



TECHNOLOGY BASED LEARNING: A STRATEGY TO UPGRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY LEVEL

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Abstract

There are two sides which force teachers to exploit technology in their teaching activities. The technological advancement and students' ICT literacy are demanding teachers to utilize technology for their English classes. Some studies found that many teachers still have not maximized the use of technology for their teaching activities yet. Meanwhile, students expect their English learning integrated with technology. However, it was found that teachers have eagerness to implement information and communication technology to their classes. Moreover, it was also found in some studies that technology can enhance students' learning achievement and motivation which are very important to increase student' English learning progress. Technology keeps developing its tools for education especially English. There are many technology tools which can be utilized, such as: computer, internet, interactive whiteboard, online dictionary, etc. However, it is not easy to have teachers implement technology to their classes. In integrating information and communication technology with their teaching activities, teachers need to be informed what tools and the way how to utilize them. This paper is intended to present some technological tools which can be employed by teachers of English in increasing their students' English proficiency.

Keywords: technology, information and communication technology, ICT tools, English language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is common that people involve technology into their daily life (Pim, 2013, p. 20). Technology gives huge effect to many fields especially education. It has involved in education for years. The involvement of technology has affected education very well as it can help learners learn more independently (Pim, 2013, p. 18, Slaoti, Onat-Stelma, & Motteram, 2013). In English language teaching, ICT provides many advantages, such as it enables learners to communicate with native speaker over via online, learn English through an educational games, etc. Involving ICT in learning and teaching activity is demanding because learners have been familiar with technology from their early age (Pim, 2013).

Teachers, however, still have an important role in English language teaching. A teacher has to be able not only to control, participate, organize, and assess teaching activity but also to give learning source and guide learners (Harmer, 2007). It will be very good if teaching materials are authentic and up to date. Therefore, a teacher also needs to update their technological competence as the era has changed into a digital era where the use of computer, internet, and mobile phones are very common. Some studies found that many teachers still prefer textbook to authentic materials from ICT. On the other side, it was found that learners are enthusiastic and interested toward involving ICT tools in their classroom (Deaney, Ruthven, & Hennessy, 2003; Pange & Dogoriti, 2012). However, teachers were also found agree to use online material in their classroom. They expect a lot from the utilization of ICT

tools. It means they also realized the importance of adapting and using ICT in their teaching activity (Pange&Dogoriti, 2012; Pim, 2013, p. 20).

In conclusion, the technological development and learners' attitude are forcing teachers to involve and adapt ICT tools into their teaching activity in classroom. However, teachers need help and training on how to integrate ICT into their teaching activity. Therefore, this paper is aimed to present some ICT tools which can be used by teachers in order to increase students' proficiency level.

The Role of Technology in English Language Teaching

The development of information and communication technology keeps increasing and helping the growth of education quality. It is proved from the investment of government in bringing ICT to schools. The European Union and the United States have invested a lot in order to "enhance digital literacy, skills and inclusion", and transform "transform education through the power of technology" (Stanley, 2013, p. 45).

In English language teaching, the involvement of ICT has contributed effectively in terms of providing rich, qualified and more flexible learning and enabling learners to have technology literacy (Ibrahim, 2010; Stanley, 2013). Moreover, it also leads learners to authenticity and autonomy, and keeps teachers up to date with the development of their field (Slaoti, Onat-Stelma, & Motteram, 2013; Kern, 2013). Furthermore, learners' academic tasks nowadays require them to use technology such as make power point presentation slide, typing their assignment using word processor application, etc. (Gilbert, 2013, p. 121)

It cannot be denied that technology has many things to do with the development of English language teaching since it has been proved that the utilization of ICT effectively influences many aspects such as students' success, teachers' performance, etc.

Technological Tools for English Class

There are a huge number of ICT tools which can be harnessed by teachers as their teaching tools. Teachers can use digital storybook to teach literature, games to enrich students' vocabulary, educational video channel to give students an authentic resource instead of native speaker. For literature class, teachers can also use animation and for reading activities, teacher can utilize text to speech.

Text to Speech

Text to speech is a technology based reader which can used both online and offline. It is a kind of technological tools in form of a software or application which can read aloud a text and become an authentic trustworthy voice, meaning-making and valuable lifelong tool for learners who lack of decoding skills and fluency (Missouri Assistive Technology, 2010; Parr, 2011). In order to get a text to be read aloud, the text must be input into a digital format. This software can be downloaded by paying or free. There are many websites which provide text to speech to be used online such as Google Translate. But, there are also many text-to-speech software and applications which can be used without internet connection or offline, such as Natural Reader, Kurzweil 3000, etc. Even, it also can be downloaded by smartphones. So, the access to this kind of technological tool is very easy.

A report of Iowa Text Reader Longitudinal study reported that text to speech bring positive influence to both teachers and students (Iowa Department of Education, 2006-2007). Moreover, students claim that text to speech can help them in writing, reading comprehension, doing their

learning tasks. It also can motivate help them learn more independently. Furthermore, it also helps students to practice their pronunciation (Kilickaya, 2009).

It can be summarized that text to speech is an authentic teaching resource that can produce voice of native speaker and used widely. Moreover, it has been proved that this software has many advantages for English language learners.

Animation

Animation is a kind of visualization which is very well known for years. It is a kind of multimedia learning which refers to learning from words and pictures which are dynamic (Mayer & Moreno, 2003, p. 43). Mayer (in Awad, 2013) states that learners are able to understand words more if they can connect words and pictures rather than only words or pictures. There many advantages of animation, such as: it allows student to make their own scenes based on their understanding, It provides students what they cannot get from their schools, students can use it anywhere they want without film equipment, students can work both individually and in a team, it attract students' attention, makes learning more creative and innovative, enables students to use a real character from their life. (Moviestorm, 2011, p. 4, Awad, 2013). Some animation software can be downloaded and some can be used online such as GoAnimate, Pencil, etc.

There are many studies which investigated the effectiveness of using animation in an English classroom. Awad (2013) investigated the effectiveness of animation for young learners' class. The study proved that animation is highly effective in increasing students' vocabulary mastery. Moreover, she found that animation brings positive atmosphere to the class as it can attract students' interest. Another study involved animation to improve students' vocabulary (Lin, 2009) found that animation can help learners' vocabulary and learners acquire new words. Gjedde(2012) found another finding. The research showed that animation can connect learners' creativity and collaboration which is more engaging. Moreover, learners are found challenged. This case study also concludes that animation provides learners a cognitive tool for meaning-making.

In conclusion, animation is effective to help learners to be more engaging and challenged. It also can improve learners' English proficiency. To vary learning activities in the classroom, teachers are suggested to use animation.

CONCLUSION

The world will always change though technological development. Learners' interest might be different depending on when they learn. Technological development can affect learners' attitude toward learning. Therefore, teachers are suggested to always update their pedagogical competence. Many studies have proved that involving ICT in classroom effectively influence learners' performance and achievement in learning English.

Some of ICT tools are text to speech and animation. The effectiveness of these tools has been shown by many studies. Both tools are found effective to enhance learners' motivation, interest, vocabulary, achievement, etc. The use of these tools can vary teaching activities and add teachers' pedagogical knowledge.

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