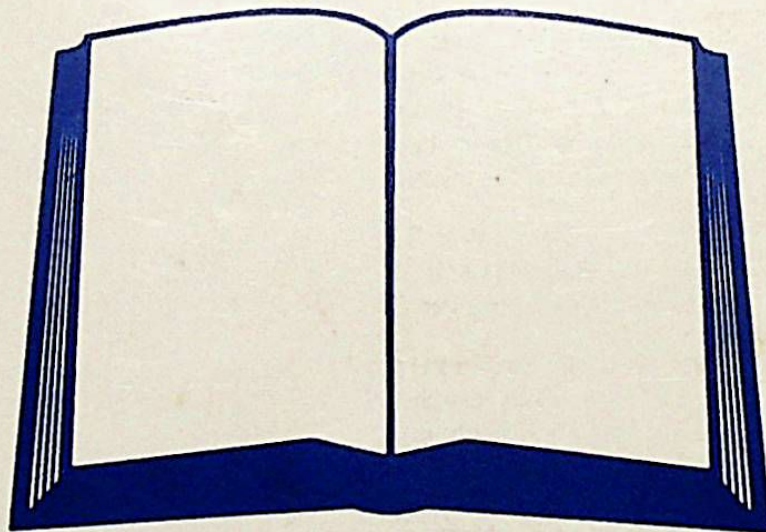


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Implementasi Pembelajaran Seni Tari melalui Model Topeng 1--16
Oleh *Hasmalena (Universitas Sriwijaya)*

Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Matematika Siswa melalui Pembelajaran Kooperatif 17--29
Oleh *Indaryanti (Universitas Sriwijaya)*

Kompetensi Profesional Guru Ilmu Sosial Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) Se-Kota Palembang 30--42
Oleh *M. Djahir Basir, Fitriyant, dan Siti Fatimah (Universitas Sriwijaya)*

Using Computer Technology in English Teaching 43--53
Oleh *Masda S. Simatupang (Universitas Kristen Indonesia) dan
Soni Mirizon (Universitas Sriwijaya)*

Pendekatan Keterpaduan Interdisiplin pada Pembelajaran Pengetahuan Sosial di Sekolah Dasar 54--64
Oleh *Nuraini Usman (Universitas Sriwijaya)*

The Students' Ability in Writing Persuasive Business Letters 65--74
Oleh *Rusman Roni (Universitas Tridianti)*

Kemampuan Mengajar dalam Kegiatan PPL Mahasiswa Jurusan PIPS FKIP Unsri 75--89
Oleh *Yulia Djahir (Universitas Sriwijaya)*

USING COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY IN ENGLISH TEACHING

Masda S. Simatupang dan Soni Mirizon^{*}

Abstract: In the teaching of English, it is necessary that English teachers apply computer technology in their teaching activities. It gives new way in the teaching and learning activity. Computer technology helps teachers prepare/produce their materials properly, obtain information easily; and communicate with colleagues or others. For students, computer as a tool to self study can increase their motivation, and be essential to their future success.

Key words: Computer technology, English teaching, internet, CD-ROM

As a lingua franca of the past century and the new millennium, English is one of the most important means for acquiring access to the world's intellectual and technical resources. People use English for communication as a medium of instruction, technology, international trade, and as a contact language between nations and parts of nations. In operating computer, English is likely to be used.

Teaching English through computer? This question arises as we relate computer mostly to software application, business, finance, or information, to name some. Traditionally, teachers of English mostly use pictures, realia, gestures, maps, or graphs to convey meanings or to introduce new vocabulary items to their students. Now, with the high technology available around us, a computer can be one of the most powerful tools of teaching media and reliable teachers' resource. Some computer programs like Microsoft Word and PowerPoint can be used as

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the teaching media and browsing the internet can provide us a lot of information. This paper focuses the discussion of using computer in teaching English through the internet and CD-ROM application, the benefits for teachers and students, and the handicaps of using the computer in English teaching in Indonesia.

USING COMPUTER IN ENGLISH TEACHING

Computer is not new to us and in this modern life. It has become our companion in our daily work. Although it is only a tool, its fascinating performance or function has made people addicted to using it every day. Nowadays, it is unavoidable the need of computer use in our daily life. Capability in operating the computer indicates having the characteristics of modern life—latest information and fastest communication.

In the teaching of English, computer may give new excitement in the process of teaching and learning. This feeling then can stimulate a motivation for students to learn. Trying something new and interesting will encourage learners to learn more and more. Computer is not the only way of learning, but it leads the learners to look for the information needed in their study. There isn't one technology best suited for language study, but rather an array of technological tools that can be harnessed to that end, although the tools themselves will continue to change very rapidly (Blake, 1999). A computer indeed helps learners to learn.

More specifically, there are two types of computer use in relation to the teaching of a second/foreign language discussed in this paper: the internet, which offers a lot of information; and CD-ROM applications, the most common tools for delivering multimedia.

The Internet

The internet as a worldwide literacy practice environment has created a new situation in communication and has consequently provided a source from which research strands may develop (Koutsogiannis and mitsikopoulou, 2004). A lot of research has been published through the on-line journals. People can make a research by using internet as the sources of data, articles, and other information needed for the reports.

The internet is a rich source of primary materials that are organized but not digested or interpreted—data, archival materials, case studies, statistics, etc. — that make it possible for students (or anybody) to learn about and actually conduct original research with primary sources in a way that was rarely possible before (McManus, 2000). Through the web we can browse various on-line newspapers, magazines or journals and get the latest news. For teachers or lecturers who want to do some research dealing with their teaching, internet can also be a source of the most recent articles for their references. In addition, it is also possible for anybody to get some theories or articles on grammar, vocabulary, cross-cultural analysis and so on. It means that computer may be an important source for teachers to have various topics in his/her teaching as well as for students to enrich their knowledge.

The great advantage of the World Wide Web [www], and the key factor underlying its phenomenal success, is the fact that it is easy to use (Eastment, 2000). The web provides a lot of information concerning anything. We may get the information by visiting some homepages, such as <http://www.google.com/>, www.yahoo.com, and many other searching machines. This searching machine provides any information we need about anything. We just need to type what we are looking for and it will give us abundant information of what we are searching. For instance, if we need the information about 'sociolinguistics', we just type 'sociolinguistics'. In only a second, we will have endless information only from that key word. We may also seek a difficult or new word or vocabulary which does not exist (yet) in the dictionary, like 'xxx' and 'friendster', etc. For this we can visit, for example, <http://www.dictionary.com>, an on-line dictionary. In case we would like to know further about a famous author, his/her articles or books, for example, we may also obtain that information by using the searching machine on-line in the internet. We just type his/her name, then there will be plenty information about him/her. The searching machine really helps teachers (or anybody) in looking for specific information in a very short time.

Although in its early days (1993–1994) the Web was restricted to text and simple graphics, it now allows full multimedia material to be transmitted (Eastment, 2000). Brett (2004) stated, multimedia can be defined as the computer-delivered combination of a large range of com-

munications elements—text, sound, graphics, pictures, photographs, animation and moving video. It means that a computer can combine, link and orchestrate all the communication elements, and in turn we can see the texts, graphics, or pictures; listen to the music or sound, and can also respond to other users (chatting).

We can also ask students to do their homework/assignment paper through the internet as a source of information. In my previous speaking III class, I assigned my students to use internet to get the information to be presented in front of the class as the final test. Here are the procedures:

- a. Students are divided into some groups, and each group consists of four members. They choose one topic they like to be presented in class, for example “chocolates”
- b. For their preparation, the group members discuss and decide ‘who says ‘what’ concerning the topic. Each student should talk different point of view about the topic. For instance, one of them will talk about the history of chocolate; another will speak about the advantages and disadvantages of consuming chocolate; another discusses kinds of chocolates and its relationship to the mood; and the other explains the myths and reality of chocolate in our lives.
- c. Having known the subtopic for every member, he/she then search the information from books, journals, and internet. He/She will find a lot of information through the internet about their subtopic.
- d. The next step is that they should write an essay concerning what they are going to present later. They should also include the reference from books, journals, newspaper, or popular magazines, plus at least two home pages from the internet.
- e. Every member of the group then will talk based on the essay they made. The students said that they get more and easier information from the internet than other sources.

The teaching of English using computer actually has been implemented since the early 1980s, which is called communicative CALL (computer-assisted language learning). Communicative CALL corresponded to cognitive theories which stressed that learning was a process of discovery, expression, and development (Warschauer, 1998). The popular CALL software includes text reconstruction program which

allow students working alone or in groups. The following is an example of how CALL is implemented in class.

CD-ROM Application

The application on CD-ROM is now very popular and largely used since it can store and integrate video, audio, graphics and text. It can also save greater data than a floppy disc—about 400 times as much (Eastment, 2000). Computers designed with CD-ROM are available now, and can be found in many market places or supermarkets. There are a lot of software products concerning language learning that can be used in a computer readily used now. In 1997, there were an estimated 10,000 multimedia CD's on the market, with over 250 packages specifically for English Language Teaching (Eastment, 2000).

CD-ROM Application is now purchasable in the market/supermarket in Indonesia, especially in big cities, from the very expensive to the more affordable one. One of the products of English language learning called "Tell Me More," is now operated in UKI. 'Tell Me More' is just one of the sorts of CD-ROM Application which we can buy at the market. It consists of three levels, beginner, intermediate and advance. This software, like most of the CD-ROM Applications, is designed to be used by learners studying alone. In other words, an individual or a student is able to self access study. It means that with minimum tutorial, a student can study by him/herself through the computer. One selection from the menus automatically and quickly presents texts, tasks and input, ready to go (Brett, 1995). The menu consists of pronunciation, listening comprehension, limited grammar exercises, list of words (vocabulary), and some games (crossword puzzles and hangman). Students are free to choose which menu they are going to study. They just click it and they can start learning right away.

Pronunciation

This software offers a lot of exercises on pronunciation. First, a student listens to a native speaker pronouncing a word or a phrase. He/she then repeats it. He/she can listen to his/her voice and compare the pronunciation with the native. The computer will tell him/her whether the pronunciation is correct or not, and ask him/her to repeat again. He/She can also see the graph of the sound he/she produces, and can compare it

with the graph of the sounds of the native speaker. This is a kind of drilling exercise which can be repeated several times until the student can produce the correct pronunciation. This exercise is suitable for beginners, but anybody can do it. This is a kind of exciting exercise because the student can repeat several times they want without feeling embarrassed of being wrong. It will increase their motivation to do the exercises as long as they want.

Listening Comprehension

With multimedia, listening comprehension is easy and quick, especially compared to tapes. Students listen, and at the same time, see the movies. A student may choose listening with or without the text. For the beginners, it is accepted to see the texts, but not for the higher level. It is possible for the students to repeat again the section they miss, so that they fully understand the message. Once they have got the idea, they can continue to answer the questions provided in the program. There are several types of questions like multiple choices, matching, and fill in the blanks with provided word(s). Having finished the questions, the students get the scores of the correct answers. It encourages them to repeat the listening part to get higher scores.

Grammar Exercises

Simple grammar theory together with exercises is available. The students just need to click kinds of grammar they would like to study, among other things, the present tense, modals, articles, and passives.

Vocabulary

Students are able to check the list of words used for the listening comprehension. For the difficult words, they can find the translation in Indonesian, or the explanation in English. There are also some exercises of vocabulary in context (filling the blanks). From the four options provided, the students choose the correct word to complete sentences. At the end of each exercise they may check the correct answer. They should answer correctly before continuing to the next question. It is very interesting to do those exercises. Another version is that the students answer all the questions, and at the end they may get the scores of all correct answers.

Exercises on synonyms and antonyms are in the matching type. Using the mouse, the students drag each word to its synonym or antonym. If they match the wrong word(s), the computer will respond with a voice indicating wrong answer(s).

Games

Games are the ones students prefer doing and spending most of their time. Crossword puzzle is one of their favorites. They click each across and down numbers. When they click number 1 across, for example, they will see a text asking a question, and they can type the answer on the space provided. If their answer is wrong, it will have different color from the correct one. They may retype the answer, or check the correct one. They do the exercises until every space is filled up. They will hear a voice indicating true or false answer.

Another interesting game is 'hangman'. This vocabulary exercise demands the students to guess a word. First, the screen provides, for example, 7 empty spaces indicating 7 letters of a word. The text provides clue(s) to the answer. The students guess the letter by typing it. If the letter is correct, it will automatically label the correct space. If not, there will be a picture of a hang man. The more mistakes they make, the more complete the picture is. If at the end they still can not guess, the picture of a hang man is completed and they will hear a popular song for funeral.

The Benefits for Teachers

There are benefits for teachers in using computer for their teaching. Among other things, teachers can use computer to obtain information easily, communicating with colleagues or students; and preparing/producing materials properly. Through the internet they can gain a lot of information concerning their interest, enrich their knowledge of some specific areas, and expose themselves to a lot of new things. This will update their knowledge and at the same acknowledge to the progress of new technology and new information. In the next new 'information era', teachers will be considered 'old fashioned' if they lack of new information, so they should keep up to date of this new era of fast information. Since internet provides a lot of things, it can be used as a source of lifetime-information. It means that they can search any information, any time they need it.

Another benefit is that teachers can communicate with colleagues or others to exchange information through the internet. This communication can be either synchronous—with all users logging on and chatting at the same time or asynchronous—with a delayed message system such as electronic mail (Warschauer and Healey, 1998). The electronic mail or e-mail allows teachers to communicate easily with thousands of colleagues, sharing new ideas, resources, and materials. It can provide the information, contacts, and simulation that can make our teaching more effective and enjoyable (Warschauer: 1995:3).

Furthermore, internet is faster and cheaper for communication compared to the telephone conversation. Talking on the telephone is very expensive especially for the inter-local and international call. Using the internet such as an e-mail enables us to contact and to be contacted easily. An e-mail can omit the distance which means that we can communicate to any body at any places with only local price. We can also send or receive files of data in a short time, compared to the ones via post which requires days to reach the destination.

Finally, by using computer teachers/lecturers can prepare their teaching materials properly. Applying word processors, for instance, teachers may prepare their teaching materials or tests using text, graphs, or pictures. Applying the PowerPoint, they can make teaching presentation at ease and interesting with colorful images/pictures and sounds (Simatupang, 2005:112). Indeed, a computer is a real help for us and enlighten our work. We can use the same material for other classes, or improve it with a little modification.

The Benefits for Students

For students, computer can increase their motivation and interest in learning English. It can also be as a tool to self study and be essential to their future success. Stepp-Greany (2002) in her study to Spanish students reported that two-third of the students agreed that the computer lab made the course more interesting and they preferred a computer-assisted class to the traditional one. The role of technology as a resource for instruction of second (and also foreign) language learners is increasing as educators recognize its ability to create both independent and collaborative learning environments in which students can acquire

and practice a new language (Butler-Pascoe 1997). Through the use of internet and CD-ROM Application, the students are able to have self study following individualized instruction provided for them. Most students are enthusiastic when they have the opportunities to learn English using computers.

Computer can also help students correcting their mistakes. The untiring, non-judgmental nature of the computer makes it an ideal tool to help second [or foreign] language learners feel sufficiently secure to make and correct their errors without embarrassment or anxiety (Butler-Pascoe, 1997). The learners can repeat the same lesson(s) until they are satisfied and master the materials. The computer will tell them their mistakes and they are always possible to repeat again and again until they have good results.

Handicaps

Although a computer has a lot of function such as a source of information, a tool to prepare printed materials, and a means of entertainment or games, it may be still not easy to be applied in the teaching and learning activity. Some handicaps that may be encountered are:

1. The high cost of providing this multimedia to classroom. At least we need thirty computers together with the software program for one class with approximately thirty students. The cost includes not only for providing the computers but also the maintenance and service. Due to the cost, it seems that we are aware of the potential [of computer technology] but not ready to develop and explore the use of internet for English Language Teaching institutionally (Jati, 2005:67).
2. The teachers' role changes from traditional teaching to computer-based teaching. Since not all teachers have enough knowledge of operating computers, training is needed to have qualified teachers, both in delivering language teaching and creating his/her teaching materials through the computers.
3. There is also a change role for students. They now view the computer as a medium through which they must negotiate meaning through interaction, interpretation, and collaboration rather than as a

finite, authoritative informational base for carrying out a stipulated language task (Kern in Stepp-Greany, 2002). It means that they also need training so that they are able to adapt the new learning through computers.

CONCLUSION

Computer may give new excitement in the process of teaching and learning which stimulate a motivation for students to learn. Trying something new and interesting encourages learners to learn more and more. Computer is not the only way of learning, but it leads learners to look for the information needed in their study.

The internet as a worldwide literacy practice environment has created a new situation in communication and has consequently provided a source from which research may develop. In doing research or improving our knowledge, computer supplies us a lot of information needed in almost any fields. In addition, browsing an internet also supports teachers (or anybody) to get some theories or articles on grammar, vocabulary, cross-cultural analysis and so on. It means that computer may be an important source for teachers to have various topics in his/her teaching as well as for students to enrich their knowledge.

The application on CD-ROM is now very popular and largely used since it can store and integrate video, audio, graphics and text. Students may have various exercises such as pronunciation, listening comprehension, grammar exercises, and games (crossword puzzles and hangman).

There are benefits for teachers in using computer for their teaching. Among other things, teachers can use computer to obtain information easily, communicating with colleagues or students; and preparing/producing materials properly. For students, computer can increase their motivation and interest in learning English. It can also be as a tool to self study and be essential to their future success. However, there may be some handicaps that may be encountered: the high cost of providing those multimedia, and limited skillful teachers.

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