THE UTILIZATION OF ICT FOR LEARNING ENGLISH IN ONLINE EFL CLASSROOM AT THE ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN TASIKMALAYA, INDONESIA

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Abstract

Information and communication technology (ICT) in English language learning incorporates digital tools and technologies to improve English language instruction and acquisition. This research explores the learning tools utilized, the use of ICT in the teaching or learning process, and the teacher's obstacles in integrating ICT into the teaching process. This research employed qualitative inquiry and in-depth interviews to collect data from two EFL Islamic junior high school teachers in Tasikmalaya. Thematic analysis was used in this study to analyze the data gathered. The result showed that the learning tools utilized in the learning process comprise PowerPoint, Google Classroom, Google Form, and Google Meet. It further described that the ICT was used to deliver, discuss, explain the material, provide assignments, and evaluate learning. The obstacles teachers faced involved the lack of student engagement in the learning process, poor internet connection, and some students' inability to use the application.

Keyword: Utilization of ICT, EFL, Online class

Abstrak

Teknologi informasi dan komunikasi (TIK) dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris menggabungkan alat dan teknologi digital untuk meningkatkan pengajaran dan penguasaan bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menganalisis perangkat pembelajaran yang dimanfaatkan, pemanfaatan TIK dalam proses belajar mengajar, dan kendala guru dalam mengintegrasikan TIK ke dalam proses pengajaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan wawancara mendalam untuk mengumpulkan data dari dua guru MTs EFL di Tasikmalaya. Analisis tematik digunakan dalam penelitian ini untuk menganalisis data yang dikumpulkan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa alat pembelajaran yang digunakan dalam proses pembelajaran terdiri dari PowerPoint, Google Classroom, Google Form, dan Google Meet. Lebih lanjut dijelaskan bahwa TIK digunakan untuk menyampaikan, mendiskusikan, menjelaskan materi, memberikan tugas,

dan mengevaluasi pembelajaran. Kendala yang dihadapi guru antara lain kurangnya keterlibatan siswa dalam proses pembelajaran, buruknya koneksi internet, dan ketidakmampuan sebagian siswa dalam menggunakan aplikasi.

Kata Kunci: Pemanfaatan TIK, EFL, kelas daring

A. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the learning tools utilized, the use of ICT in the teaching or learning process, and the teacher's obstacles in integrating ICT into the teaching process. ICT is now a powerful force transforming the educational field, rapidly reinventing old teaching approaches and reshaping the educational process (Kozma & Isaacs, 2011). This technological rise is discernible in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, where Islamic junior high school teachers play a critical role in strengthening language abilities among students. Thus, studying and comprehending the dynamic setting that arises from the link between EFL pedagogy and the utilization of ICT is required.

A new era of teaching has begun with the advent of ICT tools. It offers a range of platforms and materials to improve teaching strategies. According to Siemens and Tittenberger (2009), LMS enhances instruction by encouraging resource sharing and collaborative learning. Moreover, Smith, Hardman, and Higgins (2006) discovered that interactive whiteboards improve student comprehension and participation. Additionally, research conducted by Akçayır and Akçayır (2017) suggests that the utilization of AR and VR technology can significantly enhance student engagement and retention of knowledge. With this in mind, Islamic junior high school instructors working in the EFL context find themselves at the vanguard of this technological revolution, having to navigate a constantly changing environment due to these developments. Thus, the utilization of ICT is required for EFL teachers.

The Utilization of ICT for Learning English in Online EFL Classrooms represents a contemporary pedagogical phenomenon. Teachers and students are given exceptional possibilities to engage with English language acquisition in a way that transcends geographical. It also expands temporal boundaries in the dynamic convergence of technology language education (Chun et al., 2016). Moreover, using digital tools, interactive platforms, and immersive resources effectively improves language learning outcomes. It also promotes a welcoming, cooperative learning environment (Papanastasiou et al., 2019). Additionally, ICT utilization exposes the transformational potential and creates a road map for teachers and students to navigate the changing shapes of language acquisition (Blake, 2013). Thus, online EFL classrooms supported by ICT provide a virtual arena for learners to connect with multiple perspectives, collaborate with peers worldwide, and negotiate authentic language use globally.

This study used a qualitative approach to explore the utilization of ICT for learning English in an online EFL classroom. In investigating the utilization of ICT, qualitative methods entail exploring and comprehending the learning tools utilized, the use of ICT in the teaching or learning process, and the teacher's obstacles in integrating ICT into the teaching process. It also provides an excellent grasp of ICT utilization in context, meaning, and subjective components. Individual teacher or school case studies can

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provide rich, thorough accounts of ICT utilization in specific circumstances. This strategy can help discover the obstacles and contextual aspects that define ICT integration in EFL instruction. Thus, qualitative approaches enable this study to investigate the learning tools, opportunities, and problems of using technology in language teaching.

Several studies have been conducted regarding ICT utilization in language teaching. Saddhono, Mulyaningsih, Sudarsana, and Manurung (2019) investigate the relationship between attitudes and teachers' knowledge and the relationship between attitudes and teachers' skills toward ICT utilization in language learning. Nguyen (2021) explores teachers' perceptions of ICT integration in learning English. Suleiman, Yahya, and Tukur (2020) analyze the effectiveness of utilizing ICT in higher education. Hence, this study explores the utilization of ICT for learning English in an online EFL classroom. It focuses on the learning tools utilized, the use of ICT in the teaching or learning process, and the teacher's obstacles in integrating ICT into the teaching process. In conclusion, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the integration of ICT in online EFL instruction. It offers a comprehensive overview of the current state of ICT utilization among EFL junior high school teachers.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. ICT in education field

In this digital era, the role of ICT is widely accepted. ICT (information and communication technology) is a broad field encompassing the convergence of technologies. Hussaini, Haruna, and Muhammad (2021) mention that ICT renders information capture, storage, processing, and distribution more convenient. It influences many facets of human existence, including education, and is a vital and dynamic component of modern society (Athawale, 2023). It is a set of tools that influences how people, organizations, and society interact, communicate, and conduct business (Martínez-Caro et al., 2020). ICT includes various technologies such as computers, software applications, telecommunications infrastructure, the internet, and digital devices (Amunts et al., 2019). The term "ICT" emerged as a comprehensive concept beyond the traditional understanding of information technology, containing a broader display of communication technologies and their integration.

The influence of ICT in education is far-reaching, affecting pedagogy, curriculum design, and the overall educational experience. ICT in education improves teaching strategies and accommodates different learning preferences. Multimedia presentations, interactive whiteboards, and instructional software provide teachers with flexible tools to engage students, rendering complex subjects more approachable (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). ICT promotes an inclusive and customized learning environment. Additionally, integrating ICT into the classroom promotes participatory and collaborative learning. Students may engage with course material, work together on projects, and participate in discussions outside the conventional classroom by using online resources, discussion boards, and virtual classrooms (Anderson & Dron, 2011). The collaborative aspect may enhance the growth of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

In the language learning field, ICT is used to help learners acquire the language. More immersive and interactive language learning opportunities are made possible by CALL programs, language learning applications, and online language exchanges (Chapelle, 2001). These tools improve language proficiency by giving students immediate feedback and exposing them to real-world language usage.

Despite these significant advantages, challenges remain associated with integrating ICT in the classroom. The digital divide, defined by discrepancies in access to technology, remains a concern since it can potentially aggravate educational inequalities (Warschauer, 2004). Furthermore, teacher training and digital literacy are critical in realizing the potential of ICT in education, as teachers must be trained to integrate technology effortlessly into their teaching methods (Ertmer et al., 2012). Incorporating ICT in education represents a significant shift in how knowledge is delivered and acquired.

2. Online Language Instruction

With the emergence of online platforms, language training has experienced a significant shift in an age of digital connectivity. The paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered language acquisition is remarkable, emphasizing interactive and communicative language learning. By emphasizing the value of creating a feeling of community and encouraging critical conversation, Garrison and Vaughan's (2008) Community of Inquiry (CoI) paradigm offers a lens through which to view the interaction of cognitive, social, and teaching presences in online language learning. Technology has made numerous tools and resources that improve the online language learning experience. Adaptive learning platforms, virtual reality apps, and synchronous and asynchronous communication technologies enhance a dynamic and individualized learning environment. Language learning becomes a dynamic, immersive experience when multimedia, gamification, and social networking are incorporated, increasing engagement and participation (Meskill & Anthony, 2014). Therefore, online language learning is a dynamic and revolutionary force in language education today.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach. A qualitative descriptive approach is a research methodology that aims to provide a comprehensive, detailed, and contextually rich understanding of a phenomenon without imposing theoretical frameworks or preconceived notions on the data (Sandelowski, 2000; Sandelowski, 2010). This study details the phenomenon of utilizing ICT in learning a language. The researchers describe the result of this study using words or phrases without statistical data. The participants of this study were two EFL Islamic junior high school teachers from different schools in Tasikmalaya. The data of this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews.

A semi-structured interview design involves a set of predetermined open-ended questions, providing a broad structure for the interview process. A semi-structured interview allows for spontaneous exploration of topics that arise during the conversation. This flexibility enables researchers to pursue unexpected insights and follow the natural flow of the discussion (Bryman, 2016). This study used a set of predetermined open-ended questions to gain a deep understanding of the use of ICT in the teaching or learning process and the teachers' obstacles in integrating ICT into the teaching process. The interview was conducted via Gmeet with each participant and digitally recorded. The interview results were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely employed qualitative research method designed to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within data, offering a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through a systematic coding and categorization process, thematic analysis enables researchers to describe meaningful insights into the interview data.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved two EFL teachers at an Islamic junior high school, MTsN

1 and MTsN 2 Tasikmalaya. Teachers utilized online learning since 2020. This article describes the characteristics of learning tools that utilize ICT, the use of ICT in EFL learning, and the obstacles EFL teachers face in utilizing ICT in online learning.

A. Findings

1. The learning tools utilizing ICT in language learning

Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language learning has significantly transformed the learning process. Learning tools that leverage ICT offer numerous benefits, enhancing the language learning experience. T1 and T2 shared that they utilized tools such as PowerPoint, Google Classroom, Google Forms and Google Meet in their online EFL class. The following passage describes them profoundly.

a. PowerPoint

PowerPoint features make an effective platform for language learning activities. T1 expressed that PowerPoint allowed the inclusion of images, charts, and graphs, making it an effective tool for teaching vocabulary. T1 added that visual aids could enhance the understanding and retention of new words, especially for language learners who benefit from visuals portrayed. Moreover, T2 stated that PowerPoint enabled the creation of interactive activities. It engaged learners and promoted active participation, providing an enjoyable learning experience. T2 added that incorporating multimedia elements such as audio and video clips into PowerPoint presentations catered to different learning styles. Here, PowerPoint aids a multimodal approach that helps learners with diverse preferences to absorb information effectively.

b. Google Classroom

Google Classroom provides a digital platform that enhances communication, collaboration, and resource management. T1 displayed Google Classroom as a tool for language learning materials. She could upload and organize resources such as documents, presentations, videos, and links in one place. This helped students access learning materials easily and fostered organization in the learning process. T1 added that the platform has facilitated efficient communication between teachers and students. Moreover, T2 stated he could provide instant feedback on language-related questions, ensuring an interactive learning environment. T2 added that He could provide timely and personalized feedback on language assignments. Therefore, Google Classroom simplified the assignment workflow.

c. Google Form

Google Forms aids teachers in providing materials and assignments for students. T1 conveyed that Google Forms could construct assessments to evaluate language proficiency. She could design various question types, including multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. T1 added that the form could provide immediate feedback, allowing learners to understand and learn from their mistakes. T2 stated he could embed hyperlinks in the text to provide additional resources or explanations for unfamiliar words or phrases. He could track students' progress using Google Forms for regular assessments. Thus, Google Forms can help to build instructional decisions, allowing for targeted teaching and support.

d. Google Meet

Google Meet allows interactive virtual learning. T1 expressed that Google Meet provided virtual classrooms where she and her students could interact in real-time—video conferencing, facilitating an immersive learning process. Additionally, T2 stated that Google Meet enabled learners to practice listening and speaking skills in a live, interactive environment. He organized speaking exercises, discussions, and role-playing activities to enhance oral communication. T2 added that language learners could collaborate on projects, presentations, or shared documents, fostering

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teamwork and communication skills. Thus, Google Meet facilitates collaborative learning.

2. Utilization of ICT in English teaching

Utilizing ICT can improve language learning and encourage students' engagement. It offers various attractive learning opportunities that motivate students. ICT was used to deliver materials. T1 addressed that ICT enabled the integration of multimedia resources in language learning. It involved videos, audio clips, and interactive simulations, catering to diverse learning styles. Moreover, T1 stated that video lectures, podcasts, and online presentations enhanced comprehension and provided real-world language situations. T2 added that Learning Management Systems (LMS) facilitated the organization and delivery of course content and allowed for asynchronous learning. He further described that virtual classrooms and video conferencing tools enhanced synchronous communication as teachers delivered materials, fostering a sense of community among students during the class.

In discussing and explaining the materials, ICT was also utilized to help teachers. T1 stated that online discussion forums and collaborative tools like Google Meet promoted student interaction and encouraged language practice. Additionally, T2 conveyed that ICT provided an adaptive learning system. He stated that some platforms like Duolingo have intelligent tutoring systems adapted to individual learners, providing personalized feedback and tailored language exercises. ICT was further employed to offer assignments to students. T1 said that ICT facilitated the creation of digital projects such as multimedia presentations. T2 added that ICT was used to create online quizzes. He explained that ICT provided immediate feedback, aiding self-directed learning.

Evaluating students' learning processes can be accomplished with ICT. T1 stated that learning analytics tools like Google Forms and Google Classroom could track student progress, facilitating data-driven decision-making for her as a teacher. Additionally, T2 said that automated assessment tools assisted in evaluating language proficiency, providing instant results. Thus, continuous feedback loops through digital media contribute to ongoing student development. The integration of ICT in language teaching has revolutionized pedagogical practices, offering many tools and strategies for delivering, discussing, explaining materials, providing assignments, and evaluating learning outcomes. This integration enhances the language learning experience and prepares students for the linguistic demands of an interconnected and technologically driven global society.

3. Obstacles in utilizing ICT in the learning process

EFL teachers often encounter various obstacles when integrating ICT into language learning. These challenges can hinder the effective implementation of technology and student engagement in the classroom. Lack of student engagement is one of the obstacles that teachers face. T1 explained that some students might resist or disengage from technology-based language learning activities due to a preference for traditional methods or a lack interest in the digital tools used. T1 added that poor internet connection was another challenge. In many educational settings, especially in less developed regions like Tasikmalaya, inconsistent or slow internet connections hindered the implementation of online language learning tools and resources. Furthermore, T2 explained that with a lack of technological knowledge, students faced challenges adapting to new technologies, limiting their ability to exploit the potential of ICT in language learning fully. By addressing issues related to student engagement, poor internet connectivity, and technological knowledge, teachers can create an effective learning environment that leverages the benefits of technology in EFL instruction.

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B. Discussions

ICT tools enrich the learning experience for both learners and teachers. Based on the findings, PowerPoint allowed for the sequential presentation of information, which benefits language learners. Its benefits lie in its ability to create visually engaging content. In language education, visual aids are invaluable for reinforcing vocabulary and illustrating grammatical structures (Pateşan et al., 2018). Moreover, Google Classroom aids in organizing and delivering material. Teachers uploaded and organized resources in one place. This helped students access learning materials easily and enabled organization in the learning process. Google Classroom facilitated efficient communication between teachers and students. Additionally, teachers could instantly clarify language-related queries in Google Classroom. Announcements, assignments, and feedback could be shared with students quickly (Tarteer et al., 2022; Zhang, M. 2016)

The other tool is Google Forms, which helps teachers to provide assignments. Teachers could design various question types, including multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions (Cormier, 2018). Google Forms provides immediate feedback, allowing learners to understand and learn from their mistakes (Douell, 2020). Teachers could also track students' progress using Google Forms for regular assessments. Additionally, teachers could embed hyperlinks in the text to provide material and additional resources or explanations (Lapitan et al., 2021). The following tool is Google Meet. It is a platform for virtual classrooms where students and teachers interact in real-time—video conferencing allows for face-to-face communication (Karatas & Tuncer, 2021). Google Meet enables learners to practice language skills in an interactive environment. Teachers can organize speaking exercises, discussions, and role-playing activities to enhance oral communication (Chen, 2023). Google Meet supports collaborative learning. Students could collaborate on assignments, presentations, or shared documents, promoting teamwork and communication skills (Andrew, 2019).

ICT brings many benefits to EFL teachers in online instruction. ICT helps to deliver materials to the students in an interactive way. Delivering material with multimedia such as videos, audio clips, and interactive simulations caters to diverse learning styles (Sankey et al., 2011; Julia et al., 2023). Additionally, using the LMS, teachers can organize and deliver learning content in asynchronous learning (Bradley, 2021). ICT tools that provide virtual classrooms and video conferencing enhance synchronous communication between teachers and learners (Knapp, 2018). ICT is also used to discuss and explain materials. Online discussion platforms and collaborative tools facilitated student interaction (Beldarrain, 2006). In discussing materials, ICT platforms with intelligent tutoring systems can adapt to individual learners, providing detailed discussion personalized feedback (Klašnja-Milićević et al., 2016).

In providing assignments for students in online classes, ICT helps teachers make them accessible to students. ICT facilitated the creation of digital assignments, allowing for varied formats such as multimedia for presentations (Sharma et al., 2011). Furthermore, ICT tools like online quizzes and assessments provide immediate feedback, aiding self-directed learning (Zhu & Bonk, 2019). ICT tools are used to evaluate students' learning processes. Learning analytics tools like Google Forms track student progress and facilitate data-driven decision-making for teachers (Kaufman et al., 2014; Wise, 2019). Additionally, automated assessment tools provide instant results in evaluating language proficiency (Gikandi et al., 2011). The benefits of PowerPoint, Google Classroom, Google Forms, and Google Meet in language learning are multifaceted. From visual engagement and streamlined management to

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interactive assessments and real-time collaboration, these tools collectively contribute to a comprehensive and practical language learning experience, catering to the diverse needs of both teachers and learners.

In utilizing ICT for EFL online instruction, teachers face some challenges. The lack of student engagement is the first obstacle. Some students disengage from technology-based language learning activities due to a preference for traditional methods or a lack of interest in digital tools. Students who have grown up with conventional methods may feel more comfortable with those approaches than with digital tools (Margaryan et al., 2011; Bennett & Maton, 2010). Poor internet connection is the second obstacle that teachers face. Inconsistent or slow internet connections hinder the implementation of online language learning tools and resources. A study by Willging and Johnson (2009) found that technical issues, including slow internet, were among the factors contributing to student dissatisfaction with online courses. Furthermore, Students who lack technological understanding find it challenging to adjust to new technologies, which limits their capacity to adequately utilize ICT for language learning (Hew et al., 2007).

E. CONCLUSION

Utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in online classes has presented opportunities and obstacles. The positive impact of ICT on EFL learning is evident in its capacity to facilitate interactive and engaging language instruction. Online platforms offer diverse multimedia resources, language learning apps, and virtual communication tools that enhance language acquisition and foster a communicative environment. Furthermore, the flexibility of online classes allows for personalized learning experiences catering to diverse language proficiency levels and learning styles. However, amidst the advantages, obstacles arise that demand careful consideration. Technical issues, such as unreliable internet connectivity or hardware limitations, can disrupt the learning process flow and create student inequalities. Provide constructive feedback on students' use of ICT, acknowledging their efforts and improvements to help students use ICT tools.

For each obstacle, we suggest some solutions. Implement interactive learning platforms that encourage student participation. These platforms may include multimedia content, discussion forums, and interactive quizzes. Encourage project-based assignments that allow students to apply ICT skills in real-world scenarios, promoting a sense of relevance and purpose. Provide constructive feedback on students' use of ICT, acknowledging their efforts and improvements to engage students to utilize ICT. Regarding poor internet connection, teachers can provide downloadable versions of course materials, videos, and interactive content so students can access them offline. Encourage students to use mobile data and investigate the feasibility of providing mobile hotspot devices to students who lack reliable internet access at home. Furthermore, here are several solutions to enhance students' ICT skills. Foster a collaborative learning environment where students can share their ICT knowledge and skills. Encourage peer mentoring, collaborative projects, and group activities involving technology use.

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