

Internet-based research: A learning curve in English language learning

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT		
Keywords: <i>Language research, internet, ESUEFL</i>	<i>Internet provides ESL/EFL learners with unlimited opportunities for accessing authentic language. Besides the many sites that provide students with English learning materials where student can learn independently based on their personal needs and inquiries, today, student also come to rely on internet to provide them with accurate linguistic information, e.g. to search for the correct vocabularies or to translate the language. This study surveys how the English language students in STIBA Saraswati Denpasar use the Internet to help them in researching for their English assignments and solving language difficulties which include kinds of tools, their purposes, and their attitudes in using internet. The findings revealed that Google search engine and Google Translate were the most frequently used online tools, and students also found internet to be very useful especially for writing and translation assignment. However, students still need some training to help them make a full and appropriate use of internet.</i>		
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1. Introduction

This decade has seen the growing of internet technology and increasing accessibility of internet especially in most urban parts of Indonesia. It is inarguable that internet has considerable impact in the revolution of the way people communicate and acquiring information. Students especially those in higher education use internet for a wide variety of purposes; social, personal and educational need. Internet also provides foreign language learners with unlimited opportunities for accessing authentic language. Besides the many sites that provide students with English learning materials where student can learn independently based on their personal needs and inquiries, today, student also come to rely on internet to provide them with accurate linguistic information e.g. to search for the vocabularies and to translate the language.

Access to information via the Internet may provide unique opportunities to promote students autonomous learning in the area of ESL beyond what they can learn in the classroom. Krajka (2000) points out that material available on the Internet "belong to the outside world; therefore, they are authentic in contrast with traditional textbooks". His study shows that students can compare their writing e.g., a letter and then compare theirs with sample letters

available online. This is very useful since different kinds of texts usually have different grammatical and stylistic features and sometimes use abundance of formulaic language .e.g., collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, etc. (Ayomi, 2012). Considering that internet can provide access to an enormous database of text, students therefore might use the Internet as corpora together with corpus search tools (concordancers) and search engines (Google) . Conroy (2010) describes this briefly;"the output is referred to as a concordance and can be used by language learners to learn about specific grammatical and lexical patterns in the L2 in a form of data-driven learning". According to Kaur and Hegelheimer (2005, p. 290), this type of data-driven learning can "help students become autonomous learners and also provide them the opportunity to act as researchers". In language teaching, concordance and monolingual text corpora have been used to promote vocabulary building and to explore the grammatical and stylistic features of the text.

Shei (2008) shows a simple way of using Google as corpus as well as concordances. One can check how tightly bound a certain sequence of words is by looking at the number of hints Google generates. Shei uses the example, have been found to be.... The first search of it has generated some three billion hits. The number of hints falls every time additional word added to the phrase; have been generated some 1.8 billion; have been found some 12 million. However, the frequency line, the function of the number of words in a phrase in relation to the number of results generated, remains relatively stable, therefore "the overall fragment may be considered formulaic" (p. 71). Shei exemplifies by comparing two phrases: have been found to be infected, and, have been found to be contaminated. These phrases generated 15,200 and 22,400 hits, respectively, compared to have been found to be polluted which generated only 1,140 hits. Following Shei's reasoning, one could deduce that either of the first two phrases is more tightly bound than have been found to be polluted.

Following that, Little (1997, p. 228) and Fuji (n.d) explain that learners can reshape, reuse or recycle authentic written texts in a whole variety of ways; for example, they can borrow words and phrases from authentic texts to construct sentences of their own. In the field of translation, internet has been proven to be beneficial (Fuji, n.d,) and (Wuttikrikunlaya, 2012). The studies done by Fujii shows a noticeable improvement in the naturalness and accuracy of the Japanese students' translations of scientific texts compared to those using only traditional printed dictionaries. In doing translation, online sources are used to confirm the meaning of the terms and revise the linguistic material in small and manageable units by performing a full-text search and finding the particular word strings in natural text. In addition to that, machine translation such as Google Translate available online is used regularly for translating texts.

Despite the abundance resources found in the Internet. those resources are not likely to be useful unless the students can locate them and know how to use them to enhance their language learning experience. Chinnery (2008) explains a more potential use of Google search engine to find words collocation, by employing punctuation:

"At a basic level, Google, by default, checks for and corrects spelling errors, such that a query for 'cofee' proffers 'Did you mean: coffee: Beyond superficial form, however, learners can

discover meaning by appending a dictionary command to the start of a term (e.g., 'define: coffee'). Google can also focus on usage. The 'define: coffee' command offers several common collocations (e.g., coffee break, Turkish coffee) at the top of the page. Typing into Google Suggest will preview similar collocations. And in using a wildcard command such as 'I drink" coffee'. the asterisk acts as a placeholder for a gap-fill, and results in a range of potential responses. This is also useful for phrasal verbs, such that by typing 'come* with'. learners discover come up with'. 'come away with' and more. Another way to maintain context is to search authentic texts in Google Books, where a search for 'coffee' introduces learners to rich prose describing 'roasted coffee' and 'steaming coffee'."

A survey on the use of online tools among Thai students (Wuttikrikunlaya, 2012) shows that online tools can be used for two purposes; solving language difficulties (online dictionaries, machine translations, and grammar checkers), and searching for contents (search engines and encyclopedias). Fujii (n.d) indicates that most of L2 Japan students did not know how to use some functions such as editing (89%) provided by search engines. In addition, Fujii states that using of search engines motivated L2 Japan students in learning and improving their vocabulary and language skills while translating their assignments.

Studies are widespread about the benefit of using internet or online tools in helping students to "research" in their ISUEFL learning, little is known, however about how Indonesian EFL students use of internet to help them learning English. This study aimed to contribute to the knowledge based on exploring kinds of online tools, purposes, and attitudes of students toward using combination of online tools in their study and later can provide forward criteria for the design of language learning that address those issues. Thus, teachers of English can be informed and help their students to make the most of online tools in researching for linguistic information in the context of English language learning.

2. Research Methodology

The total of 39 students majoring in English language in a foreign language collage in Denpasar participated in this study (Table.1), 56, 41 % of the respondents were female and 43, 58 % of them were males. In terms of GPA scales, most of the respondents (43%) received the range between 2,51-3,00, 28% of the respondents were in the GPA range of 3.01-3.50 and 23% of the respondents were in the GPA range of 3.51-4.00. The subjects were asked to answer the questionnaires regarding frequency, kinds of on line tools used, purposes, and attitudes toward utilizing online internet tools. All participants were selected by convenience sampling because they were studying and learning English on daily basis as part of their study. Before asking the respondents to fill in the questionnaire, the respondents received some explanation about the questionnaire, so that they can fully understand each questions.

3. Findings

The study concluded that all respondents has access to Internet and use internet and online tools for language reference in an independent language learning, improving, and solving their difficulties with English outside their classrooms (Table.2). Most of respondents (51, 2%) frequently use

internet, 23% admitted that they Sometimes use Internet to cope with L2 difficulties and only 12,8% respondents answered with Always. The finding suggested that although students use internet somewhat frequently, they can still maximize the use of Internet to solve language difficulties.

As the students are all majoring in English, this study shows that students use the internet to do their learning and assignments, which are reading, writing, translation and structure. This present study highlighted the use of on line tools to do Translation assignment 71 % compared to the 51 % of Reading and Writing and only 23% for Structure and Grammar assignment (Table.3). As what suggested by Munpru & Wuttikrikunlaya (2013) that in doing translation respondents incorporate many kinds of on line tools (mostly online dictionary, machine translator, search engine and encyclopedia)

This study had shown that when asked about kinds of online tools that students used in solving linguistic problems or help them to do their assignments (Table. 4), they mostly preferred using online dictionaries, search engines and machine translators (77%- 92%). A survey such as that conducted by Zeng in and Kacar (2011) have shown that academia respondents also preferred use these tools to cope with their translation. However, the present study indicated that there were slightly different amount of using on line dictionaries and machine translations among the subjects. Four students answered that they used on line dictionary but they check Google Translate in the name of online tools used. This suggested that students use machine translator in this case Google Translator as dictionary. The present study showed that half of the respondents had never used grammar checkers to deal with their language assignments. In addition, the result showed the usage of the subjects with encyclopedias and search engine for searching contents.

It can be seen from the data (Table. 5) that most respondents used Oxford dictionary, followed by Cambridge dictionary for solving language difficulties. Students also used other kinds of dictionaries. However when asked about other online dictionaries they probably used besides the four names given in the questioner, two students wrote Google translators as on line dictionary. This is probably because Google translate can also used as bilingual dictionary, that they can insert entries both from Indonesian to English or vice versa. It's also fast and easy to use. Though only 77% respondents admitted using machine translation, all of them (100%) checked Google translator in the question about kinds of machine translators used. Students may have known the name of the tool more than other online tools presented to them while responding to the questionnaire. A possible explanation that respondents do not add other names of online tools used and checked for famous on line tools such as Oxford, Cambridge, Google, and Wikipedia may be because of their famous.

The respondents used on line tools for consultation outside of the classroom as what presented in Table 6. The findings seemed to suggest that the respondents used online dictionaries in order to translate words from English to Indonesian and vice versa, and also to check meaning and unknown word. Thus, it seems that vocabulary is one of the problems of students of English as a foreign language. However, only 10% of respondents used online dictionary for checking word usage. This is the skill of using dictionary that should be enforced by the teacher, as Nation (1990:31) put it "What exactly does it mean to know a word?" In order to be able to master a word, students must know its 'form'; 'position'; 'function'; and "meaning". Unfortunately, some of these aspects tend to be given more

prominence in the foreign language classroom, like "form and "meaning"; while others are hardly ever mentioned, which seems to be the case of "position" "grammatical patterns" and "collocation".

In relation to the use of machine translation, the data from the present study suggested that the respondents used machine translation to translate at paragraph and phrasal level (62.12%). They seemed to just copy the whole paragraph to the machine and then convert it to L2, when doing writing and translation, to be later checked and revised. Of course, as described in the previous table, some student used machine translators especially Google Translation as dictionary. Regarding to the use of search engine and encyclopedia, it appeared that besides using them for searching of information (71 %), the present study showed that search engines and encyclopedias offered others functions. Those include checking of word usage, unknown words, find synonym and wording. Furthermore, when consulted problems of language, respondents also used them for checking of grammatical error, collocation and verbs. This is in line with the study of Acar, et.al (2012) which reports that search engine enables beginner ESL writers to notice and improve grammatical mistakes or unnatural expressions easily by checking the number of results each search query generates and choosing the word block with the highest number. Moreover encyclopedia such as Wikipedia provides "bilingual lexicon" since some entries are translated into various languages.

In their usage of search engine to check wording and grammatical error, however, only 22% of respondents said that they know how to use punctuation marks especially quotation marks to make the searching generates more precise results as what described by Chinnery (2008). The availability of abundance kinds of texts on the internet is very useful for students to learn how to write different kinds of text by finding reference for the text structure and language style. However, only 43% of students in the survey said that they consulted the text available on line as comparison in writing their assignments.

When asked about the respondent's attitudes toward using internet almost all but one student found Internet to be useful and helpful, mostly because of their convenience, fastness and efficiency. By typing and clicking they are provided with related results. Some students said that internet can provide almost all information they needed and helped them to find English references without having to buy too many books and at the same time, saving time. A student also added that internet enable them to learn anywhere outside the classroom. Moreover, some students admitted internet provide them with examples of sentences and English language in use that can enrich their language knowledge. This evident also similar to Zengin and Karcar (2011) who proposed that the subjects tended to use online dictionaries and search engines when comparing with paper dictionaries. Zengin and Kacar (2011) stated that L2 used of online dictionaries and search engines help L2 learners in order to "correct accuracy of style, and structure" consulted difficulties of language. However, some students pointed out some weakness of using internet, for example they mentioned that the result generated by Google Translate and internet sometimes incorrect and misleading and one students said that Internet is like a jungle of information and somehow make him lost.

4. Discussion

Considering the potential of the internet that has been discussed by some researchers and that the fact that students found it useful, teacher should therefore continue to give training and develop activities to help language learners learn to research on the Internet and use the online tools available to broaden their knowledge of English. Teachers should not assume that language learners can use search engines and other online tools by themselves without some training. As Wu, Franken and Witten (2009) noted potential pitfalls when using the web as a corpus. For one, most of what is on the web is not subjected to any editorial process, hence ungrammatical language will most likely be encountered at some point. Herrington (n.d) added that "the relationship between web searching and language knowledge and suggest that students' problems may be caused as much by a lack of linguistic knowledge as by not knowing what to do. The problem presented by Herrington may also be applicable to other use of online tools such as Google Translate. Students might use the information they get unwisely by carelessly quoting paragraph or phrases for their writing and using the translation from Google translate without appropriate editing.

Based on the result of the survey and the previous studies regarding the use of internet in ESL/ EFL learning, some point of training to improve students' use of internet are as follow: the use of search engine to search and select appropriate content and as well using it as grammar checker, and concordance by for example employing good "keywords" and punctuation marks, the ethic to use and quote the information they get in the internet, and how to use and maximize other online tools such as dictionary and machine translation especially Google Translate.

5. Conclusion

The findings provided a picture of Indonesian undergraduate students majoring in English reflect to using of online tools as independent language learning, improving, and solving their language difficulties. The study shows that undergraduate English students use internet frequently to solve language difficulties for a variety of learning subject especially writing and translation. They found internet to be helpful, practical and easy to use. Students use internet especially for consulting words and vocabulary. However, some students pointed out some weakness of using internet, for example they mentioned that the sometimes the English language available on line sometimes grammatically incorrect and misleading and one student said that Internet is like a jungle of information. Without knowing how to search and select appropriate information in the Internet, students can be confused and lost. Thus, it appears training for students who use, or want to use the internet to support their language learning would be useful.

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