

Language Learning via ICT: Students' Experience

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Abstract: - The rapid growth and improvement in Information Communication Technology (ICT) has lead to the diffusion of technology in education. It is believed that ICT would bring many advantages to the students if it is use under the right circumstances. This paper describes the use of ICT for Language Learning among the urban school students in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. Data was collected via a questionnaire survey of second language students. The results show that students are aware of the benefits of using ICT in learning language. However, students did not spend much of their time for the purpose of learning. Students spend only 1- 2 hours per weeks using ICT for learning activities. Most of the students use ICT for surfing internet to get information and for searching for words meaning and pronunciation.

Keywords: language learning, ICT pedagogy, technology in education, learning method

1 Introduction

In this twenty-first century, we are all living in the age of digital technology. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a force that has changed many aspects of the way we live. ICT has been used world-wide to help people such as in business, trade, marketing, science, education and others (Brian 2000)[1]. Now, ICT is currently being used in education to assist students to learn more effectively and help teachers to do administrative tasks more efficiently (Neil Selwyn 2003)[2]. In other words, Information Communication Technology in education has made it possible for students, teachers, specialists and researchers to collaborate with each other in diverse ways.

ICT has many beneficial uses in education. For example, ICT is a powerful tool in presenting or representing information in many different ways. It can be presented through different forms such as texts, pictures, tables, graphs and even multimedia which can make the class more interesting and lively. Besides, ICT can also play various instructional roles such as make the learners feel more relax to learn the various topics and task, and also make the learners active, because they learn by applying the technology to a task rather than by being directly "instructed" by the technology (Grave & Grabe 2005)[3].

ICT also has the potential to become communication tools, such as emails, chat groups, discussion groups, pals' clubs and others to conduct

activities which require collaboration (Krajka & Grudzinska 2002)[4]. ICT can be used in facilitating various forms for online conferencing and create virtual discussion with friends or teachers online (Flecknoe 2002)[5]. This online conference enables teachers or students to share information with their peers or friends who are staying far apart across oceans. This provides a wide opportunity for students to increase their usage of the language.

Nevertheless, ICT can also provide lessons for learners to learn grammar and vocabulary at their own pace as a self-study activity. There are a number of free websites that provide such an opportunity to learners. Learners may practise grammatical structures, improve their listening and reading comprehension, and also build up their vocabulary from the websites. Seeing the advantages ICT provide, the aim of this paper, is to examine the use of ICT for learning English among the urban school students in Kuala Terengganu.

2 Literature Review

We are all living in the decade of multimedia and the millennium of the internet and the World Wide Web (WWW). According to Chuah Yoon Fah (2000)[6] the impact which has been brought by this media, is very visible and stiffening. This new technologies instrument has changed and innovated the way we learn. ICT provides a variety of learning opportunities for students to learn language

(Melor Md Yunus 2007)[7]. The Internet and the World Wide Web was able to provide supplemental language activities which can help students with additional practice in specific areas of language learning. These include reading tests and comprehension questions, grammar exercises, pronunciation exercises, vocabulary tests, cloze tests, and so forth. Students can search the Web for such web sites for their own learning. This can help them to enhance their English language learning (Melor Md Yunus 2007)[7].

The Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software programmes which have been designed for the purpose of language teaching despite other tools such as the Internet, e-mail, and others also promote student-centred language learning and help students develop their communicative skills as well (Gonglewski; Meloni & Brandt 2003 cited in Huynh Thi Bich Ngoc 2005)[8]. This CALL programmes also provide students with a variety of choice in terms of which aspects of the target language such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, they want to practise or what skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) they want to develop, and topics which they are interested. Students can manage their own learning at their own speed and based on their own choice. This helps learners to take more responsibility for their own learning, which leads to greater autonomy and more learner-centred.

A number of studies have been done concerning CALL which affects the development of language learners' in four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Most report significant gains in reading and listening and most CALL programs are geared toward these receptive skills because of the current state of computer technology. However, the speaking abilities using CALL technology has gained much attention. There has been some success in using CALL, in particular computer-mediated communication, to help speaking skills closely linked to "communicative competence" (ability to engage in meaningful conversation in the target language) and provide controlled interactive speaking practice outside the classroom (Warschauer 1998)[9]. Using chat room has been shown to help students' to master certain often-used expressions to promote the development of automatic structure that help develop speaking skills. This is true even if the chat is purely textual. The use of videoconferencing gives not only immediacy when communicating with a real person but also visual cues, such as facial expressions, making such communication more authentic.

In the Impact Report 2006 on the schools in Europe, which draw the evidence on ICT from 17 impact studies across Europe (Balanskat; Blamire & Kefala 2006)[10]. These studies show overwhelming majority of studies reviewed in the report confirm wider positive benefits of ICT for learning and learners in such areas as motivation and skills, concentration, cognitive processing, independent learning, critical thinking, and teamwork, all important skills for the language learner.

3 Methodology

This study employ a survey design in order to measure the extend students use ICT for learning English. For the purpose of the study, 66 form 4 students from a secondary school in Kuala Terengganu were involved. This study was conducted using survey method. To elicited data for the study, the students had responded to three parts of questionnaire: 1) hours students spend on the English learning activities 2) the extend ICT helped students in learning English 3) benefits of using ICT in helping students to learn English. Part 1 items were measured by the time frame, on the other hand part 2 and 3 were measured by a four-point Likert-scale range from 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Agree and 4-Strongly Agree. A descriptive statistic of percentage and mean score were used in the data analysis.

4 Findings

4.1 Use of ICT in Learning English

Table 1 presents the distribution and frequency for the use of ICT in learning English. Generally, the findings showed that ICT was not widely used by the students in the purpose of learning English, as averagely students only spent 1-2 hours weekly on learning activities. There were a large number of students reported that they did not use the activities most of the time such as writing blogs in English (75.8%), reading English newspaper online (72.7%), search for English of English essay (63.6%), search for English past year examination questions (59.1%) and practising grammar exercises as well as practising vocabulary exercises (54.5%). In greater detail, 21.3% of the sampled students reported minimal use (ranging from less than an hour and 1-2hours) of ICT in writing blogs in English. Only 1.5% reported used 6-10 hours and 11-15 hours.

Table 1: Distribution and Frequency for the use of ICT in learning ESL

Item	Do not use (%)	Less than an hour (%)	1-2 hours (%)	3-5 hours (%)	6-10 hours (%)	11-15 hours (%)	16-20 hours (%)	hours (%)
Surfing internet to get information	7 (10.6)	19 (28.8)	27 (40.9)	9 (13.6)	2 (3.0)			2 (3.0)
Writing blogs in English	50 (75.8)	10 (15.2)	4 (6.1)		1 (1.5)	1 (1.5)		
Reading English newspaper online	48 (72.7)	13 (19.7)	4 (6.1)	1 (1.5)				
Practising grammar exercises	36 (54.5)	25 (37.9)	5 (7.6)					
Practising vocabulary exercises	36 (54.5)	24 (36.4)	5 (7.6)	1 (1.5)				
Searching for sample of English essay	42 (63.6)	18 (27.3)	6 (9.1)					
Searching for English past year examination	39 (59.1)	16 (24.2)	9 (13.6)	2 (3.0)				
Searching for words meaning and pronunciation	27 (40.9)	21 (31.8)	14 (21.2)	2 (3.0)	1 (1.5)			1 (1.5)

This is probably because students did not have the habits to write blogs or they write their blogs in their mother tongue.

However, students reported some usage on “surfing internet to get information”, and “searching for words meaning and pronunciation”. As can be seen both the items has the highest mean score which is 2.85 and 2.00 respectively. This shows that students found it is convenience and easy using the ICT search for information and words or meaning rather than searching in a dictionary. On the other hand, reading English newspaper online has the lowest mean score which is 1.36. This might be due to the fact that newspapers are easily available at home, so they do not need to go online to read newspaper(s) (Refer to Table 2).

Table 2: Mean and standard deviations for the use of ICT in learning English

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Surfing internet to get information	2.85	1.32
Writing blogs in English	1.41	0.93
Reading English newspaper online	1.36	0.67
Practising grammar exercises	1.53	0.64
Practising vocabulary exercises	1.56	0.70
Searching for sample of English essay	1.45	0.66
Searching for English past year examination	1.61	0.84
Searching for words meaning and pronunciation	2.00	1.20

4.2 The extend ICT helped students in learning English

In reporting the result of the analysis in this part, the “agree” and “strongly agree” responses were combined as “agree”, whereas the “disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses were combined as “disagree”.

Results tabulated in table 3 shows, the majority (89.4%) of the students surveyed agreed with the items “the use of ICT has helped enrich their English vocabulary” and “the use of ICT has helped them better in using English to communicate in their daily conversation”. However, there were 10.6% who disagreed. 84.8% of the students agreed with the statement “the use of ICT has helped improve their English grammar whereas 15.1% responded the opposite. This is perhaps due to the fact that students view learning grammar as difficult.

In great detail, 81.8% of the sampled students agreed with the statement “the use of ICT allows me to take greater control on my language learning” and more than half (74.3%) agreed with “the use of ICT has helped improve my writing skills”. In general,

the data indicated that students perceived the use of ICT are able to enhance their language learning in vocabulary, grammar, writing, speaking and allow them take greater control in their learning. Hence we can conclude that students knew ICT could help them improve their English language in a variety of ways.

Table 4 below illustrated the mean and standard deviation for the extend ICT helped students in learning English. Among the 5 items, “the use of ICT has helped me better in using English to communicate in my daily communication” has the highest mean score which is 3.11. This is followed by, “the use of ICT has helped enrich my English vocabulary” and “the use of ICT allows me to take greater control on my language learning” which yield the same means score that is 3.02. The lowest mean score is by item “the use of ICT has helped improve my writing skills” with mean score of 2.83. This is not surprisingly, as earlier a large number of students reported that they did not practising writing blogs in English.

Table 3: Distribution and frequency on the extend ICT help students in learning ESL

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
The use of ICT has helped enrich my English vocabulary		7 (10.6)	51 (77.3)	8 (12.1)
The use of ICT has helped improve my English grammar	1 (1.5)	9 (13.6)	53 (80.3)	3 (4.5)
The use of ICT has helped improve my writing skills		17 (25.8)	43 (65.2)	6 (9.1)
The use of ICT has helped me better in using English to communicate in my daily conversation		7 (10.6)	45 (68.2)	14 (21.2)
The use of ICT allow me to take greater control on my language learning		12 (18.2)	41 (62.1)	13 (19.7)

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation on the extend ICT helps students

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
The use of ICT has helped enrich my English vocabulary	3.02	0.48
The use of ICT has helped improve my English grammar	2.88	0.48
The use of ICT has helped improve my writing skills	2.83	0.57
The use of ICT has helped me better in using English to communicate in my daily conversation	3.11	0.56
The use of ICT allow me to take greater control on my language learning	3.02	0.62

4.3 Benefits of using ICT in helping students to learn ESL

The figures tabulated in table 5 revealed that majority of the students were aware about the benefits of using ICT in helping them learning English as a Second Language. For example, the majority (98.5%) of the students agreed that “ICT help them broaden their knowledge” except for 1.5% students disagreed with this item. This means with ICT students are able to search for more information to enrich their knowledge. This is followed by, 92.4% students agreed with the item “ICT help them to improve both their English and ICT skills”.

In greater detail, similarly of 96.9% students agreed on the items “obtaining up to date information” and “convenience to get information”, only 3.0% students reported that they disagreed. This illustrated that variety of information provided by the internet can enhance the students language learning and enrich their knowledge in general as well as in learning English.

A high percentage of 81.8% agreed and 18.1% disagreed that ICT could helped them enhance their vocabulary knowledge. On the other hand, there were 80.3% who agreed and 19.7% disagreed with the use of ICT to enhance their writing ability. This is supported in the earlier parts where more than half of the students revealed that they have a basic level of proficiency in writing and also the large number of students who claimed they do not write blogs in English.

As for “build my confidence in using English to communicate”, it was found that more than half (72.7%) agreed and 27.2% said the opposite responses. This is probably some students who are weak in English who were not confident in using the language, because they are afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at by friends. 68.2% students reported they agreed that using “ICT could increase their motivation”. Yet, 31.3% students disagreed with the item. This is perhaps students were not encouraged to use the English language at home as well as using ICT to learn, as a resulted they feel not motivated in learning.

Table 5: Distribution and frequency on the benefits on using ICT in learning ESL

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Help to improve both my English and ICT skills		5 (7.6)	51 (77.3)	10 (15.2)
Convenience to get information		2 (3.0)	42 (63.6)	22 (33.3)
Broaden my knowledge		1 (1.5)	46 (69.7)	19 (28.8)
Increase my motivation	1 (1.5)	20 (30.3)	44 (66.7)	1 (1.5)
Obtaining up to date information		2 (3.0)	45 (68.2)	19 (28.8)
Build my confidence in using English to communicate	2 (3.0)	16 (24.2)	40 (60.6)	8 (12.1)
Enhance my ability in writing	3 (4.5)	10 (15.2)	47 (71.2)	6 (9.1)
Enhance my vocabulary knowledge	3 (4.5)	9 (13.6)	50 (75.8)	4 (6.1)

Table 6 reveals the mean and standard deviation on using ICT for learning English. item obtaining up to date information has the highest mean value which is 3.30. The second higher mean value is by the item “broaden my knowledge” that is 3.27. The lowest mean score is by item “increase my motivation” that is 2.68.

Table 6 Mean and standard deviation on the extend ICT helps students

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Help to improve both my English and ICT skills	3.08	0.47
Convenience to get information	3.30	0.53
Broaden my knowledge	3.27	0.48
Increase my motivation	2.68	0.53
Obtaining up to date information	3.26	0.51
Build my confidence in using English to communicate	2.82	0.68
Enhance my ability in writing	2.85	0.64
Enhance my vocabulary knowledge	2.83	0.60

5 Discussion

From the survey, we can conclude that ICT was not widely used when learning of English as a Second Language is concerned. A high percentage of the students stated that they do not use the activities such as writing blogs in English, read English newspaper online, practising grammar exercises, practising vocabulary exercises, search for sample English essay and search for English past year examination questions. This showed majority of the students do not utilize the ICT tools for the purposes of learning. The finding is consistent with the previous study by Bradley and Douglas (2002)[11] and Ott & Tavella (2009)[12]. In their study involved 30,000 15 year old Canadian students, found that only less than third used computer to help them learn school material.

The students were also asked on the extend ICT helped them in learning English. Generally, most of the students agreed that ICT has given helped to them such as in enriching their vocabulary, better in

using English to communicate in their daily conversation, improved their grammar, take greater control in their learning language and improve their writing skills. However, there were still a small sum of the students who disagreed especially in the statement “ICT helped improve their writing skills” as 25.8% stated they disagreed with ICT help them improve their writing skills, this is supported by the earlier findings where a large number of 75.7% students do not practising writing their blogs in English.

Regarding the benefits of using ICT in helping students learn English, results revealed that the majority of the students were aware of the various benefits which ICT can provide in their language learning. The findings is in line with the previous Impact Report in 2006 where the findings revealed that ICT have wider positive benefits for learning and learners such as motivation, concentration and all the important skills. This means, ICT is useful for the students’ to improve their English.

However, among the 8 benefits listed on the table above demonstrated there is one item which most students disagree. That is “ICT can increase their motivation” as can be seen 31.8% of the students stated that they disagree with the item. This is possible because most of the language used in the website were in English, as a result, those students whose English proficiency were weak or not in a favour for the English subject might discouraged them to use the ICT tools so they feel not motivated and could also be possible students are lack of ICT skills.

Hence, we can conclude that students were aware of the variety of benefits which ICT can provide in their English language learning. However, they do not fully utilize the ICT tools especially in helping them learn better English.

6 Conclusion

Feedbacks from the students’ showed majority of them do not use ICT in language learning purposes. Hence, actions need to be taken to promote students to use ICT in their language learning, because ICT could provides variety of learning opportunity for the students. Study conducted by previous study had shown the success in using CALL software in helping student improve their speaking skills and provide controlled interactive speaking outside the classroom (Warschauer 1998)[9]. Besides, in the experiment carried out by Williams (2003)[13] also found that students who use ICT achieved better results in communication, cooperation and in solving problems. Furthermore, this study is

relevant to research that conducted previously Kirdilog, Aykol and Gulsecen (2009) [14]. This proves the powerful of ICT in the learning environment. Perhaps, the Minister of Education can organize more ICT campaign or seminar on ICT to give awareness to the students on the variety of exercises and also information in the website. Besides, teachers in school need to play their role to keeps reminding students to use ICT for searching for information or teacher can provide students with URL ask them to search as one of the tasks.

7 Implications

The findings from this study, showed most of the students knew the various benefits which ICT can provide to them. However, many students still lack of awareness on the use of ICT resources to help them especially in learning English. Therefore, it is crucial for the teachers in school to encourage and guide the students to use ICT (internet) tools and provide the students with some suggestion of websites available which is useful for enhancing students' language development. Before the teachers are able to guide the students, the teachers must at first acquire the technology skills so he or she will be able to guide the students successfully. This can be done by the Ministry of education through organizing computer courses to upgrade the teacher with the technology skills. Most importantly, the students must change their attitudes towards the use of ICT in learning before they can successfully learn from the ICT tools.

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