

The Use of ICT for Teaching English for Business to Promote Students' Learning Autonomy

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Abstract: *Teaching using ICT is challenging. It's difficult to bring an ICT into a classroom of non-English native speakers. We need to know what the differences are between technology literacy, information literacy, computer literacy, internet literacy, digital literacy, and other meaning of literacy as defined by linguists. In my teaching, I have found many authentic materials as resources, from the easiest or more common topics, to more difficult ones in the internet. The problem is, not all students are competent in finding the materials on the internet. Moreover, there is a lack of computers in the classrooms. Teaching Business English across the curriculum (in an Accounting program of study), requires teachers to be active and creative in running the teaching and learning process. Students worked in a group of four, they did exercises by using authentic materials which had been downloaded from internet or copied. Problem-based learning is assumed to overcome students' obstacles. In promoting the speaking skills, students had to present their tasks in front of their classmates, and they were sometimes allowed to use their L1 to assess how well their reading comprehension of the passages.*

Keywords: *Teaching Business English using ICT, Problem-based learning, Learning Autonomy.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports a class action research (CAR) on relationships between learning methods and students' information behaviour in Politeknik Negeri Semarang, Indonesia. It has been suggested that student-centred learning methods, such as problem-based learning, influence students' information needs, seeking and use. The focus of this paper is on the concept of information literacy as a part of the students' information behavior to promote students to be autonomous learners. How is the attitude of students towards the rapid growth of technology which influences their learning a foreign language, particularly Business English.

Teaching English across the curriculum, like in an Accounting study program, especially in my institution, alternative methods of education (e.g., the problem-based learning approach) have been implemented because of the rapid growth of Business English as a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Students lack motivation in seeking information that is growing fast.

Another problem faced by teachers is the heavy burden of bringing ICTs to the classroom, particularly when most of teachers feel underprepared to use technology. They face many problems with resources related to new literacy (such as lack of technology, time, technical support); inadequate pedagogical and technological knowledge; school leadership; teacher's attitudes and beliefs (fear of using technologies); assessments (traditional rather than matching new literacies' expectation (Hew & Brush, 2007).

Nowadays the student has access to the Internet, and the knowledge of English opens him the doors to getting global information and the exchange of the information on

the items he is interested in. Therefore, teaching/learning ESP is said to be specialty-oriented as it is submitted to specific (professional) needs of the students.

Three necessary points that must be reformed when most teachers coming to classroom before bringing new literacies are:

1. Most teachers use software available in computers in language laboratories without preparing students with new literacies;
2. Teachers very seldom change the program related to new literacies;
3. Literacies are equal right for students but teachers do not offer new literacies to all students.

Teaching General English and Business English is a little bit different. Business English is suitable for post beginners to advanced levels; its communicative and thematic comprehensiveness may reflect sphere of human international business relations that can foster new motivation in developing self-confidence (Wilberg & Lewis, 1990) because there are three characteristics related to social language which deals with three major criteria which are categorized into workers as 1) Executives; 2) Managers; 3) Clerk staffs. It is a branch of ESP that "the research and careful and design are needed to identify whom the learners are what the specific learning context match" (John and Dudley Evans, 1991); and "it is designed to meet specified needs and purposes of the learners" (Stevens, 1977: 89). But Business English differs from other varieties of ESP in that it is often a mix of specific content and general content. The English for Business is likely to be defined primarily in relation to business performance, skills such as meetings, presentations, socializing, or report writing. Within these skills areas, certain concepts are typically discussed and expressed: for example, describing changes and trends, quality, product, process and procedures strategies.

The main characteristics of Business English communication is emphasized on performance. The priority for people in business is to be able to understand and get their message understood by the interlocutors. However, for the majority of Business English learners many of the refinements of language are quite simply irrelevant. In order to achieve the goals of teaching Business English, Botez Nicoleta (2000): the learners must

1. be confident and can speak fluently;
2. be skillful in organizing and structuring information;
3. be accurate to communicate their ideas without ambiguity and cause the listeners get stressed;
4. have strategy how to follow the main points of fast, complex, and imperfect speech;
5. have strategy in clarifying and checking unclear information;
6. be smart in responding and reacting others utterances;
7. be able to pronounce clearly;
8. be able to know about appropriate language and behavior for the cultures and situations in which they operate.

Business English teacher is a language teacher, not an expert in any particular business. S(he) is not teaching business strategies, nor good management practice, nor economic theory. If the learners need these things, they may find from other sources.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Problem-based learning PBL is strategy of learning which based on student-centered instructional which requires learners work collaboratively to solve their problems of learning that reflect on their experiences. It derives from medical faculty and extensively used and pioneered at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, as well as the Monterrey Institute of Technology ITESM. The Materials department at Queen Mary,

University of London was the first Materials department in the UK to introduce PBL. The characteristics of PBL are:

1. Learning is based on learners problems, it is challenging, open-ended problems;
2. Learners work collaboratively in small group.
3. The role of teacher is as facilitator in the learning and teaching process.

Learners are responsible for their group to organize the alternative way of learning process with facility from their teacher. it aims at enhancing content knowledge, increase and develop communication, problem-solving, and foster learner autonomy.

PBL AND ICT IN BUSINESS ENGLISH AND TECHNOLOGY

PBL is an instructional (and curricular) learner-centered approach that empowers learners to conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is becoming more and more popular in education since 1980s. ICT provides students to be learner autonomy but the autonomy must be developed systematically. As ICT provides a context for learner identity formation which needs hybrid uses of language(s), it needs teachers' and learners' motivation. Before coming to the main point, we need to know what the differences between the terms of literacy as follows:

1. technology literacy is the ability to understand and use technology as the tool to ease the goal pursuit (Bunz, 2002 cited in Indrajit, 2008).
2. information literacy is the root discipline of various literacies. It is the ability to access, evaluate, and use the information from multiple formats-books, newspapers, videos, CD-Rom, or the Web (Indrajit, 2008).
3. computer literacy is the ability to satisfy personal needs (Rhodes, 1986, cited in Indrajit, 2008)
4. Internet Literacy: combination of intellectual and capabilities in operating the internet
5. digital literacy, (PDA, Tablet computing devices, pocket communicator) the ability to understand and use information from a variety of resources when presented via digital devices (Grester, 1997, cited in Indrajit, 2008)
6. and other meaning of literacy meant by linguists.

Based on Warschauer's (2006) research found that laptops and connections to the Internet provided scaffolding for many classroom topics, thus building background knowledge. He noted increased student engagement in wireless classrooms as students participated in more diverse writing activities, analysis of reading, and use of media-production software. Finally, he observed how learners gained control of reading on the page as well as the screen. The learners realized that there was more to a computer than games or chatting and gained practice in reading for a variety of purposes, such as interpreting the textual and visual elements in a document and knowing how to navigate and find information.

INFORMATION LITERACY

In global era, technology grows very fast. The functions of ICT in education is vital, it influences the management of schools and social life. The concept of information literacy, which describes the knowledge and skills needed in all areas (e.g., in studies, in the workplace, and in the everyday life of people in the information rich society of today, was introduced in the United States at the beginning of the 1970s (Limberg *et al.* 2002; Webber and Johnston 2000).

In higher education the approach of information literacy is highly required to promote students' autonomy of learning. It relates to Bruce's research (1997) where she found seven distinct categories:

1. Using information technology,
2. Finding information,
3. Executing a process i.e., recognizing a need for information and using the accessed information to meet the original need,
4. Controlling information,
5. Building up a personal knowledge base,
6. Working with knowledge and personal perspectives in such a way that novel insights are gained, and
7. Using information wisely for the benefit of others (Bruce 1997: 110-116).

PHILOSOPHY OF LEARNING: AUTONOMY

Positivism (Benson & Voller: 1997: 70, cited in Dimitrios: 2000) is premised upon the assumption that knowledge reflects "objective reality." Teachers are taken for granted as objective reality, it is considered as "learning is simply; transmission of knowledge from one individual to another" as in "Traditional Classroom", "teachers are *purveyors* of knowledge, wielder of power; and "learners" are the "*containers*." Positivism posits that learning is internalizing what is taught by the teachers. This view is contrast to constructivism, which posits the learning is reorganizing and restructuring the learners' experience. Constructivism supports and covers psychological versions of autonomy which relates to learners' behavior, attitudes, motivation, and self-concept (Benson & Voller, 1997: 23, cited in Dimitrios: 2000). The result is constructivist approaches encourage and promote self-directed learning as an important condition for learner autonomy.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

Most of students prefer surfing on-line to opening up their English text books. This can be a good thing as long as we can use this to increase their exposure to authentic materials which are also up-to-date and easily accessible and copiable. So what kind of activities can our students do?

Learner autonomy does not mean isolate the students from their learning surroundings. They can work collaboratively in the classroom and outside the classroom. There are two ways of information seeking by either let the students explore the webs freely, or the teacher guides and gives them a list of websites to search. It can be done as follows:

1. To promote learners' word-power (building vocabulary)

If there lack of ICT equipment, the teacher may prepare and browse through his internet (at home) to find relevant topics to the syllabus to be discussed with the students in the classroom on the following day. By providing worksheet for class the students learn collaboratively. The downloaded materials were copied to be distributed to the students or they were shown on an LCD for the students to learn together. When they do this, the students were also asked to find the synonym and antonyms of the difficult words in the texts. By doing this with a group of 17-year-olds and the best activity we used in class, I ensure that the material is relevant to the students' needs and the competition element makes them produce a high standard of work. The following is the example of the activity.

Fill in the blanks with one word only. It can be a verb, a noun, an adjective, an adverb, a preposition, a conjunction, determiners (this, that, etc.), article (a, an, the), etc.

MONEY

Money 1) usually defined as a medium of exchange. That is, you receive money in exchange for the work you do. In turn, 2) give it to people in exchange 3) things you want, such as food, clothing, or other consumer goods. Many different 4) have been used as 5) in some places, for example, seashells have served as a 6) of exchange. However, gold, silver, and copper have been the most popular kinds 7) money throughout the ages. 8) are still made of silver and copper in most places today. However, most 9) the world's money is 10) of paper, which has almost no value in itself.

Answers:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. is | 6. medium |
| 2. you | 7. of |
| 3. for | 8. Coins |
| 4. things | 9. of |
| 5. money | 10. made |

Before the students are familiar with 'cloze' practice, I explain how to do such exercise. They are to:

- read the entire text;
- guess whether they need a verb or a noun in question no 1, and they have to guess the meaning of the words in context, not word by word.
- answer using the meaning of the words in context they know.

2. To promote learners' writing and speaking skills

Another activity is the way to use the Internet for homework to incorporate it into lesson plan. For example, the following topic is to foster writing skills, one of the topics is a unit on shopping. Ask the students to

- write shopping lists, at home, they to see who can find the best priced products,
- plan their budget, they are to write the lists of their needs, such as cosmetics; buying/copying books/handouts; transport; savings; entertainment (movies, pulse or change cell-phone); food (for those who live apart from their parents or in a boarding house); fashion; etc.
- then draw diagram based on what and how much they spend on things they wrote.

When they finish writing the activities, ask the students to present in a group of four to foster speaking skills. While one of the students is presenting his work, the other students compare with their own.

3. To increase their reading comprehension or logical thinking

Connect the netbook to the internet and when find a hot issue, then ask them to discuss the topic by dividing them into groups of four. For example the hot issue is about "*Transportation in crowded city, Jakarta.*" This exercise promotes students' logical thinking by expressing their ideas about their agreement and disagreement.

Letter: Jakarta needs MRT

Wed, 09/30/2009 1:59 PM | Opinion

This is my comment on an article titled "Four wheels good, two wheels bad with Jakarta road rage?" (The Jakarta Post, Sept. 27). I am a European who has lived almost 15 years in Indonesia, of which I spent more than 10 in Bali and the remaining five in Jakarta. While traffic in Bali is also not necessarily comparable with European standards (e.g. motorbikes "shooting" out of side roads without ever looking for traffic

or bikes driven by 10-year-old kids "overtaking" from the left, etc.) I was at first frightened to use the car in Jakarta.

Indicator signals for necessary lane changes are ignored, public transportation in derelict buses (Metro Mini and their competition) in daredevil competition races, minibuses suddenly stopping without the use of indicators or brake lights (probably, these are not even working any more - looking at the condition of the vehicles) and so on and so on.

But the most frightening experiences are my biweekly rides to Bogor on the toll road - I have never in my life seen so many crazy drivers, speeding to the absolute limit in their little sedans with flashing lights, changing lanes, using the emergency lane for their "performance rides", usually overloaded with 6-7 occupants, driving at a distance of one meter behind another car on the highway: truly crazy!

For me (a family man with two small children and a wife), it is impossible to use any public transportation as it is dirty, hot, overcrowded, unsafe and has dangerous drivers.

This should be the first thing which should change in Jakarta; provide a decent mass transportation system at a competitive price, controlled and owned by the city, one which does not unnecessarily take an additional lane away from the already clogged roads for a single Transjakarta bus that only runs about every 15 minutes; provide a subway or, if the Jakarta terrain does not allow it, a sky train as in Bangkok.

And provide proper driver training and as well as police control - my family and I do not want to be the victims of some maniac driver who is barely in control of his car - and I truly do not want to hurt any motorcyclist who thinks that he can do whatever he/she wants on the road - the blame is always put on the car driver in the case of an accident anyway. (Roland K. Jakarta).

Students have to discuss the questions as to practice their logical thinking:

1. Do you agree that Jakarta needs MRT? Why and why not? (first, explain what MRT is. Even not all teachers know what an MRT is).
2. How about Semarang (the city where we live)? Do you think Semarang also needs an MRT? Why and why not?

IN ANALYZING THE STUDY

In analyzing the case, the students come to a point where more information is needed to discuss. An issue specifies an item of information that must be learnt to complete the case. Once an issue has been identified, it becomes a learning goal for the next meeting. Each student must then independently find an answer to this question and be prepared to share it with other students. Thus, problem-based learning employs students' initiative as a driving force.

It is assumed that the students are gathering information from different sources (Barrows 1996: 6). Information sources such as libraries, databases, different textbooks, journal articles, experts, other students, faculty members, field trips and laboratory work are mentioned as possible sources. Although lectures are not regarded as a primary source of instruction, they are used also in problem-based learning, and form a source of information for students.

RESOURCES

Indonesian universities are not yet all equipped with computer laboratories, but Politeknik Negeri Semarang has. Access to the network for teachers and students both

intranet and internet are free but they are still limited and low capacity, that is why it is hard to depend on university's support, so the role of teachers of English is responsible for instruction information seeking. Therefore, I decided to use my own laptop and modem for teaching and learning in my classes.

THE PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING IN AN ACCOUNTING PROGRAM OF STUDY

In an Accounting study program, students get lecture of SIA (Application Information System/accounting computer literacy). They are also taught how to find resources through internet. This lecture is learned and practiced in special computer laboratory, which is equipped with training models, accounting equipments, literature, and audio-visual materials.

Knowledge, skills, attitudes and the learning process as a whole are evaluated. Self-evaluation and feedback are included in the evaluation. The progress of students' studies is done once in every semester, and this gives information to the students and faculty about their progress made in the studies.

METHODS

In collecting and analyzing the data, I used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The subjects are 26 (twenty six) of 1st year students of Accounting study program in the problem-based learning. Theme interviews (open-ended questions) are used to know students' diaries, observation and relevant documents. The transcriptions of the interview form the main source of information.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed following the principles of qualitative analysis for finding differences related to the research questions in the interviews and building categories that formed the basis for the analyzes. In the categorization process the coding paradigm (Strauss & Corbin 1990) was applied. In coding paradigm, data are analyzed in terms of conditions, interactions, strategies, tactics, and consequences. Data processing used manual methods since it was a small number of respondents.

The data were divided into two phases. The first phase was the different empirical category which was established on the basis of variations and differences in the interviews. Two main interview themes explored are:

1. Learning and studies which include:
 - the role of different learning situations and
 - teaching including instruction in information seeking;
 - students' ways of studying;
 - problems in learning; studies and information gathering; and
 - conceptions of learning.
2. Information seeking and use in the context of learning and studies including:
 - aspects connected with information needs;
 - choice;
 - evaluation
 - use of information, and
 - different sources and channels of information.

Information literacy is the main categories in the overall studies. Thus, information literacy is built up from the following initial categories:

1. learners' conceptions of the instruction in the use of databases collected by the researcher;

2. learners' actual use of databases;
3. learners' use of different information sources;
4. learners' evaluation of information.

FINDINGS

Information literacy-Part I

Learner's ideas of the instruction in the use of databases collected by the teacher and of information searching were divided into three components:

1. Learning by doing, information searching is something which should be learned related to real information needs. In such phase, learner is doing trial and error method. As they are from the same class they work collaboratively in group of four to search materials which will be discussed on the following day. On the basis of the instruction they could independently develop their skills, problem-based learning students' attitude to the given instruction that can be described as a positive one. They also use databases in connection with writing paper, reading comprehension and building vocabulary. When there was a group having difficulty, the other group or the teacher helped. Many of them admitted that there was also consciousness that information searching could be complicated and required knowledge and skills.
2. No motivation, sometimes students wanted more instruction at a more suitable moment, that was, when they really needed to use the databases. Lectures as method of instruction were criticized by traditional students. They reported use of databases only in connection with course papers. When they did not find the needed materials, they got assistance from more qualified student by searching materials together. Lack of motivation is the typical of the group that caused the class not running smoothly. Some students stated that it was very essential to possess skills in information retrieval for the course papers. A few students admitted that they could manage the studies without using databases. Some stated that they did not like computers, they were not interested in using them or they did not have the needed skills.
3. No problems, most of the students seemed to have a neutral attitude to the given instruction. They stated that they did not have any problem in using databases and in searching needed information, because they had been taught how to search such databases in accounting information system lecture. Some students were obviously interested in operating computers and depended on their own skills confidently. They considered that databases and programs were easy to use. Some of them who were not active, qualified, found this kind of strategy is difficult and boring.

Table 1: Students' perceptions of mode instruction (Accounting study program)

Learning by doing		No Motivation		No Problem	
PBL	Traditional	PBL	Traditional	PBL	Traditional
14	12	12	12	18	4

Information Literacy-Part II

Students' perception to the instruction used in presenting the lecture, is that this method is new to promote their logical thinking and they felt that such activities done in their class are interesting and challenging. The data of 26 students in Business English (Accounting) whose perception about the mode of instruction can be seen on table 1. They stated that from seven categories of understanding information literacy carried out by Bruce, the following categories are not easy to apply in their learning process:

1. building up a personal knowledge;
2. working with knowledge and personal perspectives in such a way that novel insights are gained; and
3. using information wisely for the benefit of others.

I divide the result of type of information into three:

1. developed information skills for the students who were industrious in using information sources.
2. simple information literacy skills for students who belonged to this categories *No Problems* and *No Motivation*.
3. underdeveloped information literacy skills for students who used only a few sources of information.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that student's information literacy is developed firstly through active use of information and sources in connection with real information needs, and secondly through an educational context which offers opportunities to get different viewpoints on issues that it helps to improve students' learning autonomy.

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Appendix: List of Websites

1. Lists of websites for students to promote their information literacy:
 - <http://www.bangkokapartments.info>
 - <http://www.bbc.englishlearning.com>
 - EnglishClub.com ESL Projects.
 - EnglishClub.com
 - <http://www.any-company-you-want.com>
 - <http://www.tefl.net/alexcase/>
 - EnglishClub.com ESL Webguide
 - ESL Cafe – Search
 - Internet TESL Journal

2. Lists of websites for teachers to develop their profession.
 - DevelopingTeachers.com
 - EnglishClub.com for ESL Teachers
 - <http://www.inspiringteachers.com>