

Teenagers, Digital Media, and Language Development: An Exploration of Potential and Challenges in Promoting Their English Skills

Norma Nofianto, Dewi Puspitasari, Chusna Maulida

ABSTRACT

Digital media has a significant role in the development of English for teenagers. The rapid development in digital technologies enables the teacher to be creative and innovative in teaching a second language, it can be used as a tool to enhance language learning, through increasing the opportunities for contact with native speakers and input from the target language. The research design used in this study was a literature study and collected data through any kinds of information from books and articles. The researcher chose and analyzed the information about the potential and challenges of digital media in promoting English language development for teenagers. The challenges of fostering English language development through digital media in teenagers based from literature reviews are teachers' problems in selecting and using instructional media, problem with curriculum, syllabus design, and lesson plan, problem with students with special needs, problem with noisy classes and student discipline problems with classroom physical size. Digital media is a potential of promoting English language development in teenagers depends on the ability of teachers to minimize the challenges.

Keywords: English for teenagers, digital media, language development.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, teaching English to teenagers is a part of curriculum. It is based on Ministerial Decree No.22 Year 2006, dated May 23rd 2006, which states that English subject can be given to secondary students as a local content. This decree results in the existence of English in secondary schools which is taught starting from the fourth grade for two credit hours every week. In teaching English to elementary school students, teachers deal with young learners whose characteristics are different from adult learners'. Several children characteristics are regarding their cognitive development and attention span. The cognitive development stage is stated by Piaget (1972). He believes that in each stage children have quality of thinking which is relatively consistent across different tasks. ¹

For secondary schools students, their cognitive developments lay on concrete operational stage. In this stage, children begin to think logically and use their experience to solve problem. Nevertheless, they are only able to solve problem which are applied to concrete examples and objects in real. Another characteristic is attention span. Attention span is defined as the amount of time in seconds the child remains on task without distraction. In learning, attention span can be seen when children pay attention to the teacher or focus on the learning. Musthafa (2010) argues that unlike adults who have long attention span, children only have attention span less than 15 minutes.²

An interesting media and appropriate method is needed in order to teaching English to teenagers effectively. They have their own characteristic. Their cognitive developments lay on concrete operational stage. In this stage, children begin to think logically and use their experience to solve problem. Nevertheless, they are only able to solve problem which are applied to concrete examples and objects in real life.³ Media used in the teaching learning activity will keep the learner focus

¹ Wildan, N A. Media in Teaching English to Young Learners: A Case Study in Elementary Schools in Kuningan. *Journal of English and Education*. (2013). Vol. 1(1), 196-205

² Musthafa, Bachrudin. Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia:Essential Requirements. *Dalam Educationist Journal*. . (2010). Vol. 4, (2), 120-125.

³ Pinter, A. *Children Learning Second Languages*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan (2011).

on the teacher, thus the classroom will be on teacher's control. The media used should be effective and interesting. The use of effective and interesting media in teaching can help the students understand the material easily.

Nurasiah (2017) found on her research that the English teacher at SMP Nurul Quran made fairly good preparations before teaching English including designing her syllabus and lesson plans, preparing teaching materials, and providing teaching media. This teaching preparation was fitted to the curriculum applied at the school namely the combination of the KTSP and Islamic Character Based curriculum. The lesson plans were carefully designed to provide easy and fun activities that were suitable for students at that level.

The activities presented in the classroom were based on what was stated in the lesson plan. The activities were procedural and met the level of the students. The teaching methods applied in the classroom were various such as Cooperative Learning, STAD, CTL, and others. The teacher also tried to make the learning fun and interesting by teaching English through games such as Simon Says, Scrabble, Guessing, etc. Cooperative interactions took place in the classroom where the students appeared to be free to speak and to ask questions.

The teacher had several problems in conducting the teaching such as problems with the joint curriculum, syllabus design, and the lesson plan, problems with two students with special needs, problem with noisy classes and student discipline, problems with catching students' attention and problems with classroom size. However, the teacher was capable to solve all these problems so that her teaching-learning could run well. It was found that the English teacher at Nurul Quran Character Based Islamic School maintained good class management to cover the problems she faced in the classroom.⁴

Another research done by Reni and Handoyo (2018) entitled "Engaging young learners of English with digital stories: Learning to mean" found that students creatively and critically crafted their own stories using multimodal

⁴ Nurasiah. Teaching English to Young Learners: A Case Study at Nurul Quran Islamic School Aceh Besar. *English Education Journal (EEJ)*. (2017). Vol 8(1).

resources such as a variety of images and sound. It empowered children to be multimodal narrative text creators. They were also enthusiastic about the project and appreciated each other's digital stories because they felt that the digital stories were collective work that they never created before.

Most of school in Padang have problem with media in teaching and learning to process. They have limited media in the classroom. Usually teacher creates their media from things that they can find around them. Related to teaching English, they also have limitation in using media, therefore teaching and learning process do not run well. For example, when the teachers introduce some vocabulary, they only show the picture to the children, mention the thing in the picture and ask children to repeat it. However, sometimes they use realia, show it to children and pronounce the words. They do have flashcard in their room, but rarely used. It is because they do not know how to use it. Only a few kindergartens have opportunity using better media. Mariana Kindergarten, for example, has used video in introducing new vocabulary. The kindergarten prepares laptop and LCD in the room, so the teacher could use it to show video, or movies to the children. The children enjoy the teaching and learning process very much.

Through video, the children also can watch movies and songs, so they can sing along together. Singing makes their pronunciation better. In addition, in Mariana Kindergarten, there is a special room where the children can play and learn English. They try to make term "Learning English is fun" really works.

The research questions from this study are : (1) what is the potential of digital media in promoting english language development in teenagers? ; (2) what are the challenges of fostering English language development through digital media in teenagers?.

Based on the research questions, this particular study aimed to describe the potential of digital media in promoting english language development in young learners and the challenges of fostering English language development through digital media in teenagers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was a literature study. This was in line with George (2008: 23) who stated that literature study included classifying and finding sources that delivered factual information or personal or expert opinion on a research question. The technique was collecting any kinds of information from books and articles.

The researcher collected data through any kinds of information from books and articles. The researcher chose and analyzed the information about the potential and challenges of digital media in promoting English language development for teenagers. The data were collected in the form of words rather than in numbers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The rapid development in digital technologies enables us to be creative and innovative in the way that we teach second languages. It can be used as a tool to enhance language learning, through increasing the opportunities for contact with native speakers and input from the target language. This interactive exchange and experience with native speakers facilitates learning the language (vocabulary and grammar) as well as cultural knowledge and competency associated with using the language to communicate effectively and appropriately. Moreover, this experience broadens and deepens young children's as well as teacher's knowledge and understanding of the different cultures and languages.

1. The potential of digital media in promoting english language development in teenagers

New technologies can be used to increase student motivation and engagement in the second language learning classroom. Typically, young children use a variety of technologies while involved in everyday activities at home. This is one reason why we need to also include these technologies in the classroom. One technology that has proved popular and an effective tool in teaching/learning in the second language classroom is the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB).

The visual aspect of the IWB appears to be the primary reason for active motivated engagement in the learning process. The opportunity that it gives students to present and discuss their work has been found to improve

attention and engagement in the learning process. This type of technology can be used to provide opportunities for children to actively engage in different activities for different purposes. Additional technologies can also be used in language learning activities including email, Apple or Android apps, and social media applications such as Skype, Facebook and YouTube channels if available.⁵

Use of virtual worlds such as Minecraft has become popular in teaching/learning languages, particularly with adults but also with older children. The activities and goals involved in the use of these technologies can be organised so that they involve collaborative learning between peers. For younger children, electronic books and games can be of great benefit. These types of activities can be projected onto the interactive whiteboard so that the whole class or groups of children can be actively engaged and/or they can be used by individual children on portable tablets so that the content can be learned and revised.⁶

However, it is important to note that teachers need to be provided with support and training to use the technology to enhance pedagogical practices as these technologies are merely useful tools to enhance teaching and learning in the language classroom. As Betcher and Lee (2009) point out, the teacher needs to understand how to use these technologies in creative and meaningful ways to actively engage children in the learning process.

In order to children can achieve in school, children must be educated by applying the right approach. Curiosity, creativity, independence, cooperation, and perseverance are some of the approaches used to improve learning and initial development. The approach to learning by playing can be done using a digital media, namely by utilizing gadget technology or mobile devices that are currently developing.

⁵ Scarino, A., & Liddicoat, A. J. (2009). Teaching and learning languages: A guide. Commonwealth of Australia. <http://www.tllg.unisa.edu.au/guide.html>

⁶ Betcher, C., & Lee, M. The interactive whiteboard revolution: Teaching with IWBs. Melbourne: 2009. ACER Press.

The use of digital media here must be under the supervision of parents or adults. This approach can be found by using an internet connection. For example, the desire of children for something can be directed by surfing in cyberspace, for example a child wants to know the traditional house of another region, without having to visit the area he can already see in full the form of traditional houses through pictures or video. Without having to visit a museum or zoo the child can see historical objects or other rare animals. The use of computers or gadget technology will involve the use of all senses. The operation of technology requires vision coordination and the ability to operate the touch screen button. There have been many software or software specifically developed for early childhood.

At the beginning of preschool, children's intellectual knowledge can be developed using several software programs. Numeracy and literacy recognition software. The software can also help provide object shape recognition exercises, object classification, colors and so on. When using this software parents or educators must accompany and provide explanations, so that in this way the child's verbal abilities will also increase. Explanation is given to the child when they are in front of the computer / gadget and explain what happened, for example if the mouse is moved, what effect on the screen, the child easily understands. One thing to note is that the proportion of the introduction of real objects must be more allocated to learning time than the introduction of objects using digital media.

The students' interest in participating in learning activities is when students are asked to pay attention to the video. Things that have not been done before provide a new learning atmosphere so that each task given by the teacher is always done by students. The interest of students makes the concentration of students in receiving material and their attention given specifically to learning.

This causes the learning atmosphere to be conducive and students are no longer crowded in the classroom. It can be said that the use of

multimedia can solve students' learning problems such as increasing concentration, increasing interest and also creating a conducive learning environment.

The role of multimedia as a breaker of student learning problems is explained by Sidhu & S. Ramesh (2005) in his research entitled *Multimedia Learning Packages: Design Issues and Implementation Problems*. In this study, we discussed ways to solve students' learning problems with multimedia learning in which media is created with various programs such as Authorware or Macromedia Flash.

In 2007, the British Council conducted market research into how the media and Internet has affected the preferred learning styles of young people wanting to learn English around the world (including Indonesia). The results of this research 69% of learners around the world said that they learned most effectively when socializing informally.

This result suggests that a lot of students learn best from their friends and family. Perhaps that is not so surprising. The things we learn from our loved ones are often more immediately relevant to our lives than what we learn from a teacher in a classroom. Also, when we are relaxed (such as when we are at home or in a café), then we are more open to suggestions and new ideas.

Since the work they do is self-directed and student centered, they can choose what they want to work on and the pace at which they work. This makes it even more motivating and contributes to the other advantages. Furthermore, they learn more easily. Learning through the use of new media enables the students to learn via many "channels". They come into contact with audio, visual and many more inputs. Pupils learn actively, they have to do something themselves. This trains their social, pragmatic, and cognitive skills. Reading interesting information they have found on the Internet can improve their reading skills.

Web 2.0 is part of the student's everyday life. Working at home on school projects with blogs and so on is very natural for them and thus, no

artificial forced project. The students can work whenever they want to. They are not forced to follow a certain schedule.

As a teacher, it is very easy to start a project since there is so much to find on the Internet. He can search for useful websites and provide these to the students to get them started. While using Web 2.0 services, the pupils improve their skills to work with these services, that is their media and method competence is improved. This could come in very handy for them later jobs and their life in general.

2. The challenges of fostering English language development through digital media in teenagers

Teachers' Problems in Selecting and Using Instructional Media

Based on the research done by Wildan (2013), problems were encountered by the teachers not only in using instructional media but also in selecting them. In selecting instructional media the problems encountered by the teachers were limited time, limited cost allocation, availability of instructional media, appropriateness of instructional media, and teachers' negative belief towards instructional media.

Problems were also experienced by the teachers in the process of utilizing media. The teachers often encountered technical problems, for instance running out of supply and the dysfunction of high-tech instructional media used. The last was personal problem. It dealt with the difficulty experienced by the teacher in explaining content in the instructional media

Problem with Curriculum, Syllabus Design, and Lesson Plan

Research that found At Nurul Quran Character Based Islamic School, English syllabus and lesson plan were oriented on the combination of KTSP and Islamic character curriculum. The teacher admitted that this combination, gave her problems about how and where to put the character points in the lesson plans, as demanded by the

Islamic character curriculum. This, she said, was due to the absence of a standard form of lesson plan from the school.

Problem with Students with Special Needs

The researcher also found that the teacher had problems with two autistic students, one in class 1 and one in class 3. These two students had learning problems such as difficulty in concentrating on study and writing, difficulty to focus, to understand the lessons and to finish their tasks. They sometimes made noises by hitting their work table, crying out, screaming, and disturbing their school friends. The teachers tried to handle and help these students but it cost a lot of time and as a result the teachers could not focus on the other students. The other students were disturbed by this phenomenon.

Eventually the English teachers worked with the class teachers to seek a solution and it was decided that each of those students needed a partner teacher-student. The parents were then told that their children needed help from a partner teacher and it was their responsibility to find these partners. These partner teachers then sat beside each of these students, personally helping them to understand the lesson, and to do their work. Each of them accompanied their student from the beginning until the end of the school each day. It was observed that these partner teachers gave a great contribution to help the teacher handle these students and to keep these two students busy working on their tasks so that they did not make trouble anymore.

Problem with Noisy Classes and Student Discipline

In almost all the classes, the teachers had problems with noisy classes and lack of discipline. Especially in the beginner classes, the students chatted, walked around, played, sang, laughed, came to friends' seats and disturbed their friends. Realizing this, the teacher would get up and calm the class down. She would raise her voice and then lower her voice and then ask them to quiet down, to sit back in their seats, and to behave well.

The researcher observed that the class started to get noisy when some of the students had finished their work early so that they became bored waiting for the teacher to check the work of their friends, and that some students were not doing their work at all. So, there was a mixture of diligent and of lazy students with nothing to do.

This perhaps happened because their classes began after midday so that these students already felt tired and bored. To overcome this, the teacher usually used group activities. She put her students into small groups and each group was given a task to discuss a question. This made the students interested and challenged.

Problems with Classroom Physical Size

While observing the beginner classes, the teacher could not move around the class easily because the physical size of the classroom was too narrow so most of the time the teacher just stood in front of the class. Sometimes she moved around the classroom but she could not reach the students sitting at the very back of the class. However, she continued to pay attention to the whole class.

The number of students in each class was 25 to 27 students. In grades 1 to 3, there were 8 to 12 students that were sitting on the floor with a long table in front of them that they had to share, while the other students were sitting on chairs with one table for each. However, the classrooms for grades 4 to 6 were bigger in size and the teacher could move around easily.⁷

REFERENCES

Ulfa, Saida. (2016). *Pemanfaatan Teknologi Bergerak Sebagai media*

Pembelajaran Bagi Anak Usia Dini. Edcomtech Vol.1, No. 1

Wildan, N A. (2013). *Media in Teaching English to Young Learners: A Case*

⁷ Ibid, hlm. 90-91

Study in Elementary Schools in Kuningan. *Journal of English and Education*. Vol. 1(1), 196-205

Musthafa, Bachrudin. (2010). Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia: Essential Requirements. *Dalam Educationist Journal*. Vol. 4, (2), 120-125.

Pinter, A. (2011). *Children Learning Second Languages*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan

Nurasiah. (2017). Teaching English to Young Learners: A Case Study at Nurul Quran Islamic School Aceh Besar. *English Education Journal (EEJ)*. Vol 8(1).

Scarino, A., & Liddicoat, A. J. (2009). *Teaching and learning languages: A guide*. Commonwealth of Australia. <http://www.tllg.unisa.edu.au/guide.html>

Betcher, C., & Lee, M. (2009). *The interactive whiteboard revolution: Teaching with IWBs*. Melbourne: ACER Press.