Evaluation of ICT Usage for General or English Learning Purposes

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Abstract: Information Communication and Technology (ICT) is reshaping our education system with an astounding speed. This has changed the learning environment, where ICT provides various materials and opportunity for the students. This paper evaluates the use of ICT in terms of general purposes and in learning English among the students in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. A total of 66 Form 4 students responded to the questionnaires. Results shows students spend most of their time using ICT for general purposes rather than learning English. The most popular activity among the students were playing computer games, and students spend only about 1-2 hours per weeks using ICT for learning activities.

Key-Words: ICT, Language, Learning, General Purpose, English, Secondary School

1 Introduction
Information and communication technology (ICT) is a force that has changed many aspects of the way we live. If one was to compare such fields as medicine, tourism, travel, business, banking, and education, the impact of ICT across the past two or three decades has been enormous. The way these fields operate today is vastly different from the ways they operated in the past. This advancement in technology has also assisted people in saving the time and energy to purposely go to the bank, or office to make their payment or transfer information. ICT is currently being used in education to assist students to learn more effectively and help teachers to do administrative tasks more efficiently [1]. It cannot be denied that the use of ICT has become increasingly important within the school curriculum and work place. In the school curriculum, it does not only support teaching and learning within other curriculum subjects, but is also a subject in its own right. In the workplace, ICT provides opportunities for students to work both collaboratively and independently [4]. The role of ICT within the curriculum is not only to enhance the learning experience of pupils but also develop skills, knowledge and understanding in the use of ICT which prepares pupils to use such technologies in their everyday and working lives [5][6]. ICT tools enable pupils to access, share analysis and present information gained from a variety of sources and in many different ways [7]. This shows that ICT tools have changed our living style as compared to the old days.

In other words, ICT in education has made it possible for students, teachers, specialists and researchers to collaborate with each other in diverse ways.

The advanced development in the country has also changed the education environment from traditional methods into e-learning. Almost all the information can be obtained through the electronic media in a short period by just a finger click [2]. ICT is seen to have the big potential in changing the world of education [3] where it provides varieties of exercises which allow students to practice at their own space. ICT also allows students to undergo a course through distance education learning.

Recently, the rapid growth of the internet has resulted in enthusiastic claims for technology’s ability to provide high-quality education for all. The use of ICT is often argued to increase motivation [8] and is frequently linked with learner autonomy [9] [10]. Autonomy can be defined as “the freedom and ability to manage one’s own affairs, which entails the right to make decisions as well” [11]. This implies that the learner is in charge of his or her own interest in obtaining knowledge.

The use of ICT can mask the nature of students’ learning and misconceptions, or provoke...
a different way of looking at the learning process within a subject. ICT promotes student-centered activity [12] which can place learners at the centre of learning process where an individual choose the learning appropriate to their particular needs and circumstances. For example, ICT is seen to support and encourage constructive learning. Learners used the ICT merely to acquired knowledge and skills, to actively construct new ideas, concepts and meanings [13]. ICT fits in with constructivist’s which emphasis on learning that is mediated by participation in social process of knowledge construction and directly linked with the social use of artifacts or tools to provide the scaffolding for learning.

With the used of ICT, students nowadays can process information and communicate with other learners from all around the world. When users log in and chat at the same time using either software programs for local area networking (LAN), internet relay chat, or web chat programs, they are said to involve in a synchronous communication whereas a delayed communication such as e-mail, bulletin boards, newsgroups, and web-based conferencing system, is called asynchronous [4].

A number of experiments have been conducted on the use of ICT. From the experiment, it was found that students who use ICT achieved better results in communication, cooperation and in solving problems [14]. Graff [15] and Mikropoulos et al. [16] claimed that ICT support the improvement of pupils’ mental and creative activities. Great use of ICT can also increase creative thinking [16]. The primary schools with high level of computerisation obtained significantly better results in national testing [17]. Pupils highly rated using animation, visual design and design software [17]. The usage of ICT is also very important in the teaching Arabic so that the material taught becomes more understandable and for students to gain more experience and to enable them to make use of the information easily and at the same time can achieve the objective of teaching and learning Arabic in the classroom [18]. Interestingly, several studies have shown that ICT usage at home differs from those at school [19]. For example, school students reported that they spend more time with computer games at home than in the school. Using new technologies contributed to positive attitudes of pupils toward ICT [20]. Neo also found out that pupil using computers had more positive attitude towards biology and natural sciences than pupils who were educated by traditional styles [21].

Due to the advance in Technology, this paper aims to examine the use of ICT in terms of general purposes and in learning English among the students in Kuala Terengganu.

3 Method
A quantitative survey of 66 Form 4 students from a secondary school were selected to participate in this research. The subjects comprised of 46 Chinese students, 17 Malay students and 3 Indian students.

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire, which consists of 3 sections. Section A solicits selected background information of the respondents. Section B solicits information on the hours students spend on the general use of ICT. Section C comprises of 2 parts which elicit information on students’ use of ICT in learning English namely the hours students spend on the English learning activities and the extend ICT helped students in learning English. In the Part 1, items were measured by the time frame, on the other hand part 2, were measured by using a four point Likert-scale range from 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Agree and 4-Strongly Agree. A descriptive statistic using percentages were used in the data analysis.

4 Findings and Discussion
4.1 Use of ICT in general
Figure 1 denotes the hours which students spent on surfing internet for pleasure. From here can be identified clearly, majority of the students claimed that they spent at least 1-2 hours on the activity of surfing internet (36.4%). This is followed by, 19.7% students claimed they spent about 3-5 hours per weeks. Similarly, 1.5% students claimed they spent 11-15 hours and more than 20 hours on this activity respectively. This is possible because the internet could provide variety of information and entertainment for students.
Figure 1: Surfing internet for pleasure

Figure 2 showed the hour’s students spent per weeks on reading and sending email to friends. Nearly half (42.4%) of the students spent less than an hour on this activity. Surprisingly, there were 25.8% students reported they do not read and send email to their friends. This is perhaps; some students do not have a personal email account. On the other hand, 22.7% indicated they spent at least 1-2hours on reading and sending email. Similarly 4.5% reported they spent 3-5 hours and 6-10 hours on this activity.

Figure 2: Reading and sending email to friends

In term of downloading movies, it was found that almost half of the students claimed they do not use the activity for downloading movie (Figure 3). The result showed, there was a high percentage of students (42.4%) who reported they did not use this activity at all. The reason for their lack of interest is that downloading requires the use of a particular installer, and the downloading process takes a longer time. Despite the large number of students who do not used this activity, there were a few students who stated that they spent more than 20 hours per week for this activity (4.5%).

Figure 3: Downloading movies

As for the item ‘downloading song’ illustrated in Figure 4 that 30.3% students spent averagely 1-2 hours on downloading song. This is followed by, 25.8% spent less than an hour. Whereas, there were 12.1% students claimed they spent 3-5 hours downloading song. Yet, almost a quarter (22.7%) students claimed they do not use this activity. Surprisingly, only 3% of the students claimed they spent more than 20 hours. This is possible because some music lovers would spent more of their time using the network to download their favourite and latest song.

Figure 4: Downloading song

Playing Computer games were the most popular activity reported by the students (Figure 5). 19.7% of the students reported that they spent about 3-5 hours playing computer games. However, 6.1% of the students surveyed stated they spent nearly 6-10 hours, 11-15 hours and more than 20 hours respectively on this activity. This is not surprisingly as it is very common among teenagers especially boys enjoying playing online games.

Figure 5: Playing Computer games

In terms of the activity online chatting, results in Figure 6 indicated a large number of students (27.3%) reported the usage of 1-2 hours and (22.7%) used 3-5 hours for chatting online. At the same time, there were 3.1% students reported that they spent more than 20 hours on this activity. This is probably due to the students feel more comfortable chatting and sharing or exchange information with their friends online rather than face to face. On the other hand, there were 19.7% students reported they do not use this activity.

Figure 6: Online chatting

4.2 Use of ICT in learning English
Regarding the item ‘surfing internet to get information’ in Figure 7, 40.9% of the students indicated they spent 1-2 hours and 13.6% students spent 3-5 hours on surfing internet to get information. Surprisingly, there were 10.6% students reported they do not use this activity at all. This is most likely some students do not have internet connection at home.

![Figure 7: Surfing internet to get information](image)

The majority (74.2%) claimed they did not use the activity of writing blogs in English (Figure 8). Only a minimum of 15.2% students claimed they spent less than an hour and 6.1% reported spent at least 1-2 hours using English to write their blogs. This is probably because students do not have the habits to write blogs or they write their blogs in their mother tongue.

![Figure 8: Writing blogs in English](image)

For the item ‘reading English newspaper online’ pointed out, 19.7% students indicated they spent less than an hour on this activity (Figure 9). On the other hand, 6.1% indicated they spent 1-2 hours whereas 1.5% of the students reported they spent 3-5 hours on reading English newspaper online. Surprisingly, a great number of the students (72.7%) indicated they do not use this activity. 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).

![Figure 9: Reading English newspaper online](image)

Regarding the activity ‘practising grammar exercises’, clearly indentified not many students used this activity, as shown in Figure 10. There were only 7.6% of the students reported they spent 1-2 hours on practising grammar exercises. While, 37.9% of the students reported they used less than an hour. More than half (54.5%) students reported did not use this activity. This is possible where students find learning grammar is bored and difficult.

![Figure 10: Practising grammar exercises](image)

Results in Figure 11 indicated more than half (54.5%) students reported they do not use ICT for practising vocabulary exercises. There were more than a quarter (36.4%) students reported they used less than an hour, whereas 7.6% of the students reported they used 1-2 hour per week only for practising vocabulary exercises. This shows only a relatively small number of students spent their time on vocabulary activity, this is probably due to lack of technology skills which hinder them from using ICT tools.

![Figure 11: Practising vocabulary exercises](image)

Students were also asked about the hour they spent on searching for sample of English essay. Result in Figure 12 revealed that, 27.3% of the students reported they used less than an hour in searching for English sample essay, while less than 10% of the students spent 1-2 hours on this activity. There were more than half (63.6%) of the students reported they do not used ICT in searching for sample of English essay. A possible reason for this is because there are many references of sample essays books available on the market, so students do not take an effort to search on internet.
In terms of the extent students use ICT in searching for English past year examination questions, Figure 13 showed that most of the students claimed they did not spend their time on searching for English past year examination questions (59.1%). Only 24.2% of the students claimed they spent less than an hour while 13.6% of the students claimed they spent 1-2 hours.

Students were asked the hour they spent on searching for words meaning and pronunciation. Findings on Figure 14 indicated less than a quarter (31.8%) students reported they spent less than an hour on this activity. On the other hand, there were 21.2% of the students reported they spent at least 1-2 hours. Similarly, 1.5% of the students reported they spent 6-10 hours and more than 20 hours respectively for searching words meaning and pronunciation. At the same time, less than half (40.9%) of the students reported they do not use this activity. This could be some of them own a pocket dictionary or most of their mobile phone were equip with dictionary software which enables them to search for words conveniently.

Results from the survey as shown in Figure 15 indicated that majority (89.4%) of the students agreed with the item ‘ICT could help them enrich their English vocabulary’. However, there were 10.6% students gave the opposite respond. This is supported in the earlier finding which showed more than half (54.5%) of the students reported they do not practise the vocabulary exercises.

A high percentage (84.8%) of the students reported they agreed with ‘ICT helped them improve grammar’ whereas 15.1% of the students disagreed with this item (Figure 16). This is perhaps students view learning grammar as difficult.

In term of whether ICT helped them improving their writing skills, denotes that 74.3% of the students agreed while 25.8% of the students disagreed with the statement (Figure 17). This is probably writing is a bored task, as a result some students do not like to the writing task.

Figure 18 displays students’ view point on how ICT helped them improve their English communication. The majority (89.4%) of the students agreed that ‘ICT could help them using English to communicate in their daily conversation”. However, there were 10.6% of the students reported that they disagreed. This is
probably because some weak students do not use English in communicating as they have low proficiency of English.

Figure 18: Helping in using English to communicate in daily conversation

In terms of the item ‘ICT help them to take greater control’ indicated that a high percentage (81.8%) of the students agreed, whereas 18.2% of the students disagreed with ICT helped them to take greater control (Figure 19). This is most likely some students are still comfortable with the teachers’ centred learning.

Figure 19: Take greater control on own language learning

Overall, it was found that most of the students spent more of their time using ICT for general purposes rather than in learning English. Findings from the study also revealed that the general activities which are popular by the students are playing computer games, surfing internet for pleasure and chatting online. On the other hand, when learning of English is concerned, it demonstrated that a great number of students reported they do not used 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. There were only limited students using ICT for learning purposes. This indicated majority of the students do not utilize the ICT tools for the purposes of learning. The finding is consistent with the previous studies [7] [18].

6 Conclusion
Feedback from the students’ shows majority of the students utilized ICT tools more on general purposes rather than in learning. Not many of them use ICT for language learning even though it was found that they were aware of the varieties of benefits ICT could provide in their language learning. Hence, actions need to be taken to promote students to use ICT in language learning, this is because ICT could provide a variety of learning opportunities for the students. The Ministry 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 can supply resources for the students to access in order to promote or encourage them use ICT for learning English. Before the teachers are able to provide the information technology knowledge to the students, the students need to equip themselves with the ICT literacy then they will be able to transmit the knowledge successfully. Moreover, the school or PPG (Pusat Pengembangan Penataran Guru) need to ensure they always upgrade their teachers with this new knowledge and skills.

References:


