Day 3: Friday, Mehr 23, 1389 (October 15, 2010)
Session 6 (9:00 – 9:30)

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Internet-Based Self Access in Developing Students' Language Skills

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Sriwijaya University
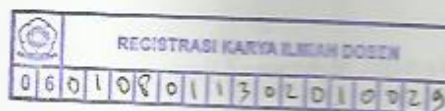
This paper aims at discussing how internet-Based Self Access (iBSA) could develop English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students' language skills based on Indonesian context. Internet-Based Self Access is a kind of supporting facility that provides autonomy learning. Students with different needs of language skills or aspects could use iBSA, so they likely feel really useful. Since the major goal of using iBSA is to promote and keep autonomy learning in which students learn by themselves freely without the assistance of teachers, there are at least three benefits students could have: 1) to get access to a variety of additional materials; 2) to do self evaluation in which they could recognize their progress by doing language exercises in the internet; 3) to enjoy learning atmosphere in which they can do self access either indoor or outdoor freely without time constraints. Viewed from the teachers' view, iBSA can help them reduce their workload such as preparing supplement materials, having more time for individual consultation, and so on. In the implementation of iBSA, it is necessary that the institution should facilitate all necessary requirements of internet for both indoor and outdoor access such as bandwidth, space with power supply, and many others.

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Internet-Based Self Access in Developing Students' Language Skills

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Abstract
This paper aims at discussing how internet-Based Self Access (iBSA) could develop students' language skills based on Indonesian context. Internet-Based Self Access is a kind of supporting facility that promotes autonomy learning. Students with different needs of language skills or components could use iBSA, so they likely feel it really useful. Since the major goal of using iBSA is to promote and keep autonomy learning in which students learn by themselves freely without the assistance of teachers, there are at least three benefits students could have 1) to get access to a variety of additional materials, 2) to do self evaluation in which they could recognize their progress by doing language exercises in the internet, 3) to enjoy learning atmosphere in which they can do self access either indoor or outdoor freely without time constraints. Viewed from the teachers' job, iBSA can help them reduce their workload such as preparing supplementary materials, having more time for individual consultation, and so on. In the implementation of iBSA, it is necessary that the institution should facilitate all necessary requirements of internet for both indoor and outdoor access such as bandwidth, space with power supply, computer accessories, and other infrastructures.

Keywords: internet-Based Self Access, self evaluation, workload

Introduction

The growth of modern technology has made teachers have the choice of adopting information technology in their teaching activities. For example, instead of using a whiteboard with a board marker or a blackboard with chalk, they could make use of a computer with LCD and screen to present their teaching materials. Aside from its weaknesses such as price and power for example, this is really efficient and practical for the teachers to adopt. Using word-processing software for example, they can delete or insert a word, phrase, or even a part of a clause or highlight them in their sentence if needed. Besides, it is of course interesting and motivating as the students have an easy access on using the computer to modify words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. Besides, the current use of computers does not only allow students to stimulate experimental trials but also to let them access information from websites for example (Bures et. al, 2000:513).

Similarly to self access learning, in addition to conventional facilities such as hardcopy or printed materials, softcopy or non-printed ones using information technology media such as computers have been common in Self Access Centers. Computers connected to internet used for self access now become more common among English language learners in Indonesia. A language lab equipped with computers connected to internet is one type of self-access learning center which provides online self-access learning from which the term iBSA (internet-Based Self Access) I have adopted is taken.

Below is the discussion of how internet-Based Self Access can be used to develop students' language skills. The language skills here refer to all the four English language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language components such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary are also included to develop their language skills. A part of this paper in the following description is related to the target of TOEFL paper-based test (pbt) test in the form of TOEFL prediction which the learners should take at the end of the program, so the major discussion of language skills and language components is much related to listening, reading, and structure & written expression. TOEFL prediction has been adopted here for the following reasons.

1. The result of TOEFL prediction is for internal use only. Therefore, the teacher can adopt used TOEFL test materials or take the test materials from his private book (not available in the public) consisting of TOEFL practices.

2. The operational cost of the test is not costly. Since it is for internal use, the teacher or the students don't have to spend too much expense for the test except for reproducing the test materials. Taking a real TOEFL test is not that cheap as it will cost hundreds of dollars. However, when the students' scores are satisfactory according to the standard requirement of

the local institution (above the required score), they are usually suggested to take a real TOEFL test in the form of either International TOEFL or TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program) for their future use such as furthering their studies overseas or completing job requirement in institutions where TOEFL score is sometimes required. It should be noted that in the following discussion the terms learners and students are used interchangeably based on what context they fit.

Internet-Based Self Access Overview

Self access refers to the selection of learning materials that the learners can get access to study by themselves freely. Self-access study, which is also called independent study, can be a part of learning activity in which learners study the materials independently without being monitored by the teacher or instructor. What the teacher usually does is to introduce self access facilities prepared by the institution and give directions or instructions to the learners how to do and when to do self access study at once and let them do whatever they want to learn freely. That learners learn freely or independently is supporting the idea of what Curran et. al (2010) has said, though it is related to medicine, that continuing medical education (CME) in which internet-based learning has become increasingly popular provided flexible, convenient and interactive form of CME. In this writing self-access study is also a part of autonomy learning. The term self-access learning is also frequently used instead of self-access study in the following discussion.

There have been many types of self-access learning. One of them is using internet so called internet-Based Self Access. Internet-Based Self Access can be defined as a supporting facility that provides learners for autonomy learning which is intended to enrich the quality of their

language competence. Autonomy learning can be done in a group or individually. Douglas (2007:130) mentions that "autonomy learning is allowing learners to do things like initiate oral production, solve problems in small groups, practice language forms in pairs, and practice using the language outside of the classroom." Besides, Nowlan (2008) says that in large EFL classrooms in particular, we often find proactive students who are motivated to learn both independently and as a group. In this case, for example in a group, learners can work together doing some tasks of language skills. For example, they can watch videos downloaded from internet together and ask to each other about the content of what they watch. This kind of task is good to train them two language skills, listening and speaking. Meanwhile, for individual work for instance, a learner may work with his or her own choice of language skill or component that he or she might feel weak in based on their daily language study achievement. Plenty of language skill or component materials have been available online.

Benefits of Internet-Based Self Access

Again internet-Based Self Access is a part of autonomy learning in which students learn by themselves without the assistance of teachers and is used to enrich their language competence. There are at least three benefits as the major characteristics of having iBSA to be discussed in turn in the following.

1. To Get a Variety of Available Materials

The materials given by the teacher in class are usually limited to the major points of the subject matter to discuss. The topic might provide limited number of tasks or exercises. The teacher usually suggests the students to have supplementary materials from other sources or direct them to do individual study using self access facility such as internet-Based Self

Access. iBSA is a kind of online language support in which learners make use of computers connected to internet for their independent study. It is stated in Brian (1990:148) that among the various ways of learning individual can take is learning from new technology such as computer program. When learners use internet for their learning, this means they are doing online learning system. Online learning system is a way of facilitating education and supporting on-campus teaching (Leith and Warren, 2008). In this case internet is believed to be a part of computer programs that contain various kinds of software packages including language learning package. Norte (2005:153) says that "the internet provides us with the World Wide Web – WWW – which is a great warehouse of every type of information in the world." In internet, there are various topics of language skills and components with explanation and a variety of exercises from different kinds of language learning software packages. The packages are usually provided by different kinds of website addresses related to language learning such as www.usingenglish.com which provides reading materials for beginning, pre intermediate, and advanced levels of learners, www.els-lab.com which provides both listening and reading materials, www.ezslang.com which focuses on listening materials, and so forth. In addition, the students themselves might feel happy to find other sources of information instead of consulting their teachers with restricted time for instance. In other words the students might have flexible time for their individual study using internet. Brian (1990:148) mentions that one of the characteristics of individual study is the flexibility within the day.

Furthermore, since there are various kinds of online language materials available, it is logic that iBSA can reduce the workload of teachers. For example the teachers do not need to

prepare teacher-made materials for supplementary exercises for their students' assignment. They feel to get helped by the presence of the materials online. This means they just probably ask their students to browse additional softcopy materials online for related topic instead of preparing the hardcopy or printed ones. Preparing additional learning materials is time consuming for the teachers whose job is overload. In Indonesia, teachers mostly take a part in providing materials for self access. What materials to appear in the self-access center largely depend on the recommendation of teachers. The materials that serve different level of language learners may vary from the simple to the most difficult ones. Meanwhile, workload of teachers especially those teaching English at the Language Lab of Graduate School, Sriwijaya University as part-time teachers, is abundant. They have to face too many classes not only at the English departments but also at the non English departments such as engineering, nursing, law, etc. in which English subject is also taught as ESP (English for Specific Purposes) as it is included in their curriculum. This means very little do the teachers spend their time on this language laboratory for the students. Workload is the major problem for most of them. Workload of teachers here does not refer to the teacher workload related to administrative chores or tasks or class sizes as mentioned in some issues. In fact, it rather refers to the number of classes to teach so that it requires the teacher to teach more than normal hours a week (20 hours for instance in Sriwijaya University). Therefore, the availability of iBSA has made them feel happy since they don't have to prepare more additional hardcopy materials for students' self access.

2. To do Self Evaluation

As has previously been stated that internet provides plenty of language exercises. Students could do any exercise they might feel important as it can help them increase their language skill or component. In each exercise, the software provider of e-learning usually gives feedback to the students based on their performance of answering the questions. In The Free Dictionary (Feedback, 2008) feedback can be defined as the return of information about the result of a process or activity; an evaluative response. In relation to education, feedback is also a part of teaching and learning activity in which both teachers and learners need to know the performance of learners' work. Teachers give feedback, while learners receive and learn the given feedback. The feedback may vary from teachers to teachers or from software providers to others such as giving scores, judging the language level of learners, showing the percentage of correct answers, etc. Some providers give answer keys of the exercises while some others ask the learners to do the exercises again if they make mistakes until they find the correct answers. For example, www.englisch-hilfen.de prepares grammar exercises for different levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) with a variety of topics such as passive, comparative degree, conditional, etc. This website gives comments on what the result of learners based on their correct answers in doing the exercises. This comment is considered as a feedback for the learners. Again, different website providers may have different feedback for the results. Some providers refer to percentage of the correct answers and request the learners to repeat doing the exercises until they get all correct answers.

Having learnt from the feedback, learners could identify the ability of their language performance. This means they could decide or recognize where their language level is or how

far they have already mastered the language concerned. I possibly could disagree much with the issue mentioning the negative effect of feedback for learners as it is mentioned in Davis (1999) cited in Cashin (1979)   that negative feedback could lead to a negative class atmosphere when identifying a learner's weakness. Based on my experience, it is possibly true if we refer to elementary or even secondary school learners in which feedback could even make them motivated to learn if they have good performance on what they have. On the other hand, their learning motivation might become less sometimes when they get negative feedback. Sometime they feel reluctant to learn from and even throw their paper with feedback of poor grade or bad remarks. However, for adult learners learning English, especially university students, feedback might be considered very useful as they can discover the results of their learning outcome. It is absolutely reasonable for what has been stated that "we could all be learning from everything that happens" (Haskins, 2007).

In addition, though iBSA study is not monitored by the teacher or instructor, there is still time for learners for consultation. It is the teachers' job to serve their students when they get stuck. It should be noted that not all language exercises online provide solution for both correct and incorrect answers. Provided that the learner gets confused in doing the language exercises as he or she cannot find the reason for the correct answer or for the incorrect one, he or she is right to ask the teacher for help some time in the class or outside of the iBSA study.

3. **To Enjoy Learning Atmosphere**

iBSA can take place as indoor or outdoor activity. The students feel free to do iBSA wherever they feel convenient. Quintana mentions that one of the benefits of internet-based learning is

the flexibility to pursue education at personally convenient times. Online learning which is a part of iBSA is actually one of formal learning activities of learning environment components (Lombardozzi, 2008). Therefore, the design of internet environment should be made as well as possible to create good learning atmosphere for the students. Indoor for example, the internet facilities should be equipped with computer accessories such as headset or loudspeaker for listening and speaking skills. The space between one learner and the other should be standard one (not so close for example) so that each learner can relax while doing iBSA. In outdoor, the space where students need to get access with internet should be available. Some students prefer to do individual study outdoor while enjoying their nature, food, and drinks for example. Meanwhile, Ly et.al (2007:47) state that as language learning does not fully depend on the classroom, language acquisition outside the classroom should help students to learn a language faster and more effectively.

In addition, for the purpose of a good service of iBSA activity taking place both indoor and outdoor, some other necessary supporting facilities of network such as modem, bandwidth, speed, etc. must be well prepared so that learners could get access quickly. Internet users often fail to get access to internet because of poor network or they suddenly get disconnected because the server could not hold such number of users. The provision of those facilities is a part of user-friendly system that students must have.

Implementation of iBSA

Self access study in the Language Laboratory of Graduate School of Sriwijaya University is in the form of iBSA. The implementation of iBSA (especially indoor activity) here is likely to serve

learners individually rather than in a group since each learner has different purpose of iBSA study. One learner might work on grammar while the other does reading skill based on which area of language studies is needed to improve.

There are at least two things to prepare for iBSA implementation: hardware and software. The hardware here refers to all facilities as the infrastructure for both indoor and outdoor iBSA. These include not only sets of computers and sets of furniture such as chairs and tables but also things related to computer supporting facilities as mentioned above for network such as bandwidth, modem, power supply, etc. Again, the limitation of bandwidth for example, may often cause learners to fail to access information because of slow communication. Quintana mentions that "the bandwidth limitations can make some interactive multimedia applications too slow for effective learning". The language laboratory has provided a quiet room with such number of computers equipped with headsets and connected with internet for language learners. This room is used for internet-Based Self Access Language Center (iBSALC). The design and layout of the computers is made in such away so that learners feel comfortable to do the iBSA.

Meanwhile, software can be defined as computer programs to run the application of iBSA such as operating system as well as language software for non printed language tools and language materials. Some language software packages such as dictionary, writing tool, pronunciation, etc. have been installed in each computer for learners' purposes. For example, when they need to find out the meaning of a word, they could retrieve it from the language dictionary software installed. There are no hardcopy or printed materials in the room, and there is no English teacher or instructor except a computer technical assistant.

In addition to indoor iBSA, Graduate School of Sriwijaya University also provides outdoor iBSA in which the learners could be connected with internet. The infrastructure prepared by the school mainly includes seats, tables, electricity source, and so forth. The provision of these facilities is also a part of user-friendly system of iBSA. The learners could get access with internet freely while enjoying their time talking with their friends or even discussing other related materials of language skills.

The implementation of iBSA at the Language Laboratory of Graduate School Sriwjaya University mostly takes time after lunch (in the afternoon). Since the class usually starts at 7.30 am and often finishes at 3 pm, the formal iBSA usually occurs in the afternoon until early evening before the school closes at 6 pm. However, learners usually do iBSA during long break, lunch time as they need to rush for other assignments or to their home after class.

Points to Consider in iBSA

In the implementation of iBSA, there are some major points that the iBSA provider (teacher for example) should consider.

1. Make sure all iBSA facilities for both indoor and outdoor as previously mentioned are available. This includes facilities of hardware and software.
2. Be prepared for good network so that learners can do iBSA anytime.
3. Make sure all learners are able to operate computers and have been familiar to internet as it should be noted that not every single is probably good at operating computers). In case they are not, spend some extra time to learn.

4. Introduce iBSA study to all learners before they do themselves. Spend at least one meeting to explain iBSA study for the whole class.

5. Instruct the learners to do iBSA after they get an overview of iBSA study and ask them to report their work if necessary.

6. For the purpose of controlling learners' work of iBSA, prepare log sheet of iBSA as shown in the appendix. In the log sheet, the students write down what language skill or component they access, when and where they do iBSA study.

7. Give initial (from the teacher or instructor) for every single activity in the column of log sheet of learners to show that they have done the iBSA activity. from the teacher or instructor.

8. Evaluate the iBSA activity after the program is finished for example by asking learners' point of view of the use of iBSA and its application. This might be good for future improvement of iBSA implementation.

Related Result of the Implementation of iBSA

Internet-Based Self Access has been implemented to the Nursing Students of Nursing Department, Faculty of Medicine Sriwijaya University taking a one hundred-hour Intensive English Training (IET) program at the Language Laboratory of Graduate School of Sriwijaya University since 2008. The students have already got English subject for two semesters as it is included in their curriculum before they take this English training. There were two groups of 2008 and 2009 taking the IET consisting of 85 students. The two groups have been adopted as the study of the implementation of iBSA either indoor (at the iBSALC) or outdoor. This quantitative study was aimed at improving the language skills of nursing students as one of the requirements

to hold nursing professional certificate. To support the IET program the students were requested to do internet-Based Self Access (iBSA) study. During self access, the students learnt any language skill or component they felt they needed to improve. For example, if they were still weak in vocabulary or reading, they worked on it doing exercises available in the internet. The students were introduced some websites to refer for language skills and components and for those especially related to TOEFL materials covering the three sections of TOEFL: Listening, Structure & Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension.

Language Target Related to iBSA

In addition to oral communication, one of the targets of IET was that the students had to get TOEFL prediction score of ≥ 450 as the standard reference for their English achievement. The score of 450 is categorized a fair target for undergraduate students in Indonesia, particularly at Sriwijaya University who learn English as a foreign language. The reasons of adopting TOEFL prediction have been stated earlier in the previous section.

Analysis of iBSA Study

Based on the study of the IET program conducted in 2008 and 2009, the number of 2008 nursing students achieving the standard TOEFL prediction score for pretest was 15 (33%) and the number of those who did not was 30 (67%). Meanwhile, the number of 2009 nursing students who got the standard score of TOEFL prediction was 10 (24%) and that who did not reach the target was 31 (76%). Though few of the students had already reached the standard requirement in the pretest, they were still required to take IET program since in the program they were also focused on oral presentation skill. At the end of the program, the students were given a posttest also in the form

of TOEFL prediction. The results of the test showed that the number of students who achieved the standard score was 38 (84%) and who did not was 7 (16%) in 2008. Whereas, in 2009, the number of students achieving the standard score was 37 (90%) and the number of those not achieving the standard one was 4 (10%). Though few students did not achieve the standard score, they relatively could gain several points in their posttest compared with the ones in their pretest as shown in the following tables.

Table 1. TOEFL Prediction Scores of 2008 Students

No.	N a m e	Pretest	Posttest	Gain
1	Student 1	503	507	3
2	Student 2	460	497	37
3	Student 3	477	493	17
4	Student 4	440	460	20
5	Student 5	437	463	27
6	Student 6	427	500	73
7	Student 7	500	517	17
8	Student 8	377	483	07
9	Student 9	420	463	43
10	Student 10	407	467	60
11	Student 11	440	440	0
12	Student 12	433	477	43
13	Student 13	397	463	67
14	Student 14	373	480	107
15	Student 15	427	463	36
16	Student 16	400	497	97
17	Student 17	420	460	40
18	Student 18	470	493	23
19	Student 19	410	450	40
20	Student 20	443	467	24
21	Student 21	450	440	-10
22	Student 22	420	453	33
23	Student 23	0	507	
24	Student 24	473	487	14
25	Student 25	413	487	74
26	Student 26	380	460	80
27	Student 27	443	470	27
28	Student 28	393	440	47
29	Student 29	463	487	24
30	Student 30	407	477	70
31	Student 31	453	470	17
32	Student 32	430	527	97

Table 2. TOEFL Prediction Scores of 2009 Students

No.	N a m e	Pretest	Posttest	Gain
1	Student 1	453	493	40
2	Student 2	430	457	27
3	Student 3	427	470	43
4	Student 4	513	507	7
5	Student 5	453	477	24
6	Student 6	397	447	50
7	Student 7	403	460	57
8	Student 8	430	467	37
9	Student 9	410	447	37
10	Student 10	450	477	27
11	Student 11	423	483	60
12	Student 12	460	510	50
13	Student 13	437	463	24
14	Student 14	437	483	44
15	Student 15	440	493	53
16	Student 16	450	470	20
17	Student 17	560	577	17
18	Student 18	407	470	63
19	Student 19	447	483	36
20	Student 20	0	487	
21	Student 21	367	467	100
22	Student 22	427	410	-17
23	Student 23	440	477	37
24	Student 24	517	533	16
25	Student 25	423	480	57
26	Student 26	380	470	90
27	Student 27	420	470	50
28	Student 28	447	447	0
29	Student 29	417	467	50
30	Student 30	370	480	110
31	Student 31	427	473	46
32	Student 32	423	453	30

33	Student 33	460	490	30
34	Student 34	467	467	0
35	Student 35	417	470	53
36	Student 36	417	437	20
37	Student 37	390	447	57
38	Student 38	510	513	3
39	Student 39	487	503	16
40	Student 40	423	477	54
41	Student 41	520	560	40
42	Student 42	413	457	44
43	Student 43	477	480	3
44	Student 44	437	0	
45	Student 45	400	437	37

33	Student 33	450	510	60
34	Student 34	487	507	20
35	Student 35	397	470	73
36	Student 36	427	477	50
37	Student 37	443	497	54
38	Student 38	420	477	57
39	Student 39	387	460	73
40	Student 40	433	490	57
41	Student 41	440	460	20

The following diagrams show the percentage of nursing students who got TOEFL Prediction scores of pretest and post test of both 2008 and 2009 IET programs.
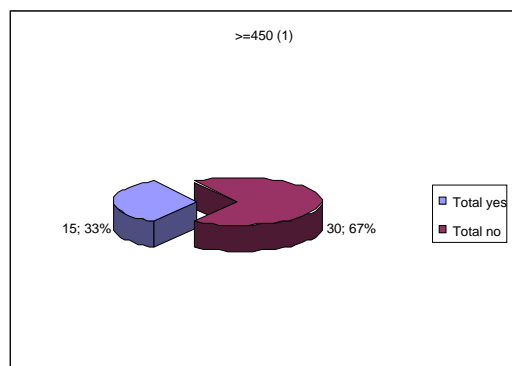
Result of Pretest of 2008 IET
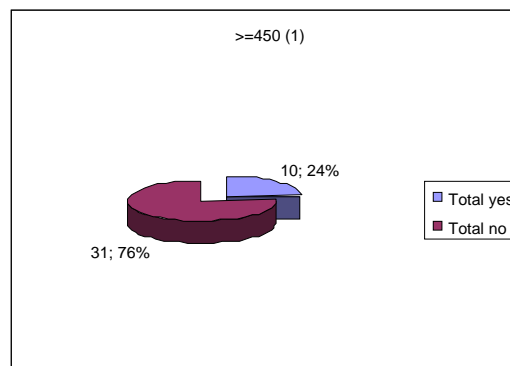
Result of Pretest of 2009 IET

Result of Post Test of 2008 IET
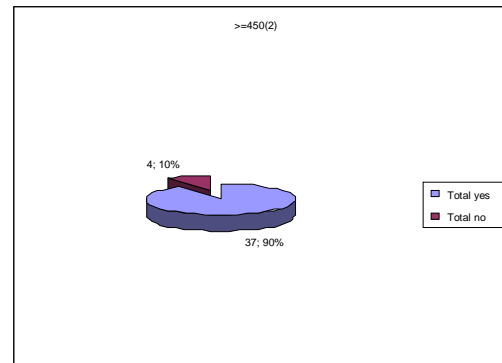
Result of Post Test of 2009 IET

Figure 1. Diagrams of Pretest and Post Test Results of 2008 and 2009 IET Program

Furthermore, the positive effect supported by internet-Based Self Access was indicated by the analysis of t-test of both pretest and posttest data. In 2008, the students' average TOEFL prediction score of pretest was 423 and t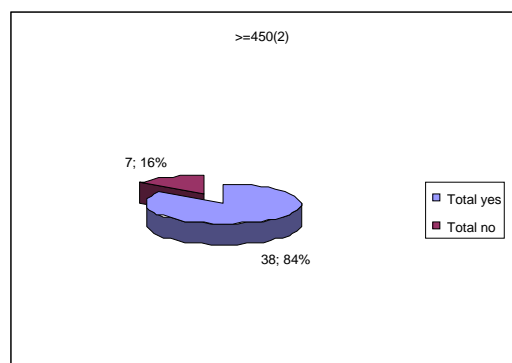hat of posttest was 464. The standard deviation (SD) was 74.35 and median was 430 in the pretest. While in the posttest, SD was 75.59 and median was 470. The result was significant with the p-value (two-tail) = 0.01 <α = 0.05. In 2009, the students' average TOEFL prediction score of pretest was 421 and that of posttest was 461. The standard deviation (SD) was 77.22 and median was 430 in the pretest. While in the posttest, SD was 26.57 and median was 476.7. The result was significant with the p-value (two-tail) = 0.00 <α = 0.05. The following diagram also shows the average TOEFL Prediction scores of pretest and post test of nursing students of both 2008 and 2009 IET program. Based on the previous analysis, it could be concluded that there was an improvement of students' English achievement after the program.
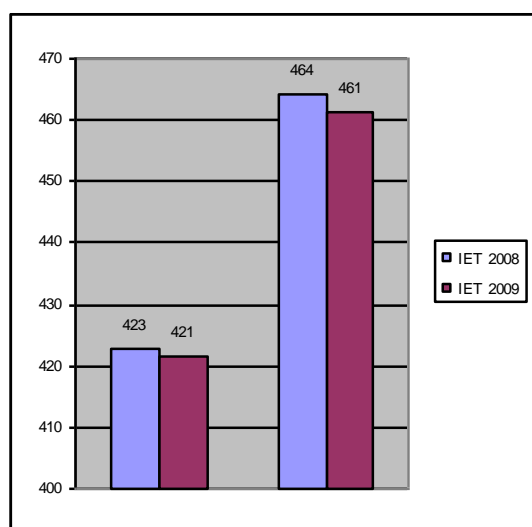
Figure 2. Diagram of average scores of both pretest and posttest

Learners' Response of iBSA

The result of the questionnaires given to the students showed that they felt impressed with the help of internet-based self access. More than 90 percent of the respondents agreed the availability of iBSA could help them learn more additional materials they needed. Besides getting a variety of materials with different levels from internet, they could evaluate their English improvement themselves and did some access freely without time constraints.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to draw conclusion on the use of iBSA in developing learners' language skills based on Indonesian context. iBSA has proven that it is an interesting activity which helps learners do independent or individual study. Internet has great potential for the application of self-access study. Not only can internet provide free sources of materials, but also it can make learners enjoy doing self-access study. In addition, by using internet learners could improve their language skills or component depending on what specific skill or component they need to. For these reasons, it is suggested that the educational institutions utilize internet environment equipped with such number of facilities such as computer accessories for indoor iBSA or power supply and seats for outdoor one. Positive response from the learners has been promising. With adequate iBSA facilities to accommodate learners, we feel that the Language Laboratory of Graduate School, Sriwijaya University in general and Graduate School in particular have stepped one point to improve learning atmosphere. Further study of the use of iBSA is certainly needed since this study only focused on nursing students and limited materials related to TOEFL.

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Appendix 1.
Student's Record

LOG SHEET OF iBSA

Student Name   : ……………………………………
Student Number   : ……………………………………
Class/Level   : ……………………………………
Name of Instructor/Teacher: ……………………………………

No	Date	Language Skill/Component Retrieved	Time		Place		Instructor's Initial
			Start	Finish	Indoor	Outdoor	