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Internet and Indonesian EFL Teaching Profession

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Abstract

The integration of internet in education has been a global phenomenon. For EFL teachers, the use of internet is potential not only for classroom teaching and learning but also for professional learning. Warschauer et al (2000) claimed that internet for English teaching deals with ALIVE (Authenticity, Literacy, Interaction, Vitality and Empowerment).

This qualitative research used guided questions to interview as many as 21 EFL teachers from junior high schools, senior high schools, English courses, and universities. The guided questions are designed to answer these research questions: What internet resources do Indonesian EFL teachers use for their professional learning and classroom teaching? How do they use the resources for both purposes? Why do and don't they use the resources for both purposes? The interview notes were then coded and categorized, then discussed.

While it was portrayed from the findings that Indonesian EFL teachers believe in the benefits of internet for their profession; these beliefs do not generally affect their practices in using internet to enhance their teaching profession. It is recommended to guide Indonesian EFL teachers to optimize the usage of internet resources to enrich learning and to succeed teaching.

Keywords: internet, Indonesian EFL teachers, classroom teaching and learning, and professional learning.

1. Introduction

The use of internet by ELT teachers has been popular since last 1990s for it offers wide range of benefits (Dudeney and Hackly, 2012; Eastment, 1999; Teeler and Gray, 2000; Warschauer et al, 2000: 11). Warschauer et al (2000: 11) argue that internet is resouseful for teachers; it can be both for professional development medium and classroom teaching supports. They also state that internet is often faster, easier, and less expensive than other medium for the same purpose. On the same line, Teeler and Gray (2000) write that internet can be used in teacher development, as a material resource, classroom tool and activities, and as course book.

Resources in the internet for English language teachers that that are categorized into two: email and World Wide Web (Eastment, 1999; Teeler and Gray, 2000; Warschauer et al, 2000: 11-30). Email technology allowed teachers to create global network through private email,

mailing list and newsletter. World Wide Web offers millions of texts from organizations and individuals in form of professional journals and magazines, virtual libraries, online media, professional organization and association, online workshop and conferences, English language program and staff, publisher, language reference material, downloadable software tools, and sites for English language learning.

There are several reasons why teachers use technology for their classroom. Ertmer et al (1999) reveals that the reasons teachers are motivated to use technology in the classroom: useful for learners (e.g. students more excited and lesson more interesting) and teacher become more competent. Particularly on internet in the context of English teaching, Warschauer et al (2000: 7) view that there are five reasons to use internet for English teaching, called ALIVE (Authenticity, Literacy, Interaction, Vitality and Empowerment).

Teacher's attitude toward internet is generally positive (Albirini, 2006; Tezci, 2009). However some constraints are also faced by teachers. Chen (2008) summarized her literature review on barriers to implementation of ICT that there are institution-related and teacher-related issues. By synthesizing and analyzing several studies, she mention that institution-related issues entail availability, accessibility, technical and administrative support, complexity and unreliability, and funding; while, teacher-related issues entail time, confidence, knowledge and skills, training, previous negative experience, fear and anxiety, classroom style, motivation, belief and attitude. While, Patahuddin (2008) argues that teacher's knowledge and beliefs are key to the success of technology implementation in education; and that technology such as computer and internet is only tool which can both enrich and restrict learning.

While studies about internet and English language teachers are growing in other countries, it is limited in Indonesian context. Cahyono and Cahyani (2012) conducted descriptive quantitative research to 37 EFL teachers at East Java, Indonesia and reported that those teachers believe in technology for the success of teaching and learning. Part of their discussion, focusing on web-based technology, mentions that popular resources used by Indonesian ELT teachers for their classroom are websites and email, virtual forum and weblog are less used by teachers. They use it because of its practicality, convenience, potential to make interesting lesson, and its advantage in preparing students for their future (Cahyani and Cahyono, 2012). Given that internet is also useful not only for teaching but also for teacher professional learning, this study emphasizes on how Indonesian EFL teachers use internet for both purposes. The questions of this study are: What internet resources do Indonesian EFL teachers use for their professional learning and classroom teaching? How do they use the resources for both purposes? Why do and don't they use the resources for both purposes?

2. Research Method

This study employed descriptive qualitative method. The respondents are ELT teachers pursuing graduate program at Ahmad Dahlan University. The participation in this research was voluntary. In-depth interview was chosen as technique to gather information. The researcher texted active students via SMS asking for their availability for interview sessions. Their mobile phone numbers were collected from the graduate program database. From 93 numbers of target respondents,

38 replied the message, and 21 of them were available for interview sessions. The respondents are English teacher from various institutions: 5 from junior high schools, 8 from senior high schools, and 8 from universities/colleges; 11 males and 10 females. They age ranges from 23 – 59; with 1 – 10 years of teaching experience. The researcher used question lists to guide the interview more structured. The interviews were noted. Interview notes were analyzed by coding and categorization and then discussed.

3. Findings and Discussion

- 3.1. What internet resources do Indonesian EFL teachers use for their professional learning and classroom teaching? How do they use the resources for both purposes?

The data shows that the respondents used various resources in the internet:

a. Email

The teachers used email for some purposes: 1) to send additional or home assignment to the students (R.16), 2) to make announcement (when the teacher could not attend the class) (R.21), 3) to receive assignments from the students (R. 17), and 4) to give written feedback to students (R.6). Besides, they used the email 5) to share their classroom experience to their colleagues/old friends (R.20), 6) to inform their colleagues particularly about call for paper of conferences (R.19), and 7) to attach interesting articles about new teaching method to their colleagues (R.10).

b. Face book groups

Few of the respondents join classroom face book groups. They use the FB group to help them engaged with their students (R.4,7,14)

c. Web Search Engine: www.google.com

There are several search engines available in the internet, but Google is the most visited websites used in Indonesia (Alexa, 2013). Almost all respondents used this popular website for both searching texts (essays, slides, e-books, worksheets, pictures) they need for teaching and finding information, articles, and references.

Google... to find texts such as recount, descriptive, etc ...(R.8)

I used Google to search free worksheet and exercises ... (R.10)

I also look for power point teaching material in Google , so I can use the slides in the classroom ... (R.19.)

.... to download E-textbook I open Google first (R.18)

I find pictures for apperception through Google image (R3.)

I wrote 'call for paper ELT conference' in Google to find information about conferences (R.8)

When I have to write papers, I asked my 'grandpa' Google to collect references (R.21)

d. Personal Blog and Website

Few of the respondents created their own blog. Sometimes they use their blog to practice writing in English (R. 6, 7). One of the respondent stated that he is in the process of creating his own websites (R.1).

e. Online Magazine and Newspaper:

Some of the respondents enjoyed reading online magazine (www.hellomagazine.com) and newspaper (www.thejakartapost.com) to improve their English reading competence and enrich their vocabulary (R 1, 2, 6).

f. Virtual Library and Gateways

It seems that the respondents were not familiar with online ELT journals existing in the internet such as ELT Journal, ; because, their institutions and their surrounding public libraries do not subscribe the journals. When they need to find scholarly papers they started from www.academia.edu and digital image library (for example: <http://digilib.uad.ac.id/>) (R.1, 2).

g. English teaching and learning resources websites

In order to improve their English competence and find free worksheets they clicked on these websites <http://www.onestopenglish.com/>, <http://www.usingenglish.com/>, <http://en.islcollective.com/>, <http://playkidsgames.com/>, and <http://www.duniabelajar.com/> (R.20, 21). There were some other websites that they access but they don't exactly remember the address (R.10).

h. Websites of TEFL association and organization:

Although there are numbers of websites owned and operated by TEFL associations and organizations (Warschauer et al, 2000: 24-25), only these two websites are mentioned by some respondents during the interview sessions: British Council (<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/>) and <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/>) and TEFLIN (<http://www.teflin-indonesia.org/>). From those three websites they utilize teaching resources, games and exercises for their teaching and learning needs (P.); and, articles to enlighten their view on teaching English (P.)

i. Others:

Occasionally they used online dictionary, Google translate, Wikipedia, to learn English terms (R.1, 2), used social media like tweeter to find pen pal (R.4) and utilized YouTube to find videos for classroom and explanation (R.13).

It seems that almost all respondents were familiar with the use of internet for their teaching needs and professional development. Only one of the respondents could not operate internet (R.11). This familiarity is a good potential for Indonesian EFL teachers to engage with the growth of technology and how to integrate them into their professional lives. They could extend their internet usage to create global network by

joining professional mailing lists, online workshop, online conference, and language program. Besides, they can utilize other useful websites and databases to find academic papers such as Google Scholars, ERIC, ProQuest, BookOS.

3.2. Why do they use the resources for both purposes?

The teachers are motivated to use internet because they don't want to be technology-illiterate-teachers. The respondents used internet in EFL classroom because they believe that their lessons will be more interesting and the students will be more enthusiastic and will not get bored (R.5, 7). They searched and downloaded teaching resources from internet because it's easy and cheap (R. 3, 12). Besides, it's more authentic (R.1) and can improve teachers and students technology competence (R.2). It's also interesting to know that their students learning achievements is better when teaching using internet (R7).

Teachers can broaden their knowledge easily and share information effectively (R.18). Moreover, they can retrieve useful references faster and cheaper (R.20). These findings confirm what is pointed out by Dudeney and Hackly (2012), Eastment (1999), Teeler and Gray, (2000), Warschauer et al, 2000: 11).

3.3. Why don't they use the resources for both purposes?

Chen (2008) reviewed that there are some barriers in using internet by English teachers. This study finds also some barriers found by respondents in using internet for their professional lives. Although most of the respondents can operate internet, not all of them utilized various resources available for them to support their teaching needs and their professional leaning. There were both external and internal factors. The external factors related to the accessibility and funding issue. Hardware facilities are available but connections are sometime slow (R.9). Institutional funding to upgrade the bandwidth and subscribe some resources is limited (R.13). Besides, that internet provides many unqualified information makes them worry to select resources (R17). Pornography and pop up advertisements also discourage them to use internet for their lessons (R.8, 20).

While internal factors related to their inability to operate internet (R.11). Some of them enjoy playing games and loading FB rather than professional websites (R 6). They also become lazy to teach because they just can ask the students to learn independently from internet (R5). This study also found that there's worry from teachers that they become addicted to internet and too much depend on it, and teacher become useless (R.3). While, it has been known that internet is only tool which can both enrich and restrict learning (Patahuddin, 2008).

3. Conclusion

The core finding of this study is that EFL teachers in Indonesia are familiar with the use of internet for their professional lives. It can be seen from various types of resources available in the internet that they used. However, teachers need more information on other useful websites to access more teaching ideas and more scholarly papers. They should also be encouraged to create global network by joining online professional groups. Given that internal barriers are found, guidance to use internet wisely and to create meaningful learning through internet is required. While this research is small-scale and use single data collection technique (interview), it is valuable to dig this area by conducting large-scale research or ethnographic research.

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