaching English is a process of transferring knowledge of English from the teachers to the students. It is evidenced that teaching English is not easy especially in Indonesia because the people in Indonesia use English as a foreign language. Therefore, teachers must be creative in using media that may facilitate the students' learning process. In this digital era, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is believed as one kind of supporting media that can help teachers teach EFL students. ICT is very useful to provide opportunity to both teachers and students in finding teaching and learning resources. So that is why both teachers and students have to be familiar in ICT. In this paper, the writers will elaborate how ICT can be integrated to EFL classroom, the advantages and the challenges of teachers in using ICT.

Keywords: ICT, EFL classroom, integration, advantage, challenge

INTRODUCTION

English, as an international language, is used by more than thousands people in all over the world. It is very important and useful for people in this world to master this language for accessing all things, include the knowledge, that are mostly written in English. Due to its importance, many countries which use English as second or foreign language are demanded to introduce this language to their society. Indonesia uses English as a foreign language and makes English to be taught as compulsory subject start from primary up to university. Indonesian students' background who do not have any prior knowledge on English make them get difficulty in mastering the language. This condition makes teachers of English in Indonesia should work hard to have a successful teaching and learning process. Teachers are forced to be creative and innovative in providing various methods and media to facilitate the students' learning process of English.

In this digital era, the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is highly increased year by year. ICT is believed as one kind of supporting media that can help teachers teaching EFL students. ICT is very useful to provide opportunity to both teachers and students in finding teaching and learning resources. Biancarosa and Griffiths (2012) states, "these technological advances have created high hopes among many teachers, administrators, researchers, and policy makers, who believe that the digital devices offer great promise as instructional tools for literacy education". Furthermore, the integration of ICT in EFL classroom is believed as one tool that have important influence to the success of teachers in reaching the instructional purposes (Jang, 2008). The

teachers have positive attitude on the integration of ICT in classroom activities since ICT can make the teaching and learning process more interesting, successfully develop the students' language skills, and increase the students' motivation (Cahyani and Cahyono, 2012; Ilter, 2009).

Integration of ICT in the language classroom is believed as a new pedagogical approach that can be implemented by teachers. However, This integration must be difficult since lack of accessibility, teachers' familiarity and skills toward the ICT devices, and insufficient technical support at schools become the barriers that prevent the teachers to integrate the ICT devices in their EFL classroom (Bingimlas, 2009; Salehi and Salehi, 2012)

This paper elaborates the integration of ICT to EFL classroom, the advantages that teachers and students can get from integrating ICT in their teaching and learning process, and possible challenges that the teachers face due to the integration of ICT in the classroom.

The Integration of ICT to EFL Classroom

The students' encouragement and their motivation are really needed to overcome the complexity of foreign language learning. Technology, which is rapidly developed and used by most people in the world, is considered as one of tools that can motivate the students (Ilter, 2009) and give new transformation of English teaching media from the traditional to the modern one. According to Baniabdelrahman (2013, p.79), **"**Education needs to equip students with the needed tools and skills that make them capable of dealing with these new requirements effectively. Thus, involving technology as a goal in itself in the educational paradigm is no longer a privilege; on the contrary, it is an urgent need". The followings are some of ICT devices that can be integrated to EFL classrooms:

Internet

Regarding that digital era develops rapidly nowadays, the teachers of English should aware that ICT gives many advantages for them in providing the teaching and learning material for their students. So the teachers must equip them selves with knowledge and skills of using and operating some technological devices. Internet, one of ICT devices, is very valuable sources that enable teachers to access various teaching materials. The finding of Shin's study (2007) who examined the perceptions and perspectives of EFL teachers on Internet-Assisted Language Teaching in Korea showed that most of the teachers who became the respondents on his study show positive attitude on the use of internet in their classroom and give their agreement that internet is very effective to provide the various resources for teaching English to their students. The figure below is the result found by Shin (2007) for kinds of activity that teachers mostly did when use the internet.
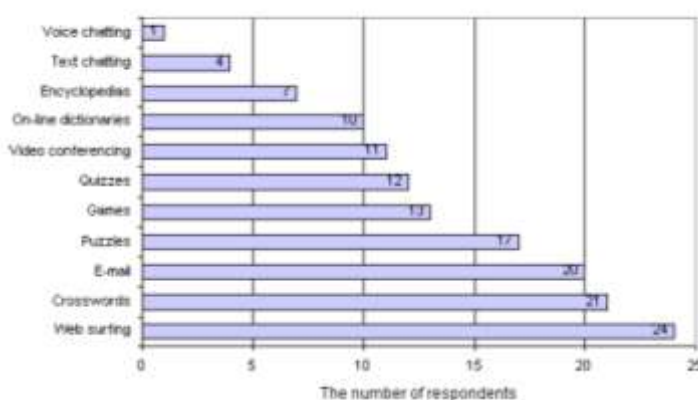
Source: Shin (2007) retrieved from http://www.tell.is.ritsumei.ac.jp/callejonline/journal/8-2/hjs_j-bs.html

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The figure showed that the teachers considered the Internet as a valuable EFL teaching tool and informed that there are a great number of Websites available for teachers to search various types of learning materials. Furthermore, Ilter (2009) explains, "authentic materials which are available on the internet were effective, enjoyable, interesting and useful for the students".

Video / Web-Video

Video is one kind of visual instructional media that can be used to facilitate the students' language learning process and motivate the students to actively participate in the classroom activities. Kamaruzaman, Azahari & Anwar (2012) explains that video become an important potential media for students to practice the language and make the learning process more interesting. In this digital era, both students and teachers can easily find the video they want through downloading on youtube or other online video-streaming site. Watkins and Wilkins (2011) state, "YouTube remains a valid resource for teachers seeking to enhance their lessons with lively, topical content, and further research into the use of the site (as well as other online video-streaming websites) would be very welcome for the EFL and SLA community".

Facebook

The rapid development of ICT also causes the appearances of many social networks in the world community. Everyone is very familiar with Twitter, Friendster, Myspace, Skype, Facebook, and so forth. Facebook, for example, is a popular social-networking website which is happening all over the world. Seeing the facebook phenomenon which causes the youths spend most their time staying on their laptop or computer to on-line on Facebook, the teachers, as the educators, are demanded to be creative to take the advantages of this social networking site in increasing the students' motivation and their language use ability. Writing is one of language skills that can be improved through this social-networking site. A study conducted by Yunus and Salehi (2012) showed that FB group does help in students' writing, especially in the process of brainstorming before the actual writing. This study also showed that the students can learn new vocabulary when reading the comments of others in the FB group, and the feature of spell-check helps decrease their errors of spelling. Furthermore, the ideas or opinions by peers help the students in getting a better idea for writing and they can easily complete their essays after getting involved in the FB group discussion. Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi (2012) on their findings concluded, "FB not only gave the students convenience to study at their own place but also enhanced their grammatical knowledge and subsequently enhanced writing competence after they had discussions with the teacher and FB friends".

Smartphones and Other Portable Devices

Modern science and technology development causes a great number of productions of mobile phone and other portable devices in the world such as cell phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), smart phones, and so forth. Recently, the rapid development of the use of those kinds of portable devices begins giving an impact on language teaching and learning. Cui and Wang (2008) explains, "mobile devices provide individuals with abundant and quality information and materials for many benefits such as mobile learning, E-learning, etc". Furthermore, Bromley (2012) explains, "Supplementing classroom reading activity with access to Smartphone can acknowledge and build on students' out-of-school literacy as they become proficient with in-school literacy goals".

The Advantages of ICT in EFL Classroom

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The use of ICT gives a good contribution in teaching and learning process. Moreover, it can bring positive energy in encouraging both teachers and students. According to Isisag (2012), "ICT presents a powerful learning environment for learners in the classroom. Many countries make investments in ICT integration as ICT is viewed as an effective tool for renewing educational practice in any field". There are many advantages can be got from the use of ICT in EFL Classroom. Houcine (2011) explains that there are six main advantages in using ICT to support foreign language teaching. They are;

- The possibility to adapt easily the teaching materials according to circumstances, learner's needs and response. ICT provides an opportunity for teachers in finding many kinds of teaching and learning material needed.

- ICT allows reacting upon and enables the use of recent/daily news. It offers access to authentic materials on the web. In this globalization, people are required to know information as much as possible in order to enrich their knowledge.

- A quick feedback is made possible. ICT can be used as a media to know learners' response as fast as possible. It can also provide an opportunity to have teaching and learning in a long distance. Although teacher and learners are in a long distance, teacher can give the material to learners. Learners can also give their questions and answer to teachers directly.

- Possibility to combine/use alternately (basic) skills (text and images, audio and video clip...). Teaching and learning process needs supported media to help teachers deliver the material easily and optimally. Good teaching and learning media can also help learners receive the knowledge from teachers well.

- Lectures become more interesting and less ordinary which boosts learners' engagement. ICT can bring traditional teaching to conventional teaching. Teachers can change their teaching techniques like discussion and explanation to the interesting teaching techniques accompanied by ICT. For example; teachers can use smartphone and internet in order to attract learners' attention.

- ICT enables to focus on one specific aspect of the lesson (pronunciation, vocabulary...). In this digital era, people can find easily such kinds of application that can help learners add their knowledge and improve their language proficiency. For example, learners can know the correct pronunciation pronounced by native speakers through some application in computer or internet. Through this way, learners can improve their ability independently and effectively.

Moreover, ICT can increase learners' motivation because by involving ICT in teaching and learning process, learners will get new atmosphere involved with technology. It encourages both teachers and learners in teaching and learning. Davis (2006) argues that ICT can heighten students' motivation and engage students to learn.

Teachers' Challenges of Integrating ICT in EFL Classroom

The use of ICT makes language teaching more exciting, yet it requires readiness on the part of the teacher. The use of Internet, for example, is no longer limited to the need to access, store, and distribute materials for enhancing learning. But, as Pathak (2007) suggests, the Internet should be used for "managing course and managing learning, facilitating online group work, creating opportunities for project-based learning" (p. 9). Many researchers (e.g. Wood et al. 2005) stress limited availability of equipment and internet access as a potential barrier to the integration of the internet into classroom settings. Gibson & Oberg (2004) identify the challenges of financing and putting in place the

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hardwareand connections necessary to provide and maintain internet access in schools as key potential barriers. Studies of the Thai (Yutdhana, 2004) and Korean (Shin & Son, 2007) contexts found that inadequate infrastructure, especially low availability of computers, poor internet access,and poor quality network connections were major barriers to using internet applications ineducation. Insufficient time is regarded by many researchers (Wood, et al., 2005; Gibson & Oberg, 2004; Vrasidas& Glass, 2005) as a further potentially major obstacle for teachers in integrating new technologies such as the internet.

Hadi Salehi and Zeinab Salehi (2013) identified although the high school teachers are familiar with ICT and ICT usage, this not mean that they integrate ICT into the curriculum. Insufficient technical supports at schools, little access to Internet and ICT, shortage of class time was important discouraging factor for the teachers to integrate ICT into the curriculum.

Not only because of those reason but there are another factors that prevent teachers to integrate ICT in classroom , a large number of studies have focused on finding the role of teachers' personal characteristics and demographic variables such as age, gender, and years of teaching experience in their ICT use in the classroom (e.g., Robinson, 2003). Then, Gender gap in general has been the subject of many studies in the literature of computer use (e.g., Cooper, 2006) revealing mostly inconclusive results. However, studies with regard to teachers' gender and ICT use have reported lower levels of computer use by female teachers (Volman & van Eck, 2001) due to female teachers' limited technology access, skill, and interest.   Studies on teachers' teaching experience and age have reported that teachers' ICT use, experience, and age are inversely associated meaning that more experienced teachers and older teachers tend to use computers less frequently (Van Braak et al., 2004). Some studies have attributed this to veterans' limited computer proficiency (Bingimals, 2009), confidence (Robinson, 2003; Snoeyink & Ertmer, 2001) and readiness to use ICT in their classes (Inan & Lowther, 2010).

Roblyer (2002) found that many preservice teachers are still entering universities with little knowledge of computers and appropriate skills as well as lacking positive attitudes toward ICT use in the classroom. Moreover, Gunter (2001) states that many higher education institutions are still failing to prepare pre-service teachers for positive technological experiences. Hence, it is unlikely that teachers will be able to transfer their ICT skills to their students and encourage them to implement ICT when they themselves have negative perceptions toward ICT deployment (Yıldırım, 2000).

CONCLUSION

In this digital area, ICT can be used by teachers in EFL classroom as a good media to help them teach students effectively and optimally. Teachers are also required to be able to know and use ICT well so that they can us it in teaching and learning process. Moreover, ICT can be used by EFL students to find the material, encourage their motivation, and get interesting circumstance in learning. Therefore, the writers really hope this article can be useful both for EFL teachers and students.

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