The Impact of Utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on Promoting Autonomous Learning

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Abstract

In the last decade of high technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has established a powerful presence in foreign language pedagogy. A common justification for the use of ICT in language teaching and learning is that to promote learner autonomy, which researchers and practitioners now set as a very important goal. The learners are required to be more independent in exploring and developing their knowledge through the use of information technology. Thus, the present study aims at investigating the impact of utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on promoting autonomous learning. To reveal the result of this study, a qualitative research design was employed in which the data were obtained through semi-structured interview, observation, as well as field-notes. The subjects of the interview section are two essential elements directly get involved to this issue; students and teachers. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to give more implications to the development of language pedagogy, especially, on the use of ICT as the implementation of active learning strategy which can promote autonomous learning.

Keywords

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Autonomous Learning

1. Introduction

In the last few decades, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have a major role in developing modern life for many social fields, including education. In education, computer technology has become an essential part so that the government put ICT as one of the curriculum in Indonesia’s education. The utilization of ICT in education has started to appeal the potential as well as the significant progress in language learning. It has a major issue in education world and had been used in all level of education, from preschool to university level that could facilitate students and teachers in teaching and learning process.

ICT presents a powerful learning environment for learners either inside or outside of the classroom. Many teachers make use of ICT to support the learning process, especially, for innovative instructional approaches such as collaborative learning and problem-based learning which can increase students’ productivity and useful knowledge construction. Thus, technology, especially the internet presents us with new opportunity for independent, autonomous, and self-access language learning center. The usefulness of technology software, including the computer and internet, for promoting autonomous language learning has become tremendous topic for the researchers since it has a positive impact on language learning. As stated by Dudeney (2007)
that using a range of ICT tools can give learners exposure to and practice in all of the four main language skills autonomously such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading.

In relation to the aforementioned ideas, autonomous learning is considered to be important, since it help learners engage themselves with continuous knowledge excitement. According to Holec (1981) autonomous learning has to do with a person’s ability to take full responsibility of his or her own learning. It includes the ability to decide what, when, and how learning should take place. In addition, Wilson & Boldmeman (2012) also stated that the autonomy-friendly skills can be developed, if the process of learning can increase students’ motivation. The topics of learning materials should be linked to learners’ interests, needs and talents. It also has to challenge learners to deal with everyday life issues which are familiar to them. By utilizing ICT, it can help the learners’ engagement in learning the target language, such as using digital images, video, music, and spreadsheets. Moreover, According to Louis (2006) teacher should encourage learners to work independently by helping them how to make decisions about their learning process. Thus, by directing and controlling their learning, it can help students develop their awareness of responsibilities in the learning process. Eventually, the students may work confidentially outside of the classroom by utilizing ICT as their media of learning.

Computer Technology has contributed much to the concept of autonomous learning in terms of facilitating learner autonomy through enabling a vast amount of materials for self-learning (Godwin-Jones, 2011). The materials given by the teacher in the classroom can be developed by the students themselves by finding thousand of sources through utilizing ICT, especially internet. As the example in reading comprehension, the students are able to find other articles related to the topic given, so that, they can broaden their knowledge and improve their reading skills as well as enrich their vocabulary. Another example is listening comprehension, in the classroom section; the students only get the limited materials due to the limited time allotment. By using technology, especially computer, the students are able to improve their listening skills by listening more on the materials related to the topic or practicing their listening comprehension through other sources outside of the classroom.

In addition, Schmenk (2005:107) also stated that the popularity of learner autonomy may be at least partially related to the rise of computer technology and the growing importance of computers in language learning environments worldwide. The Schmenk’s idea is in line with the result of studies conducted by several researchers. The study conducted by Mantikou (2013) on Greek primary school students revealed that the learners were very motivated while learning by using ICT tools. They started using ICT to learn things in relation to their curriculum subjects. Moreover, the same positive result also revealed on the study conducted by Budianto (2014) on ICP class program that the students felt positive effect on using internet to perform their learning task compared to the regular class. In line with those studies, the result of study conducted by Hayta (2013) showed that the students made use of a good amount of autonomous learning activities and they benefited from technology in their language learning process. Thus, the impacts of ICT on language learning give much benefit to promote autonomous learning.

Regarding to the aforementioned background above, the main purpose of the present study is to explore the impact of utilizing ICT on promoting autonomous learning. Therefore, the research problems are formulated as follows: (1) how learners perceive themselves into autonomous learners? (2) how does ICT based learning help learners to be autonomous in their learning? and (3) what is the impact of utilizing ICT on promoting autonomous learning?. In addition, for the purpose of the study, the present study tries to give an overview about how the students perceive their autonomy through ICT based learning. In other words, it examines the way the ICT based learning help the students to be more autonomous in learning the target language, especially English.

2. Methodology

The present study aims at drawing a qualitative conclusion through case study on utilizing ICT based learning to build students’
autonomous learning. The data were obtained through field notes and interviews. An observation was also conducted by the researchers to enrich the data and reported the actual data from the natural setting. The subjects of this study were the students as well as the teachers of MAN 3 Malang. One class of second grade was chosen in the present study which consists of 25 students since they are utilizing ICT in learning English. The proportions of male and female students in this class are almost equal. Moreover, they have different language competency, thus, they have different styles in learning. However, for the purpose of the study, the researcher selected only five students to participate in this study to be interviewed more about the use of ICT in promoting autonomous learning. In addition, two teachers were also chosen as the subjects of this study due to the enrichment of the data.

In collecting the data, the researcher observed the classroom’s teaching and learning process for three meetings. By using field notes, the researcher gather the raw data including the information related to the use of ICT in teaching and learning. Furthermore, interview sections were also conducted by the researcher which are addressed to five students and two English teachers who utilize ICT in their teaching process. The interviews are semi-structured, consisting pre-written major questions as well as additional questions asked during the interviews. The interview guidelines involved the perspective and opinions of participants related to the impact of using ICT in promoting autonomous learning.

In addition, after obtaining the data through interviews and field notes, the data, then, analyzed by the researcher. Since the main focus of this study was on the impact of ICT in promoting autonomous learning, thus, the goal of the data analysis is finding out whether the students could be characterized as autonomous learner by utilizing ICT in language learning. From the result of interviews as well as the observation in which the data are gathered in the field notes, the data, then, interpreted by the researcher to get the result and draw the conclusion of the present study.

3. Findings and Discussion

In an attempt to answer the first research question about how learners perceive themselves into autonomous learners, the result of the interview section could be concluded that the students have awareness in language learning. They are able to set goals in their learning. In order to achieve their goals, they try to learn English well, even; they make good use of their free time to study English. The students said that they are able to manage their time well. However, being self-directed learners are not easy. The students have to ignore any distraction come up while they are learning. They are able to manage themselves on how, when, and what are the materials should be learned and accomplished during their learning. In addition, from the result of field notes, it also revealed that most of the students were well-motivated in learning English. In the process of teaching and learning in classroom, they were enthusiastic and interested in on the materials given by the teachers.

Moreover, the finding of the present study also revealed that the students are quite eager to learn English. They have a responsibility to complete the task. In accomplishing the task, they try to find any sources from other media, such as internet. Besides, they also use library to enrich the source of references. The students have big responsibility in completing the task from the teacher in order to achieve a higher achievement. In the process of teaching and learning, the students also try to use every opportunity to take part in the activities where and when they can speak English. Some of them are able to speak confidently, but some are not. However, they are able to overcome their anxiety in speaking English by preparing the notes before they start to speak in front of the class. Besides, the result of interview with the teacher also can be inferred that the teachers have a big role in promoting students’ autonomous learning. This idea is in line with Nunan (2003) on the concepts of learner autonomy. He said that the teacher should raise awareness of learning process, encourage learners to use their second language outside the classroom, help learners identify their own preferred styles and strategies, allow learners to generate their own tasks, allow learners to become researchers, etc. In the process of teaching and learning, the teachers facilitate students with the appropriate teaching method as well as the task in order to promote students’ autonomous learning.
Furthermore, with regards to the second research question about how does ICT-based learning help learners to be autonomous in their learning, the results revealed that the students are able to utilize ICT in their learning in which it promotes their autonomous learning. It was found that the students were very enthusiastic about using technology including internet and computer to study and improve English. They used audio-visual materials to improve their speech such as: listen to BBC, watch English movies, read English articles or newspapers, etc. Additionally, in line with the responsibility in completing the task, they claimed that online materials were really helpful to support their learning. When the teacher gave them a task, either for speaking or reading materials, a major of students would finish the task by online sources. Thus, they are able to accomplish the task easily. The present result is line with the result of study found by Budianto (2014) in which the students prefer to use online sources.

In addition, by using technology, learners develop research skill, critical thinking, and inquiry-based learning in a way that they become more responsible for their own learning. Technology can facilitate students in developing their language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing as stated by Dudeney (2007). Moreover, it was also clear that technology benefited students to learn language with different learning styles. In this respect, Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (2003) assert that “multimedia provides the multiple modalities needed to meet the needs of students with different learning styles and strategies”. Eventually, the students are able to overcome their difficulties in learning English by utilizing technology.

In accordance with the third research questions on the impact of utilizing ICT on promoting autonomous learning, the result of the present study showed that the students becomes well-motivated in learning English. A vast majority of students exploited computers and the internet to support and facilitate their learning. The students have numerous opportunities to access thousand of sources provided in the internet. For example, by using YouTube channel, the students can learn many English materials from the native speakers in order to broader their knowledge as well as improve their language ability. The students may not only get the materials given by the teacher in the process of teaching and learning in the classroom, but rather they can develop their own skills by utilizing ICT. Moreover, the impact of technology also benefited for the teachers. As Louis (2006) claims that both teachers and students can make use of technology in various ways; teachers may prepare instructional materials and activities by using sites and other media such as power point, video, music, or media flash player. In addition, the students also have much opportunity such as reflecting on what they have learnt or share their ideas via blogs, communicating with their friends all over the world via social media or chat programs, and studying through authentic materials (Godwin-Jones, 2011). In this point, it is clear that the students’ use of technology give much benefit on promoting their autonomous learning.

4. Conclusion

From the findings of the present study, it can be inferred that most students are able to perceive autonomous learning. The students have more self-awareness in their learning English. They are able to set goals in their learning, besides; they also have responsibility with their own learning. Additionally, the use of technology including computer and internet benefited students to facilitate their learning. The students are able to access thousand of sources provided in the internet as well as utilize the computers to improve their English skill. They can learn from many ways in the form of various media by themselves. Thus, the students not only get the materials given by the teacher in the classroom, but also develop their language skill through ICT. In short, the use of ICT in language learning can give positive impacts to the students, especially in promoting autonomous learning.

References
