ICT IN THE EFL SPEAKING CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The trend towards Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enhanced English Language Teaching (ELT) has been implemented broadly for years. The main purpose of this paper is to report the power of (ICT) in the EFL speaking classroom. The investigation, basically, is twofold: First, to see EFL student attitudes after being empowered with ICT in the EFL speaking classroom; second, to measure whether ICT has any significant impacts on EFL students' speaking fluency. Twenty EFL students participated in this research. They were empowered with ICT in the speaking classroom, and they were required to express their opinion related to the use of ICT in the speaking class. The findings suggest that teachers should empower their students with ICT since it is valuable to strengthen student attitudes towards English learning and it facilitates them to improve their speaking proficiency, specifically fluency.

Keywords: ICT, ELT, EFL, speaking proficiency, fluency, student attitude

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The trend toward Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enhanced English Language Teaching (ELT) has been implemented broadly for years. Somehow, there has been a misconception saying that ICT only deals with 'computers and computing related works' (Amin, 2013). In contrast, according to UNESCO (2002), ICT may be regarded as the combination of 'informatics technology' with other related technology, especially communication technology. ICT, with regards to English Language Teaching, refers to the use of general components of information and communication technologies in the teaching and learning process of English. However, more specifically it refers to the use of technology by teachers for instructional preparation, instructional delivery, and technology as a learning tool for students (Inan & Lowther, 2010). Lavin et al. (2012) avow that the trend in maximizing technology in classrooms

has broadly been applied since students have positively become tech-savvy literate, and technology has been implemented in foreign language instruction for the last 30 years when Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was developed and implemented in the fields of education (Domalewska, 2014). Most teachers are familiar with and complain about students who have poor speaking and communication skills in an EFL setting (Abidin et al.,2011) since the teaching and learning process of English, specifically speaking class in Indonesian context, has been facing some obstacles. One of them is a lack of English exposure which hinders the students from obtaining sufficient speaking proficiency. The obstacles might be able to be minimized by applying ICT in EFL learning.

According to Dennison et al. (1997), ICT is affecting education in two advantageous ways: changing the content and methods that teachers use to instruct and is, at the same time, changing the methods by which students learn, and of course, technology affects student attitude towards teaching and learning process of speaking. Yu and Wang (2006) add that ICT has changed the perspectives of EFL learners towards ELT. Lam (2000) advocates that language teachers use technology because it submits an altered manner of demonstration and offers a kind of enthusiasm for students. In addition, Chamorro and Rey (2013) mention that the use of ICT in the classroom is important to prepare students' personal and professional lives, and successful communication learning relies on the students' desire to participate.

Basically, there have been several studies investigating the use of ICT in ELT, yet the facts show that there have been a few studies investigating the roles of ICT in uplifting students' speaking proficiency and attitudes towards ELT. Young (2003) investigated the role of ICT in ELT and it was found that the students overall had a positive perception toward using Internet tools. Then Padurean and Margan (2009) concluded that the use of computers makes classes more vivid, pleasant, and appealing to students. Chamorro and Rey (2013) revealed that the use of technology-based activities in the English classroom is twofold: reinforcing already studied topics in class and promoting motivation. In addition, Guerza (2015) found that ICT pedagogies could create positive opportunities for learners to go beyond their classroom environment and encourage them to engage in meaningful interactional spaces where they are pushed to invest their identities and to "speak as themselves". Accordingly, ICT seems meaningful in ELT, yet how students behave towards ICT use on speaking class should be investigated further, especially their attitudes and expectations in ELT.

Other studies focusing on the use of ICT in speaking class found various results. Ibrahim and Yusoff (2012) indicated that ICT facilitates students' speech preparation process specifically in receiving feedback and improving speech delivery. Other studies also proved that ICT can help deepen students' content knowledge, engage them in constructing their own knowledge, and support the development of thinking skills (Kozma, 2005; Kulik, 2003; Web & Cox, 2004). In contrast, Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) who investigated learning outcomes and students' perception of the use of ICT, especially BLOG, found that students have positive perception of BLOG, but there are no significant learning outcomes. Lowerison et al. (2006) proved that there is no significant relationship between actual computer use and perceived computer usage on learning outcomes. In addition, a study by Apperson et al. (2006) found no significant impact of the use of power point on students' learning outcomes, but they found that students in Power-Point enhanced classrooms responded differently to the classroom experience. The findings of

the previous studies, then, show different results and even contrary. Thus it is still necessary to examine further the roles of ICT in ELT especially to understand student attitude towards ICT and speaking proficiency outcomes.

This paper then continues the inquiry into the impacts of ICT on student attitude towards English speaking class and students' speaking proficiency, specifically fluency. As a result, the research questions were formulated as follows:
1. How do EFL students behave towards the use of ICT in a speaking class setting?
2. Can the use of ICT promote students' speaking proficiency, specifically fluency?

METHOD

The research design of the present study was a mixed method approach which included qualitative and quantitative aspects. The present study aimed at investigating student attitude towards ICT in English Language Teaching and students' speaking proficiency, specifically fluency. The study was carried out in a university located in Malang, east Java.

The qualitative data were taken from a semi-structured interview with 20 EFL students participating in a speaking class as the participants of the study. There were two main questions used in the semi structured interview which allowed students to freely express their opinions related to the use of ICT in the speaking class. The first question and its sub questions asked the participants their perceptions of using different modes of ICT in the speaking class including their expectations in applying ICT in the classroom. The last question dealt with challenges encountered by the participants including benefits and obstacles in the implementation of the ICT in the speaking class setting. The interviews were conducted in English and sometimes Indonesian to make students able to express more accurately their attitudes towards the use of ICT in the speaking class and were tape-recorded to be analyzed further.

On the other hand, quantitative data were obtained from a speaking test in which each student presented their speaking proficiency, especially fluency, in a given topic namely 'My Idol'. The scores were given based on a scoring rubric of speaking test (ranging from 0 – 20) using intra-rater system. The presentation of each student was tape-recorded and scored by the classroom lecturer twice in order to avoid bias. The average score was the final score showing students' speaking fluency.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data were collected from a semi structured interview and an oral test, and the findings are presented in two sections: student attitudes towards the use of ICT and students' speaking fluency.

STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF ICT

There were two major questions and their sub questions the students answered regarding their attitudes towards the use of ICT in the speaking class setting. Answering the first question dealing with student perceptions and expectations on the use of ICT, all participants mentioned that they enjoyed using different modes of ICT in the speaking class. In general, they avowed that the teaching and learning process of speaking is more enjoyable, meaningful, and relaxed. According to a student, ICT, especially internet, helped him a lot in constructing his presentation on 'My Idol' by saying that,

> *Internet has helped me enrich my background knowledge on 'Casey Stoner' as my idol-the topic I presented orally. Also, You Tube allows me to find good models of delivering a speech and the likes. Then using a semantic mapping as the power point, I presented my topic much better with high confidence. I hope other classes will maximize ICT more frequently.*

Another student commented that,

> *ICT makes me more motivated in learning. I can be more confident in speaking class because I can get the contents of my presentation easily. Also, using a computer and an LCD helps me a lot in my speaking presentation. I hope I can use more ICT in the classroom including using my own mobile phone to record my own speaking performance.*

The above comments imply that the students have positive attitudes towards the use of ICT in the speaking class. Also, they want to have more activities using ICT-based instruction and activities. In short, they have positive attitudes towards ELT, and it is in line with Padurean and Margan (2009) who believe that ICT brings variety in classrooms, and students get used to learning a foreign language in a new and pleasant way, not just by interacting with the teacher and books. [11]malewska (2014) adds that ICT promotes the students in the learning process modifying the way learning is delivered, so learning takes place in context and nowadays this means technology-rich context.

In addition, answering the second question and its sub questions dealing with Challenges including benefits and obstacles the students encountered, the participants gave different responses. Nevertheless, 17 0f 20 participants (85%) answered that they have got benefits from ICT and it has given them more opportunities to select materials they have to present and execute their speaking performance. Then 2 of 20 (10%) participants mentioned that they still get difficulties in browsing from internet since they sometimes suffer from internet connection. 1 of 20 (5%) participants avowed that even though he applied ICT, he still gets difficulties to speak owing to his lack of speaking proficiency.

A statement was given by one participant that,

> *I agree with ICT in the speaking class, but when it was time for me to present my topic and suddenly there was a black out-no electricity, I had no more idea how to cope with it.*

Another participant complained that,

The internet connectivity sometimes does not work well. I become frustrated. Somehow, the class must go on, and ICT must be applied.

The above comments reflect some obstacles the students might encounter in the classroom. Somehow, they show that they get benefits from the use of ICT in the classroom. Therefore, although ICT is very meaningful in ELT, there are still some challenges and obstacles which need to be tackled to ensure its benefits.

STUDENTS' SPEAKING FLUENCY

Students' speaking fluency was obtained by comparing students' speaking performance before and after the treatment using ICT. The pretest and posttest were used to find out whether there is a significant effect of the use of ICT on students' speaking fluency. Table 1 shows that students got better achievement in the posttest compared to the pretest, and Table 2 concludes that there is a significant difference between the achievement in the pretest and posttest since the level of significance obtained was 0.01 which was lower than 0.05.

Table 1. Mean scores of pretest and posttest on speaking fluency

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	14.9500	20	1.35627	.30327
	Posttest	15.7500	20	1.65036	.36903

Table 2. The result of statistical computation on the pretest and posttest on speaking fluency

Paired Samples Test

			Paired Differences						
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Df	Mean			Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Postest	-.80000	.89443	.20000	-1.21860	-.38140	-4.000	19	.001

The results show that ICT promotes the students to improve their speaking fluency. In relation to the findings, Dundey and Hockly (2007) state that ICT has a positive effect on students' performance and autonomous learning. Ahlem (2015) found that ICT is an important strategy students should follow in order to improve their speaking skill. ICT can help deepen students' content knowledge, engage them in constructing their own knowledge, and support the development of thinking skills (Kozma, 2005; Kulik, 2003; Web & Cox, 2004).

Muric (2007: 3) says that the Internet brings the outside world into the classroom. It permits to discover the target culture to the learners, so students can discover the contents they need before presenting their speaking performance resulting on fluency. It makes sense that if learners have sufficient contents to present, they can produce better fluency. Amin (2013) adds that ICT increases the flexibility of delivery of education, so learners can access knowledge anytime and anywhere.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Basically, the results of this study conclude student attitudes towards ELT and students' speaking proficiency, specifically fluency. With regards to student attitudes, the findings prove that the students have positive attitudes towards ELT and they enjoy learning English with the use of ICT regardless the challenges and obstacles students might encounter during the teaching and learning process of speaking class. For them, teaching and learning process in integration with ICT allows them to be more motivated since the speaking turns to be more enjoyable and meaningful

Besides, ICT promotes students' speaking fluency since it allows learners to go beyond the classroom and obtain more information provided by ICT. They can find real examples of how to carry out real and meaningful dialogues of different dialects, settings, and gestures. Thus they behave much better towards teaching learning process of speaking and produce much better utterances both for verbal and non-verbal language near the target language. Those who are involved in the field of ELT, however, should notice that ITC is a means which can have positive impacts on student attitudes towards ELT and on students' speaking fluency if it is applied appropriately.

There are somewhat several limitations to the present study. The data were taken from a small number of students, therefor, the results may not be generalized to hold different and bigger populations such as non-English department students or different skills such as reading or writing class. Further comprehensible studies are suggested to be conducted in order to obtain more valid findings which will be beneficial to set up better atmospheres of teaching and learning process of different English skills.

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