The Advantages and Challenges of ICT Integration in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract: The existence of ICT serves to provide positive impacts in people's daily activities including in educational context. In teaching, for example, teachers may integrate ICT to enhance their performance. However, they may encounter some challenges. The present study was aimed at identifying the advantages and challenges of ICT integration in EFL classrooms. A qualitative descriptive study using a semi-structured interview was employed to gain data. The findings revealed that ICT integration serves to meet students' needs and language level, improve teachers' creativity, provide faster access to teaching materials, encourage interactive work, create positive attitude of the students toward their learning, and support them in learning-teaching process. However, they need to consider some challenges such as time management, technical supports, technical knowledge, and teachers' self-confidence. Future studies are suggested to employ a survey and classroom observation to see the actual implementation of the use of ICTs in EFL classrooms, and a questionnaire to students to see how they reflect on the ICT integration.

1 INTRODUCTION

ICT plays a very substantial role in enhancing English teaching. It is considered a must to survive this digital era we live in (Suherdi, 2017). The existence of ICT actually brings advantages for both teachers and students (Margan and Paduaren, 2009; Riasiati, Allahyar and Tan, 2012; Isisag, 2012). Teachers may try to assist their teaching by utilizing ICT to create a more meaningful learning environment, or to create a better interaction between teachers and students (UNESCO, 2004). Related to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), teachers may integrate ICT in their EFL classrooms. Many learning resources are available online which they may take for the lessons, like from YouTube or websites (Suherdi, 2017). Furthermore, they may use ICTs to deliver their teaching, for example, by using computer and projector in presenting the materials. ICT could bring a real life experience for the students by presenting them the way native use their language in communication. Teachers may use audio-visual materials to facilitate and stimulate target language (Çakir, 2006). Moreover, ICTs can be integrated to evaluate the lessons in order to provide a holistic, integrated and authentic evaluation (Suherdi, 2017). Following the explanation, English teachers may

enhance their teaching by integrating ICT in preparing, delivering, and evaluating their materials.

However, teachers need to bear in mind that the existence of ICT is not merely the shortcut to the success of learning and teaching. They need to consider for all the factors that may challenge them to integrate ICT effectively. In international perspectives, studies on challenges of integrating ICT in EFL classrooms have been conducted (e.g. Salehi and Salehi, 2012; Mbodila, Jones and Muhandji, 2013; Raman and Yamat, 2015). Meanwhile, in Indonesian school context, despite the facts that Indonesian government has tried to solve problems of access to ICT by providing both software and hardware at schools, utilizing ICTs in the classroom practices is still low (Harendita, 2013). It could mean that English teachers still face challenges in utilizing ICT in their teaching. Al-Munawwarah (2014) explained that two main challenges of ICT integration in Indonesia are about how teachers manage their time in preparing a lesson using ICT. Another challenge is the insufficiency of technical supports provided by the schools such as access to internet and broken facilities which cannot be used anymore. These lead to teachers' complaint about the issue. Similarly Silviyanti and Yusuf (2015) mentioned the lack of technical supports as one of the challenges.

They further mentioned two more challenges such as the lack of teacher's training on the use of ICT in teaching, and teachers' negative attitudes toward the use of ICTs. Some of them were hesitant to integrate ICTs since they thought there was no significant improvement for teaching and learning.

Considering the previous studies above; it seems that it is still a limited number of studies on investigating both advantages and challenges in ICT integration in EFL classrooms especially in local perspectives; thus, the present study was conducted to see those advantages and challenges through the voices of six English teachers teaching at six different high schools in Indonesia. Therefore, the research questions elaborated were: (1) What are advantages of integrating ICT in EFL classrooms?; and (2) What are challenges encountered by English teachers in integrating ICT in EFL classrooms? Therefore, this study may serve to provide information that would be valuable for English teachers regarding ICT integration for their teaching practices. Moreover, the study would be helpful for those who are going to conduct the same study in the future.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Integrating ICT in EFL Classrooms

ICT (Information and Communication Technology) has been existing in this digital era in which people can make use of it to improve their works including in education field. ICT can be integrated in teaching subjects including English. English teachers can utilize ICT to develop their teaching materials fast and creative. For instance, instead of spending time to draw pictures when teaching English, they simply can download some pictures from the internet to save their time. Suherdi (2017) pointed out that ICT can be integrated in EFL teaching by making the best use of TV and videos, utilizing English materials on YouTube, and using authentic materials available online.

The success of ICT integration in EFL classroom depends on so many factors. According to Scrimshaw (2004), some factors that have impact on the integration of ICT in EFL classroom are the awareness, capability and confidence of the teachers, the access to reliable system, the effectiveness of using ICT in the learning process and time management in preparing the lesson and in conducting the lesson. Knowing that, that would be wise to note the factors when teachers integrate the use of ICTs in their teaching practices to improve teaching-learning process.

2.2 Advantages of Integrating ICT in EFL Classrooms

The existence of ICT may bring some advantages to people who make use of it. UNESCO (2004) stated the use of ICT has advantages such as promoting the autonomous learning, encouraging interactive work, facilitating direct feedback, promoting student-centered learning, facilitating teachers with the contents which could be continually updated with minimum efforts, providing faster access to teaching materials and greater opportunities for individual learning, and encouraging students to learn in group.

Moreover, Margan and Padurean (2009) exemplified other advantages of ICT integration in EFL classrooms such as giving capacity to control presentation better compared to textbook that has fixed presentation, improving teachers' creativity to use different materials for each lesson, facilitating faster feedback to students' work through error correction, and providing adaptable materials to suit students' needs and level of language knowledge. Yunus, Lubis and Lin (2009) stated that the use of ICT can also improve the students' confidence in using English and provide the exposure to use English in daily activities context. Meanwhile, Riasiati, Allahyar and Tan (2012) stated that other advantages of ICT integration are supporting the engagement of the students, improving academic ability, creating a paradigm shift in learning and teaching, promoting a collaborative learning enhancement and reducing the students' anxiety level. Jayanthi and Kumar (2016) mentioned the use of ICT also provides the availability to the unlimited access of the material, creates positive attitude of the students, provides the authentic materials, helps the teachers in learning-teaching process and provides the self-assessment tools. ICT integration in EFL classrooms also increases learners' motivation, personal commitment and engagement; improves independent learning; promotes learners' collaboration and communication; improves learners' attainment and outcomes (Isisag, 2012). Considering the advantages offered by ICT integration in EFL classrooms, it can be concluded that teachers can try to make use of ICTs to enhance their teaching and encourage their students' learning as well.

2.3 Challenges in Integrating ICT in EFL Classrooms

Several considerations need to think about when it comes to ICT integration in EFL classrooms. Salehi and Salehi (2012) found three biggest challenges in ICT integration in EFL classrooms such as lack of technical supports at school, lack of access to the internet and the shortage class time, while the attitudes of the teachers did not really influence their use of ICT in the classroom.

Meanwhile, Tanveer (2011) categorized the challenges into three: administrative (e.g. insufficiency of e-learning resources, misuse of ICT tools by the students), technical (e.g. lack of technical training for both teachers and students), and pedagogical (e.g. confusion on time management). Riasiati, Allahyar and Tan (2012) also mentioned that several challenges in integrating ICT in EFL classrooms include teachers' lack of access to the internet, lack of effective training, teachers' attitudes toward the use of ICT, the students' attitudes, and the lack of time.

Mbodila, Jones and Muhandji (2013) also classified the challenges into three categories: (1) environmental challenges, e.g. appropriate rooms or building available, different types of ICT in the learning system; (2) cultural challenges, e.g. most of online contents in English may cause serious barriers in integrating the use of ICTs; and (3) educational challenges, e.g. types of methods used and limited interaction between teachers and students. Furthermore, other challenges are teachers' hesitancy in integrating ICT, their workload, their lack of time, their lack of ICT skills, their experiences and age (Raman and Yamat, 2015).

Looking closer into a more local context, Al-Munawwarah (2014) mentioned two challenges faced by teachers in integrating ICT in their teaching which are: (1) time management in which teachers need to spend more time in preparing a lesson using ICT; and (2) lack of technical supports. The teachers complained about lack of internet connection and the broken facilities which could not be used anymore. Meanwhile, Silviyanti and Yusuf (2015) elaborated three major barriers encountered by teachers which are: (1) lack of teachers' training on how to use ICT; so they were still confused in operating ICT; (2) lack of technical supports, for example, lack of ICT medias or facilities, lack of internet connection and regular blackout which often happened during the lesson; (3) teachers' negative attitude towards the use of ICT. Some of them still thought that using ICT would not give significant improvement to language teaching-learning.

Considering the challenges found by the previous researchers, it is clear that ICT integration may also lead to some barriers in the implementation of it in teaching and learning process. Thus, teachers need to bear in mind that the existence of ICT is not the only shortcut to the success of teaching and learning.

3 METHODOLOGY

Since the study was aimed at finding out what advantages and challenges encountered in integrating ICT in EFL classrooms, a qualitative descriptive design was employed to get a rich description depicted on the topic (Sullivan-Bolyai, Bova and Harper, 2005, as cited in Mendez-Shannon, 2010). The study selected six English teachers namely Ani, Dika, Salma, Nina, Gian, and Rania (pseudonyms) from six different high schools in Bandung, Indonesia. The selection was done based on their familiarity of ICT integration and the ICTs use in their teaching practices as well.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out to dig more information on the topic to understand the answers provided (Harrell and Bradley, 2009) by the participants. The interview questions addressed were focused on the advantages and challenges in ICT integration in EFL classrooms.

The data collection was done through these following steps: (1) the participants were asked for the interviews; (2) after there was an agreement for the interviews, several questions about ICT integration in EFL classrooms in terms of advantages and challenges were addressed to each participant; (3) the interview session was recorded by sound recorder. The raw data (recorded sounds) obtained from the interview was transcribed.

Furthermore, the transcribed data was reduced and selected for discussion, then, was analysed qualitatively based on Milles and Huberman's (1994) data analysis model by (1) reducing the raw data to find the themes appeared; (2) displaying the major themes regarding the advantages and challenges in ICT integration in EFL classrooms; and (3) concluding the data to answer the research questions.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Advantages of ICT Integration in EFL Classrooms

Some advantages of integrating ICT in EFL classrooms found include meeting students' needs and language level, improving teachers' creativity, providing faster access for teachers to deliver their teaching materials, encouraging interactive work between teachers and students, creating positive attitude of the students toward their learning, and supporting teachers in learning-teaching process.

4.1.1 Meeting Students' Needs and Language Level through Adapted ICT Programs

Rania mentioned that she tried to adapt the way she teaches English to meet her students' learning needs and language level. By adapting ICT programs, she believed that students' needs would be fulfilled and the teaching-learning process would be more effective. This is in accordance with Margan and Paduaren (2009) who stated that ICT programs can be adapted to meet students' needs and language level they are in. Adapting ICT programs in ICT integration would be useful since teachers would find their students get motivated to learn more and better since their needs are fulfilled. Additionally, they can see that their learning is more interesting; thus, they can pay more attention to learn.

4.1.2 Improving Teachers' Creativity in Teaching English

Gian and Rania stated they could deliver various learning materials to their students to engage them in a more meaningful learning environment. They found ICT integration beneficial for their teaching and students' learning since they could be more creative teachers. Margan and Padurean (2009) also stated that ICT could allow teachers to employ various materials for each lesson meaning that they can be creative teachers to deliver their English teaching materials to their students. It means that the existence of ICT actually encourages teachers to be creative, for instance in providing interesting materials for their students. By being creative teachers, the students would get motivation to learn better. Thus, teachers are benefitted from integrating ICT by enhancing their creativity in teaching to make their students

participate actively and become more attentive in their learning.

4.1.3 Providing Faster Access for Teachers to Deliver Their Teaching Materials

Ani, Salma, and Nina mentioned that ICT integration actually could help them save their time, for example in preparing teaching materials. ICT also offers faster access to teaching learning delivered in the class. This is in accordance with UNESCO (2004) that pointed out ICT may serve to provide faster access for teachers to deliver their teaching materials. Thus, ICT integration could help teachers to have more effective time to prepare their teaching materials; additionally, as having prepared the materials, they could save more time to deliver assignments for their students.

4.1.4 Encouraging Interactive Work between Teachers and Students

Dika stated that ICT could promote interactive work especially when delivering materials and assigning some practices to the students. He also believed it could enhance students' communicative competence because they tried to communicate better in the learning-teaching process. This is in line with UNESCO (2004) that the integration of ICT may enhance interaction between teachers and students. As Dika explained, by providing various kinds of learning materials to the students by utilizing ICT in the learning-teaching process, he found it as the way to interact better with his students. Moreover, his students could interact more with their peers in the learning process to share their knowledge about the materials delivered to them. Not only ICT could promote interactive work, he also found it could improve communicative competence. Students could communicate better with him and their peers to develop their communicative competence. To improve students' communicative competence, teachers may provide interesting materials delivered in a more meaningful learning-teaching environment. Given that it is clear that interactive work could be promoted when teachers utilize ICTs in their teaching.

4.1.5 Creating Positive Attitude of the Students toward Their Learning

Rania stated that her students like the learning materials since there is ICT integration. Moreover, providing different kinds of materials in ICT integration may encourage teachers to engage their

students in the learning. Additionally, Gian stated that he tried to create more positive energy to his students so they could pay attention to the material. This is in accordance with Yunus, Lubis and Lin (2009) that ICTs use may improve students' confidence in learning English. Moreover, Jayanthi and Kumar (2016) stated ICT integration could make students positive towards their own learning. Positive attitudes can be realized by how students behave towards the learning. By having positive attitudes toward learning, students will be more motivated to learn better.

4.1.6 Supporting Teachers in Learning-Teaching Process

Ani, Salma, and Nina pointed out that ICT could help them create their teaching more effective and easier. It means that the existence of ICT serves to provide ease for teachers to utilize and integrate it in their teaching. Integrating ICT would be easy to those teachers who equip themselves with technical and pedagogical knowledge of ICT integration. This is in accordance with Jayanthi and Kumar (2016) that ICT could support teachers to be better in learning-teaching process. On the other hand, for those who do not have sufficient knowledge of ICT integration would tend to be reluctant to perform it. However, it could be considered that the participants have sufficient pedagogical and technical knowledge of ICT integration; therefore, they tried to utilize and integrate ICT in order to help them promote effective teaching.

It can be summed up that ICT integration in EFL classrooms bring positive impacts for both teachers and students in learning-teaching process. Thus, ICT can be utilized in order to create a more meaningful learning-teaching process.

4.2 Challenges in ICT Integration

The popularity of ICT is inevitable. It influences all people in all around the world. It almost dominates all aspects of life including education. Suherdi (2017) stated that the development of ICT (which triggers the advent of the second wave of globalization), however, has led teachers to take new perspectives in their teaching. They are now facing a more challenging world which requires them to be literate in ICT and skillful in using ICT-based resources and facilities in their teaching practices. Nevertheless, we should admit that the existence of ICT in the development is not always smooth. It gives not only great benefits but also great challenges for teachers in the

implementation. Based on the data analysis, the challenges found are regarding time management, technical supports, technical knowledge, and teacher's self-confidence.

4.2.1 Time Management

Preparing activities by utilizing ICT in the process needs to be arranged carefully and could not be conducted in a sudden. Ani and Dika felt that the preparation phase became a great challenge for them since they needed a lot of efforts and spent a lot of time in finding learning resources or materials. Moreover, Ani felt that she needed more time to practice how to operate the ICT first to make sure that she mastered it; so that, she could be confident in using ICTs in the teaching-learning process later. What they experienced was in line with what Raman and Yamat (2015) found. Teachers felt that by using ICT, they got bigger workload. Teachers also felt that they spent more time in preparing a lesson using ICT. It is also in accordance with Silviyanti and Yusuf (2015) who also mentioned about the problem in time management and bigger workload. However, this challenge, somehow, was believed by them as a way to improve their quality in integrating ICT in their teaching-learning process.

4.2.2 Technical Supports

Almost all of the participants, except for Rania, mentioned that the technical supports problems were faced in integrating ICT in their EFL classrooms. Dika, Nina, and Gian felt that the lack of internet connection sometimes became barrier to conduct an interactive and interesting learning process using ICT. Moreover, Salma and Nina mentioned that the schools did not have sufficient supports of ICT facilities like laptop, tablet, cellphone, etc.; so that, they could only use the facilities owned by the students. Such a condition created gap between students since some of them do not have laptops or other facilities. Nina further mentioned that not all students were allowed to bring laptops and even cellphones to school by their parents. Furthermore, Ani even stated that at school where she taught which was located in the remote area, there were no ICT existence supported. These are in accordance with Tanveer (2011) and Salehi and Salehi (2012) who also mentioned that technical challenges often appeared in ICT integration in EFL classrooms. Technical supports are needed in ICT integration to help both teachers and students in teaching-learning process (Jayanthi and Kumar, 2015). The problems about technical supports were also mentioned by

Silviyanti and Yusuf (2015) and Al-Munawwarah (2014) who stated that teachers faced difficulties in accessing internet connection and finding supporting media like computers, laptop, etc. Thus, schools and parents need to cooperate well in providing supports for a better ICT integration in teaching and learning.

4.2.3 Technical Knowledge

Ani and Dika realized that they encountered a lot of difficulties in operating ICT in the teaching-leaning process. They felt that ICT grew fast and they did not really understand about the new innovations in ICT. However, they also realized that they needed to improve their skills to solve those challenges. It also happened to other teachers in Silviyanti and Yusuf (2015)'s research who had difficulties in operating ICT due to their lack of skills and knowledge on how to use ICT. This happened due to the lack of training the teachers get; so that, they could not keep up with the ICT development (Riasiati, Allahyar and Tan, 2012). Thus, it is essential for teachers to have technical knowledge to make them capable of integrating ICTs in their teaching. To have sufficient technical knowledge, training on ICT integration should be provided.

4.2.4 Teachers' Self-confidence

Confidence of the teachers plays important role in their decision making. Dika mentioned that he was not confident in using ICT in his lesson. It was due to the lack of skill he had in operating ICTs. Riasiati, Allahyar and Tan (2012) also found that teachers tend to be hesitant to use ICTs because they were not confident enough to operate it. As one of the most important things to have, the teachers need adequate training to grow the confidence (Scrimshaw, 2004). It will allow them to feel competent in what they are doing.

Accordingly, challenges in ICT integration in EFL classrooms faced by the teachers are categorized into four categories: time management (e.g. need more time and efforts in preparing materials and practicing how to operate the media), technical supports (e.g. lack of internet connection and facilities), technical knowledge (e.g. teachers were hard to cope with the development of ICT), and self-confidence of the teachers in integrating ICT in teaching practices.

5 CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that the present study has identified that ICT integration in EFL classrooms could serve to provide both advantages and challenges. The advantages include meeting students' needs and language level through adapted ICT programs. ICT could also enhance teachers' creativity to teach English. Moreover, ICT could provide faster access for teachers to deliver their teaching materials. ICT could promote interactive work between teachers and students as well. ICT may also promote positive attitudes of the students toward their language learning. Furthermore, ICT could help teachers in learning-teaching process. Meanwhile, four main challenges found are time management, technical supports, technical knowledge, and teachers' self-confidence. Considering the challenges, teachers may try to equip themselves with sufficient training to have more self-confidence and more technical knowledge to integrate ICT in their teaching. Moreover, schools, parents, and stakeholders need to take some actions like giving supports to teachers and students to integrate ICT to promote a more meaningful learning-teaching process.

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