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Integrating technology into EFL curriculum

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Abstract

The goal of this research is to understand EFL (English as Foreign Language) teachers, faculty members and students' perspectives toward the integration of technology into the English Education Curriculum. As one of the four pillars of UNG's development program, the development of ICT in teaching and learning process has gained a significant attention from the institution; thus, through this research, the integration of technology in English education curriculum and instruction is be designed. The design then is offered as one consideration to implemented in English education program of UNG. The basic design of technology implementation is be based on studies in CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning). Studies in this field have developed significantly in determining the effect of the technology use in language learning, thus it is considered significant to be included in English Education curriculum. The long target of this research is the integration of one subject in English education curriculum that is specifically targeting the mastery of technology literacy to enable the students to become English teachers who understand technology and able to use it in their teaching and learning process. This is important considering that the students nowadays are born in technology era.

Key Words: Technology, English as a Foreign Language, EFL Curriculum

1. Background

When my daughter was three years old back in 2009, she asked me to buy her a laptop. For my generation, this sounds ridiculous; however, my daughter is what so called *millennial generation or digital natives*, who were born and raised in technology era. For digital natives, devices such as Laptop, iPod, iPad, iPhone, and other technology are no longer categorized as strange tools. The use of technology becomes an urgent issue to deal with, considering that students nowadays are born in an era where technology becomes part of every aspects of human life including education.

There are tremendous evidence shows that today's students, those who was born after 1982, have different relationship with information and learning due to the fast development of information and technology and better access to the Internet. One of the studies is conducted by Oblinger (2004). The study shows that by the age of 21, students, would have spent 10,000 hours playing video games, sent 200,000 emails, watched 20,000 hours of television, spent 10,000 hours on cell phone, but less than 5000 hours reading. The study also shows that based on the trend, children age 6 and under will spend 2.01 hours per day playing outside, but 1.58 hours using computers. They will spend only 40 minutes reading daily or ask being read to. It also shows that 48% of these children have used a computer. Further, Oblinger suggested that the intense interaction between children and technology has significantly affected the way they learn and interact with their environment.

The use of technology becomes an urgent issue to deal with considering that students nowadays are born in an era where technology becomes part of every aspects of human life including education. They are born as digital natives. The digital natives are thinking, learning, and socializing in different ways. The way of thinking and socializing is influenced by the environment and culture in which they are raised (Prensky, 2001). Thus, a special classroom environment is crucial to support what constitute learning based on their way of thinking. The integration of technology in teaching and learning process is essential to support the digital natives. The classroom has to provide an environment and atmosphere that is allow students to create, construct their knowledge, share, and collaborate with their peers who are not only from their hometown, but also with people from around the world

1. The objective of research

Studies have been conducted on the integration of technology in learning. In the area of language learning, research into the integration of technology has benefitted from the tremendous amount of studies in the use of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (Kessler, 2005, 200; Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Fotos & Browne, 2004; Hegelmeimer, 2006). The problem is teachers in general are not implementing the use of technology in their teaching and learning process.

The previous study (Machmud, 2011) shows that many teachers who have access to the technology are not using it because of the following reasons; they do not know how to use the technology equipment, and not motivated to learn; they are satisfied with their current approach in teaching, and reluctant to learn a new approach including the use of technology in teaching; They do not have sufficient time to devote to research to overcome those problems is that technology in language learning or computer-assisted language learning should be included in teacher education program in both higher institutions.

Students who are learning to be English teachers should be prepared with the technological knowledge, because they will face students might already be ahead of them in terms of technological knowledge. advance knowledge of students could be used as an opportunity for teachers to improve their teaching. Teachers who had been prepared with technology knowledge will know how to utilize the students' prior knowledge technology to enhance their EFL learning, because of integrating CALL language.

The study is also suggested that in order to prepare English teachers who have technology literacy, the English education curriculum in Gorontalo should incorporate technology in language learning as one of the subject (Machmud, 2011).

Thus, there are two targets to be achieved as the result of this research:

1. To gain teachers' perspectives toward the integration of technology in English education curriculum in English Education Department, UNG.

2. To design a model of technology integration in language learning to be implemented as one subject in English education curriculum in English Department of UNG.

3. Literature review

Technology exists everywhere, touching almost every part of our lives, our communities, and our homes. Unfortunately, most schools lag far behind when it comes to integrating technology into the instructional context. Many people are just starting to explore the real potential technology offers for teaching and learning. If it properly used, technology will help students acquire the skills they need to survive in a complex, highly technological knowledge-based economy (Edutopia Staff, 2008).

Learning through projects while equipped with technology equipment allows students to be intellectually challenged while providing them with a realistic picture of what the modern office looks like. Through projects, students acquire and refine their analysis and problem-solving skills as they work individually and in teams to find, process, and synthesize information they've found online. The numerous resources in the online world also provide each classroom with more interesting, diverse, and current learning materials. The Web connects students to experts in the real world and provides numerous opportunities for expressing understanding through images, sound, and text. As an added benefit, with technology tools and a project-learning approach, students are more likely to stay engaged and on task, reducing behavioral problems in the classroom (Edutopia Staff, 2008).

Technology also changes the way teachers teach, offering educators effective ways to reach different types of learners and to assess student understanding through multiple means. It also enhances the relationship between teacher and student. When technology is effectively integrated into subject areas, teachers grow into roles of adviser, content expert, and coach. "Technology helps make teaching and learning more meaningful and fun" (Edutopia staff, 2008, para. 6).

4. Integrating technology into EFL curriculum

Deneyland and Selwood (1998) assert in their study that teachers want to have a false idea about the integration of computer use... curriculum. Most of them thought that integration was quite easy because the computer has always been in the classroom, and they only needed... This approach reflects a limited view of the meaning of integration of computers in the curriculum. Besides finding that teachers have false ideas about the computer integration curriculum, their study also found that teachers implement computers... activities related to some curriculum topics, only with the primary objective of building computer skills and not for actual academic learning.

Integrating CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in language instruction is not aimed at just developing students with computer skills. Instead, the objective of integrating CALL in the curriculum of language learning is "associated with self-contained, programmed applications such as tutorials, tools, simulations, instructional games, tests, and so on" (Kern and Warschauer, 2000, p. 1). Therefore, most importantly, the pedagogical aspect of language acquisition through the use of technology is the main objective of integrating CALL in language curriculum.

It is essential for EFL and ESL teachers to consider using CALL effectively to enhance language learning by integrating it into curriculum. However, the availability of the technology devices is the first challenge of integrating CALL in language instruction. It is important to conduct a need analysis before deciding to build a CALL lab (O'Connor & Gatton, 2006; Kessler, 2006). Kessler (2006) emphasizes the importance of conducting preliminary steps to evaluating the needs and then implementing the most effective CALL solution. He points out that in order to build a CALL lab, need to conduct a needs analysis; develop a better understanding of CALL; consider space, budget, and staffing; select appropriate hardware and software; and finally, consult online sources for useful information... determined appropriate and a CALL lab can be provided, then it can be appropriately integrated into the language curriculum and instruction.

When it comes to the attempt to integrate technology into... curriculum, the first obstacles are mainly physical such as lack of hardware which includes computers, printers, scanners and other devices; lack...

software, which includes operating systems, applications, and other specific software, such as packages for developing language skills; lack of resources for infrastructure, such as furniture, cabling, room arrangements, and sustainable maintenance and upgrading of systems; and no access to an Internet connection, or slow and unstable Internet connection due to the geographic location. It is a reality that even in this era of wireless Internet connection, many schools around the world, especially those in developing countries, still have no access to the Internet. The condition of the schools' building makes it difficult to build an infrastructure to support the integration of technology into the instructional activities.

5. Problems of integrating technology into EFL curriculum

The problem of integrating computer technology into the general education and language learning program curriculum is not merely physical. Educational factors also appear to be the problem even when computer hardware and software are available for teachers to use. Yildiz (2007) argues that to be successful in incorporating computer technology into instructional activities requires both technical as well as pedagogical ability, which unfortunately, many teachers lack the motivation to gain this knowledge. This trend emerges mainly from their lack of training and preparation in the field and their beliefs towards the benefits of computer technology in the teaching context. Many teachers are not convinced of the value of using technology in teaching.

Brickner (1995) classified two factors that affect teachers' attempts to implement computer technology in their classroom activities; extrinsic factors that include limited access to the physical aspects of technology such as technological devices, lack of time in planning, and insufficient support; and intrinsic factors such as the teachers' beliefs about the benefits that computer bring to their teaching, and their "unwillingness to change". Brickner furthermore claims that the intrinsic problem is more challenging compared to the extrinsic problem because it requires teachers to change their "belief systems and institutionalized routines". Extrinsic barriers can simply be addressed by providing more resources (p. xvii).

In some parts of the world, the problems of implementing computer technology in an institutional context are even more complicated. Teachers often face obstacles from the bureaucracy. A centralized and inflexible curriculum often becomes a barrier for teachers who are enthusiastic about integrating the use of technology in their teaching. In the countries where the curriculum is highly centralized, teachers have limited opportunities to design their own curriculum to suit the students' needs. The government imposes a pre-set curriculum, which they must follow and cover. Unfortunately, this condition is made worse with the extremely limited budget and lack of staff training that is needed to fulfill the government demands. In an EFL context, the result is that even finding software and applications that fit the existing curriculum can be difficult tasks.

Another obstacle that affects teachers' perceptions of the integration technology to EFL instructions is the lack of institutional support (Yildiz, 2007). Teachers who are eager to incorporate technology in their teaching activities will have to deal with uncommitted administrators or colleagues and insufficient technical support. In some cases teachers are frequently mandated to be involved in administrative work that often prevents them from having more time to explore and improve their knowledge on the use of computer technology. Low appreciation from the administrators of teachers' attempts to explore a more creative approach in teaching also affects teachers' willingness to incorporate technology in the classroom context (Yildiz, 2007). Administrators are sometimes reluctant to encourage teachers to explore new approaches because of the fear of not fulfilling the government's demands in the implementation of the pre-set curriculum. In addition to this quandary, the lack of understanding of the use of technology and the lack of resources often create significant barriers between administrators and the technology-literate teachers who are eager to use their knowledge in their classroom.

6. The Results

We purposely select the full-time EFL teachers and faculty members in Gorontalo province. The list of the teachers' contact information obtained from the National Education Department of Gorontalo Province. The investigator is also request permission from the head of National Education Department of Gorontalo Province to conduct this study by using English teachers in Gorontalo province as the participants.

The participants of this research consist of 7 Middle school EFL teachers and 8 High School EFL teachers. This research also involved about 60% of English Department faculty members who attended a Departments' meeting for curriculum workshop on 12-14 June 2014. The data for this research are gained from Focus Group Discussion. The data are gained to know the teachers perspectives towards the integration of technology in the curriculum in Teacher Education Program.

The availability of technology equipment is one of the requirements for integrating technology in EFL curriculum. When asked to overview their school's computer facilities, all participants mentioned that their school have language laboratory, but minus computers, because computers were used only for administration purposes. The computers provided in school are not utilized for EFL instructions. Teachers are rarely used computer in teaching and learning process because the limited access to school's computer. In one school, one computer in language laboratory is shared with subjects other than English, they can only use it once in a month, in this case the teacher prepare to use their own laptop. One participant mentioned that even though the computers are provided in his school but it was not supported with a stable electricity supply.

The participant's familiarity with technology is explored by asking them with the kind of software they use in their teaching process and whether they use the Internet in the teaching and learning process. All participants state that the software that they mostly used is power point and other Microsoft office. They often use video and games downloaded from the Internet. Due to the limited access to the Internet in schools, the teachers said that they are not using the Internet in the classroom. The Internet is used when they have an access outside school to prepare for their teaching materials. One participant mentioned that he encouraged his students to use their smart phones to help them with online dictionary. The teacher also said that he used social media especially face book to help him teaching. He further explained that he used face book because almost a hundred percent of his students own a face book account. On the other hand, two other participants argued that they have never used the Internet in the classroom because the internet access is not provided in school while the use of cellphone is banned in school area. Another participant said that even the cellphone network is not available in her school's area, not to mention the Internet access.

Integrating technology into EFL curriculum requires analyzing the level of technology literacy of the students. In this research the participant asked to discuss their students' technological literacy. What surprising us, the participants argued that most of their students have a minimum level of technological literacy due to the limited access of technological facilities in their school and in the students' homes. Students' technological literacy depends on their access to technology. However, these students are basically able to send email, use social media, and browsing the Internet, and use their smart phone for online dictionary or google translate. Only one participant said that her students have never seen or touch a computer; anxiety was clearly seen when her students are introduced to use the computer.

An an in-service teacher, the participants are encouraged to reflect their own technological literacy compared to their students'. Almost all participants admitted that their technological literacy are somewhat lower that their students. We asked each of them to tell us their experience. One participant said that he was inspired to use face book in his teaching because all his students have face book account, and they teach him how to establish a face book group for their class. Another participant said that the has a student who is excelled in computer programming whom he seek for help. Almost all students in this research know how to use one dictionary, while their teachers, the participants of this research, are still using manual dictionary.

Born as digital natives, it is not a surprising that these students outsmart their teachers. When asked their feeling about this fact, teachers said that they are very proud of their students, but most of teachers wished that they have more or at least the same level as their students' knowledge of technology. They believe the importance of mastering technology can help them ease their teaching and learning process. It can help them motivate their students to learn English. It can also help them increase their proficiency in English and in teaching English, the ability of accessing teaching materials online, keeping up with the latest development of curriculum, and helping them with the hustle of grading and assessing students' works.

The participants deplore the fact that it is a little bit late for them to learn technology literacy. All participants said that they have never learned how [...]

use technology in teaching English, because it was not taught in undergraduate level; thus, integrating the technology subject in the curriculum in Undergraduate Program for English Education Program that is significant.

Integrating technology in EFL curriculum can be done by designing one course to be taught in English Education Department. The participant are asked to mention what should be taught in the course by designing the syllabus. The following lists are mentioned by the participants:

4. How to teach text types using media
5. How to design a lesson plan with the integration of technology
6. Netiquette
7. Using smart phone in EFL teaching
8. How to use a multimedia Power point
9. How to access and evaluate teaching materials online
10. How to use some EFL related software
11. How to detect students' plagiarism
12. How to range a level of difficulties for students' reading assignments, and tests
13. How to automatically assess students' assignment

These lists will be used to design the technology course that will be integrated in EFL curriculum in Teachers Education Program of English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo.

7. Recommendation and Implication

The integration of technology in the teaching and learning process is essential to support the digital natives. The classroom needs to provide an environment and atmosphere that will allow students to create and connect their knowledge, share and collaborate with their peers who are not only from their in-class group, but also from around the world (Warschauer, 2003).

Thus, if in the teaching and learning process, teachers can only provide the students with content, fact, formulas, theories, stories, and information, then, the role of teachers is obsolete, because students nowadays can find those information themselves on Google, Bing, Facebook, Twitter, Yandut

iPad and smartphone. This means that teachers are no longer the main source of knowledge, instead, teacher is a filter by helping students to find and present and adequate sources based on the curriculum under focus.

Teachers are not necessarily forced to be a technology savvy, but they should have a certain level of technology literacy in order to be able to teach the digital natives, and Higher education institution plays an important role to design the model of technology integration into EFL curriculum in teachers education program to prepare teachers to teach in 21st century.

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Biodata

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Abstract

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Key words: Lifelong
teaching strategies

1. Definition of lifelong

The concept "Lifelong
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