

UTILIZING VLOG TO PROMOTE STUDENTS' ENGLISH AND DIGITAL LITERACIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A Best Practice in an ESP Classroom

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Abstract

In this digital era, it is important to equip students with skills that enable them to solve problems and communicate effectively in a digital world. English literacy and digital literacy then become very important for ESP students who will pursue their career in the work industry soon after they graduate. The technology advancement has shifted the concept of literacy, that it is no longer only about read and write on printed papers. For future generations, digital tasks may become part of their daily life. Only those who have good English language skills and the ability to make use of digital sources effectively can survive in the work industry and reach the best career. This paper aims to explore how vlog (video blog) can be utilized in the ESP classroom to develop students' English literacy and digital literacy. A teacher's experience in utilizing vlog as one of the students' task in an ESP classroom in Politeknik Ilmu Pelayaran Semarang will be shared. The experience revealed that the use of vlog could enhance students' motivation in understanding their study materials, improve their ability in reading and organizing information. However, in the process of completing the vlog project, both teacher and students might encounter several challenges.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, English Literacy, English For Specific Purposes, Vlog.

INTRODUCTION

The invention of the internet and the advancement of technology have big impacts on the society as well as in the field of education. Technology can equip students to independently organize their learning process. Instead of being passive recipients of information, by using technology students can become more active users (Simjanoska, 2016). In the digital era, the notion of literacy has shifted that it is not only about to read and write on a printed document. Pilgrim and Martinez (2013) argue that in the 21st century, the definition of literacy has

increasingly reflected the ability to use technology for gathering and communicating information. The literacies used by today's students are much different from those of their parents or even those of students from just a decade ago. In order to become fully literate in today's world, students must become proficient in the literacies of the 21st century technologies (The International Reading Association, 2009). Thus, makes the so-called 'Digital Literacy' become a highly important issue to be discussed nowadays.

Digital literacy is defined as the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information (Museum and Library Services Act of 2010) and the ability to use those skills to solve problems in technology-rich environments (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013). The International Literacy Association (2018) defines digital literacy as teaching children how to compose and communicate using digital technologies as well as how to comprehend and evaluate information in digital forms. Those definitions imply that digital literacy involves students' ability in using technology to organize and to make use of information so that students can communicate effectively. Therefore, digital literacy is very important to be integrated in English classroom to develop students' English literacy.

In the context of English for Specific Purpose, digital literacy is highly essential. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a branch of English Language Teaching (ELT). It is divided into two main branches of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) such as Medicine, Engineering, etc. and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) such as English for secretaries, technicians, seafarers, port and shipping officers, etc (Ahmadi and Bajelani, 2012). Sarré & Whyte (2017) provides a more complex definition that 'ESP is the branch of English language studies which concerns the language, discourse, and culture of English-language professional communities and specialized groups, as well as the learning and teaching of this object from a didactic perspective'. The latter definition implies that ESP has multiple perspectives and it has a specific

purpose of language ability that combines knowledge related to both language and content.

The field of ESP has blossomed over the past 50 years and has gained its significance among other fields. The idea of embedding content of a subject under study into a language classroom was first introduced in the 1970s by Hutchinson and Waters. They argued that the content of a subject, for example, economics or management, should be used for teaching a foreign language (Savas, 2009). The ESP then put a high emphasis on the practical outcomes of the language. It focuses on the learners needs to conduct their jobs effectively in their future professional career. Therefore, the main purpose of English for Specific Purpose is to prepare students to comprehend their own field materials to be able to conduct effective communication in a real working situation in the digital era. Therefore, the integration of English literacy and digital literacy can help ESP students in preparing themselves with future challenges. This is in line with Beavis, Bradford, O'Mara and Walsh' (2008) argument that to be effective members of society, students need to become critical and capable users of both print and multimodal literacy. In the digital era, students have to be able to organize texts or information (printed or digital) that they encounter in everyday life.

A concept of effective learning and teaching in literacy and English is best presented by Scotland's Government through its 'Curriculum for Excellence'. It is stated that effective learning and teaching in literacy and English will involve a skillful mix of appropriate approaches which include:

- a. The use of relevant, real-life and enjoyable contexts which build upon children and young people's own experiences.
- b. Effective direct and interactive teaching.
- c. A balance of spontaneous play and planned activities.
- d. Collaborative working and independent thinking and learning.
- e. Making meaningful links for learners across different curriculum areas.
- f. Building on the principles of Assessment is for Learning.
- g. Frequent opportunities to communicate in a wide range of contexts, for relevant purposes and for real audiences within and beyond places of learning.
- h. The development of problem-solving skills and approaches.
- i. The appropriate and effective use of Information and communications technology (ICT).

The above descriptions show that the activity of teaching and learning will be more effective if it is relevant and meaningful for students, and employ interactive activities by utilizing information and communications technology effectively. It is also beneficial to involve authentic communication context.

The best practice presented in this paper is about how a teacher utilized vlog as one of a class assignment in ESP Classroom of Port and Shipping Management Study Program. Vlog or Video Blog is a composition of video series that are shot by the composers themselves. After composing the video, the composers usually do a necessary editing process then upload it on the internet. The content of the video can be based on the composers' experience or knowledge that

they want to share with other people. The composers then can share their vlogs through several platforms such as YouTube, Dailymotion, and Facebook (Fidan and Debbağ, 2018).

YouTube is considered as one of the most useful teaching aids in the modern teaching and learning environment. Students can find a lot of information related to port and shipping management study materials. If properly selected, these materials can operate as audio-visual resources that bring real life into the classroom, provide students with every-day professional situations, and play the role of valuable authentic material, which altogether is of great importance in the ESP teaching (Sarré and Whyte, 2017).

The use of vlog in the ESP classroom is supported by the Vygotsky's social constructivism theory and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. According to Vygotsky (in Fidan and Debbağ, 2018), learning can occur when students have social interactions with other people and when they internalize the information obtained from these interactions. Bandura (in Fidan and Debbağ, 2018) adds that learning can take place when individuals observe the behaviour of the other individuals and take them as a model. The use of vlogs can provide context and opportunity for social interaction and make the learning activity become meaningful and enjoyable for students. The meaningful activities can support to more effective English teaching and learning thus promote students' literacy. Students can learn English more effectively and learn how to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate the information they find from the internet.

The Setting of the Study

Politeknik Ilmu Pelayaran Semarang (PIP Semarang) is one of Maritime Polytechnic under the Ministry of Transport which has three study programs: Nautical Study, Marine Engineering, and Port and Shipping Management. This paper will focus on the Port and Shipping Management program in which the graduates will work as Port and Shipping Officers in their future career.

Maritime polytechnics under the Ministry of Transport have specific characteristics. The students are called cadets and they have to undergo 4 years of education. On the first and the second years, they will spend their study at campus. On the third year, they will have an apprenticeship program. On the fourth year, they will come back to campus to continue their education and write a research report based on their experience during the apprenticeship.

During their education, cadets have to live in the dormitory and follow certain semi-military rules which regulate their daily activities, their uniform, and behaviours. From the very beginning of their study, cadets are trained to be disciplined, have a strong character and a good physical condition. However, one disadvantage of cadets' life in the dormitory is they have very limited access to gadget and internet on their first and second years. Laptops and mobile phones are not allowed, especially when cadets are on their first, second, and third semesters. On the fourth semester, laptops are allowed but are still limited in number. On the third year (the fifth and the sixth semesters) and the fourth year (the seventh and eighth semesters) cadets can get their full

freedom to use their gadgets and to access information.

The project described in this paper was conducted in semester 8 class of Port and Shipping Management. After they graduate, cadets will work as port and shipping management officers. They will deal with shipping documents and shipping procedures. Tasks related to logistics, containerization, warehousing, loading and unloading activity at the port, customs, export-import, and marine insurance, are some of the tasks they might encounter. They have to be able to describe, explain, negotiate and exchange information related to their jobs. It is important that they have the ability to understand written documents in order to be able to make use of the information. It is also essential for them to have a good speaking skill to be able to communicate effectively.

The Vlog Project

The Vlog project was used as one of the cadets' assignments in Port and Shipping Management Class. To do this project, cadets worked in pairs. Each pair composed an informative vlog in English related to Port and Shipping Management field with the duration of the clip is around 8 – 12 minutes. Cadets' were free to choose the topic that they like. They were allowed to refer to their lesson from the first semester or their experience during their apprenticeship program. They could find information from many sources: textbooks, Google, YouTube, or other sources. After finished with the video making, they uploaded the video on YouTube and shared the link to their friends.

The detailed steps in conducting the project are elaborated as follow:

1. At the beginning of the project, the teacher introduced the project to the cadets. The teacher also explained the objectives of the project.
2. The cadets were asked to find a partner and discuss the topic that they wanted to choose.
3. Cadets were asked to find samples of video from YouTube that have a similar topic with them and discuss with their partner about the content of the video.
4. Working in pairs, cadets then conducted further discussion by answering the following questions:
 - a. What is the topic of your vlog?
 - b. What information will be included in your vlog?
 - c. Where do you think you can get the information or the materials that are needed? Who can help you to find the information?
 - d. What media or equipment that you need for making the video? Do you need to go outside the campus (for example to the harbour, office, library, etc)? Do you need posters, pictures, or graphs in the video making? Do you need to show authentic documents?
 - e. How long will it take to do the video-shooting and video editing?
 - f. Who do you think will become the potential viewers of your video?
5. Cadets handed in the result of the discussion before they start the video recording.
6. Cadets were instructed to find adequate resources and to gather relevant information related to the topic. They could read the textbooks, encyclopedia, websites, or videos on YouTube. Then, they could start the video making.
7. The teacher followed up cadets progress every week.
8. The time allocated for cadets to complete their project was 2 months. They had to submit the link to the teacher after they uploaded it on their YouTube channel.

The Evaluation Rubric for the Vlog Project

Cadets' vlog was scored based on the criteria listed in an evaluation rubric. The evaluation rubric was adapted from several sources. It was modified to suit the context and the condition of cadets. The criteria are described as follow:

1. Language Aspect. This aspect refers to the language use of cadets when they speak in the video. It refers to their vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency (The maximum score is 20).
2. Subject content. It evaluates whether the information given on the video is appropriate, correct, and clear. It reflects cadets' technical knowledge about the topic they chose (The maximum score is 20).
3. Storyboard / script. It evaluates whether the storyboard/the script made by cadets is thoroughly described and matches the video (The maximum score is 20).
4. Group cooperation. It evaluates cadets' contribution to the video: Did they give an equal contribution? Did they work together in a friendly manner? Did they share the workload fairly? (The maximum score is 10).
5. Introduction and closing. This aspect refers to how cadets provide an interesting and motivating introduction and how they wrap up all content and deliver the closing (The maximum score is 10).

6. Production. It evaluates how the video is edited. Whether the video runs smoothly from shot to shot, whether a variety of transitions are used to assist in communicating the main idea (The maximum score is 15).
7. Punctuality. It evaluates whether cadets can meet the project deadline (The maximum score is 5).

Challenge and Opportunity in Implementing the Vlog Project

Implementing this project in Port and Shipping Management class of PIP Semarang was not as easy as it seemed. The first time the teacher introduced the task, some cadets were confused and had no idea how to do the task. Cadets were not used to utilizing information technology in their classroom. They also did not get used to the type of learning that demand autonomy, in which they have to be independent, creative, and have a high initiative to complete their task. The dominant approach of behaviorism in their life in the dormitory has likely hindered cadets' creative thinking and initiative. It took times to adjust cadets' habit and attitude. This was a big challenge for cadets as well as for the teachers. Therefore, it is important to assist cadets by giving them guideline questions and following up their progress. It is also beneficial if the teacher divided cadets' big project into some smaller tasks to scaffold their learning. For example, in the beginning, the teacher asked cadets to find some videos that related to their own video. It is necessary to give cadets examples about the video that they are going to make. For the next task, the teacher can ask cadets to conduct a discussion with their partner by following a set of guideline questions, then they have to submit the result of their

discussion. It is important for the teacher because he/she can monitor the cadets' progress. After the discussion, the teacher can proceed to the next task. It is the script writing. Cadets are asked to write their script for the video and hand in their script. After the script writing, cadets can start the video recording followed by video editing.

Another challenge encountered by the cadets and the teacher was the difference of cadets' English proficiency which influenced the cadets' motivation and attitude. High proficiency cadets found the task very challenging for them. They had a high motivation to complete the task and enjoyed the activity. For low proficiency cadets, on the other hand, the task was rather difficult. It is necessary, therefore, for the teacher to give more attention to cadets who face the difficulties and make sure that they complete every step of the project. Intensive assistance is highly essential. This is in line with the concept of Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) which mentions that learning can happen when a teacher scaffolds students in their ZPD so that they can reach their independent problem-solving. This concept is depicted by Vadenais (in Sarker, 2019):

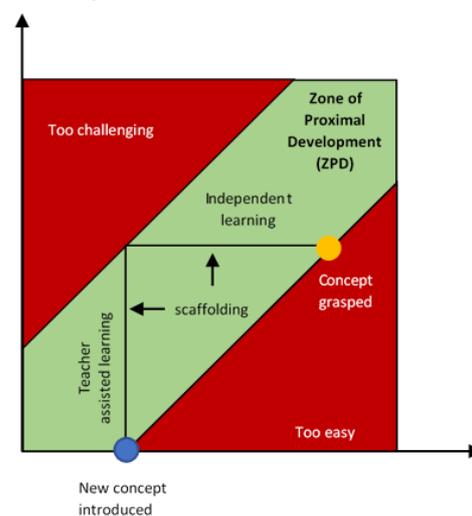


Figure 1: ZPD and teacher's scaffolding
In the context of cadets of PIP Semarang, this project was challenging not only for the cadets but the teacher herself. The unique characteristic of cadets' life and habits made the teacher needs to design a scenario to help cadets to complete their task. However, this project was worth doing because it gave cadets many benefits and opportunities to develop their ability. Firstly, cadets could learn how to organize information. They learned to find information from several sources, evaluate the information, and make use of the information for their project. All the activities were conducted in a digital setting. They learned to utilize information technology and communicate their idea to the world. Starting from reading the sources, writing the script, and finally making the video, cadets could practice to use their background technical knowledge (their schemata) and integrated it with their English knowledge and skills.

Secondly, by making the vlog, cadets also got the experience to share their knowledge about the topic that they mastered the most. The experience made the activity become meaningful for them. It could enhance their motivation to learn English as well as their technical knowledge about Port and Shipping Management. Uploading the video on YouTube could also provide a meaningful context of learning because it enabled cadets to interact with the viewers of their video. According to Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, individuals can create meaning when they interact with each other and with the environment they live in (Amineh and Asl, 2015). Thus, the use of vlog can enhance students' learning of language and their content knowledge. Other

literature mentions that integrating technology, pedagogy and content knowledge within a classroom is called as TPACK. TPACK is the new framework for teachers to teach the subject matter which integrates three essential aspects which are interrelated each other, they are technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge. Several studies have proved that TPACK approach can benefits student in their teaching and learning process and develop their multimodal literacies (Drajati, et al, 2018). In this digital era, integrating technology in the classroom is something that cannot be avoided because students in the future will face more complicated tasks related to technology.

Thirdly, the project could also activate cadets' critical thinking, creativity, and initiative. During the process of completing the project, cadets worked together with their partners. They had independent discussions and proposed their own problem-solving in relation to the difficulties that they encountered. Thus, cadets would try to find a creative way to solve their problems.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the digital era, young generations face different kinds of challenges compared to the previous generations. Therefore, it is important to equip students with skills that match the current and future condition. English literacy and digital literacy are highly significant for students nowadays in order to be able to conduct their duties in the digital world, especially for ESP students who will work in their professional career soon after they graduate. Therefore, for the cadets of Maritime Polytechnic, this issue is very essentials.

The Vlog Project can be used as one of cadets' assignment to promote their English and Digital Literacies. This project offers many benefits and opportunities for cadets. Cadets can learn to work together in a good collaboration with their partner to organize information and to share their knowledge to the world in a digital setting. They can learn to integrate their background knowledge or content knowledge about Port and Shipping Management with their English knowledge and skills. The project, thus, can promote cadets' English and Digital literacies which are highly needed in this era.

However, when implementing the vlog project for cadets in a Maritime Polytechnic, there were several challenges faced by the teacher. The different level of cadets' proficiency and the lack of opportunity for them to utilize information technology may hamper the process of project completion. Realizing the importance of integrating the English and digital literacies, it is suggested that the institution can give cadets sufficient access to gadgets and internet connections since they are on the first year in order to build their English and Digital literacies from the very beginning of their education. For teachers who are interested in implementing a similar project, it is suggested that they assist their students in the process of completing the vlog and divide the big project into smaller tasks or targets as the scaffolding.

However, it is important to note that this project was conducted in a Maritime Polytechnic which adopts a boarding school system. Cadets studying here have a unique life and characteristics that made the result of the project might not be generalized to other

education institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust the project to suit the needs and the conditions of your institution if you are interested in implementing this project.

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