

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTED SELF ACCESS LANGUAGE LEARNING (SALL)

Meita Lukitawati Sujatna¹

ABSTRACT

Students need a lot of self-exposure in fulfilling the job competition, and English has still been a big issue in Indonesia. It leaves a big question 'Why does it takes so long to learn English and yet we still get unsatisfactory results?' It becomes a handicap for those who want to be involved in global market.

Learning using a conventional method is not popular anymore.

The paradigm has changed, namely from the teacher-centered to the learner-centered approach. Using Information Technology (IT) based equipments as supporting media has become one of the ways to improve quality of language exposure for the individual student as well as students' experience in the classroom.

The use of the computer is unavoidable since it can play a very important role in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process. As IT develops and becomes closer to people's daily life, the demand to use computer and IT for learning and teaching purposes becomes stronger. In this paper we share our experience in developing a Self Access Center in Widayatama University and we propose this as an alternative method to improve student's learning independency.

Keywords

IT, SALL, SAC, Language Exposure.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Development of Foreign Language Teaching especially English, in this era of globalization and communication has grown rapidly. Conventional methods such as Lecturer-Centered learning is changing into Student-Centered learning. Students can not just sit waiting for the transfer of information from the teacher but also must play an active role in improving their knowledge.

These days there are many ways/methods available to improve the learning process both in-class or outside, individually or collectively. One of the most common methods is the adoption of Information Technology (IT) in the learning process. This is in line with the fact that learners today are getting familiar with computers earlier than their parents.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The purpose of language teaching has changed a lot from time to time. Linguists, for example Allwright [1] and Kumaradivellu [2] criticized that the model of Teaching English has shifted from improving learning to improving methods.

This paper proposes an effective and efficient alternative method to improve the ability of students' in learning independently.

Educational conditions and facilities supported by technology in Indonesia are extremely heterogeneous, ranging from those institutions that use conventional methods to very modern ones.

Inevitably, every educational institution must compete to improve the methods and educational facilities to support their students in pursuing job in the future, especially those candidates who are willing to work. Educational institutions should prepare graduates who are ready to compete in the real world.

Lack of English competence is often still a handicap for our students. Learning English at school since primary school to university level is not a guarantee for the students to be able to absorb and use English optimally. Most of the time both learners and teachers as well as the curriculums are not in their best condition. They are constrained by the many limitations, such as time and opportunity to practice as an individual. The situation is worsened in classes with large numbers of students. Many of the students are lacking in motivation, they simply learn English only because they have to, not because they need to or know what the benefits are. They have never been in a situation where they are forced to use English. How then can we encourage our students to learn and to communicate properly? Therefore, to encourage them we should be more innovative in supporting and providing conditions for effective and efficient learning.

Stephen Krashen[3] pointed out two independent systems of second language performance as cited by Priowirjanto [4]:The 'acquired system or **acquisition**' is the language performances (language acquisition) gained naturally and subconsciously, which is like a child who is learning his first language, the speaker on this system does not only focus on the utterances but also its meaning, while in the 'learned system' or **learning** is the language performance gained consciously in the form of formal instructions, such as the grammar lesson that we are achieving in school.

Both systems should take place at school. It depends on the teacher's skills and creativity to combine them. The use of technology in SAC should be able to facilitate and to enhance Self Access Language Learning. Unlike in Indonesian context, the use of Technology, in this case computers in Self Access Language Learning (SALL) may not be a very phenomenal. In some developed countries. It has been applied in the early 1960s. The problem is how to make benefit of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language teaching which is also known as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Learner autonomy or learner independence has been a central issue in discussions of language learning in distance education. Rose Paul as cited by Chynthia J. White and Priowirjanto [4] pointed out that the most important criterion for success in distance learning should relate to learner independence and that the learners should be responsible for his or her own learning, that is by doing the Self Access Language Learning (SALL) at Self Access Centre (SAC).

Tarjana [5] in her paper about 'Establishing Self Access Centre' quoted that the paradigm has shifted towards Lecturer Autonomy

in Self-Access Language Learning (SALL). The above principles have emerged from this paradigm shift, namely the shift from the conventional teacher-centered to the learner-centered approach. In this approach learners are expected to "be responsible for their success in learning" as the title Self Access Language Learning (SALL) implies. Whereas in the former approach learners are more likely to be passive and submissive to the teacher, in the latter they need to be active in the decision- making of their learning. Holec cited by Tarjana [5] states that learner responsibility is a necessary requirement for self directed learning. He identifies two kinds of learners, namely static learners who only go through the learning program with or without the help of the teacher, and dynamic learners. who are more flexible to develop their learning progress as the program develops (in Gardner & Miller, 1999: 8) [6]. This implies that learners (and teachers) need to change their perspectives, strategies and roles in the new paradigm.

There are different approaches to help learners to move from teacher dependence towards autonomy such as in self-directed, self-instructional, individualized instruction, independent learning and self-access learning. Each approach encourages learners to get and pursue their personal goals, and to take an active role in autonomous learning

Individuals, particularly adult learners, have different needs, purposes, motivation, interests and study habits. Therefore there is a need for some degrees of autonomy. Broadly speaking learners potentials for achieving their learning objectives depend on such factors as their personality, their goals, the institutional philosophy and cultural context. In this matter, self-access is "one way to promote autonomy". As a matter of fact, among the above approaches, self-access is likely the most commonly used one to encourage autonomy (Gardner & Miller, 1999:8) [6].

Some Characteristics of Self-Access Method
Self-access method is quite flexible. It can be used on a large scale or a small scale implementation. It caters for all levels of learning. It can function for different degrees of independence, involving both teacher-directed learners and autonomous ones. It can involve individual learners, pairs and larger peer-groups. It can be carried out in the classroom or in a specially designed SAC.

The aims of this paper are

1. Introducing Self Access Language Learning (SALL) as an alternative ways of developing an effective and efficient learning process
2. Using Technology for Self Access Centre (SAC)'s material as one of the alternative media in developing learners' ability to learn independently
3. Encouraging English language teachers to enrich the teaching mechanism by integrating technology to the current teaching method

3. MODEL ANALYSIS, DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The independence of learner becomes an interesting issue related to distance learning. Paul Rose as quoted by Priowirjanto (2009) [4] explained that the criteria for success of distant education (outside class) must relate to the independence of learning and

that learners must take the responsibility for their learning needs, and the Self Access Centre (SAC) is a very appropriate place to support Self Access Language Learning (SALL) in achieving learner independence.

3.1. Self Access Centre

Self Access Centre (SAC) is a learning environment where learners have access to a variety of learning resources. SAC is a means of self-study/co-curricular activities, especially for Self Access Language Learning (SALL) for students who find difficulties or wish to deepen and develop English language skills beyond the acquisition of material in classrooms. SAC which is integrated to technology will support the achievement of autonomy. In SAC, the learner is able to access various learning resources. Learners can select and use materials with or without the help of teachers or anyone else. By utilizing suitable materials provided, learners are expected to make improvement in their learning process

3.2. How To Develop a SAC

This learning model is still a relatively new concept for some learners, therefore, the material needs to be provided 'ready' to create an active interaction between the learner with the condition of the SAC. Each person may have their own uniqueness in doing so. The interaction between the two parties can be illustrated in figure 1 (Gardner and Miller, [6])

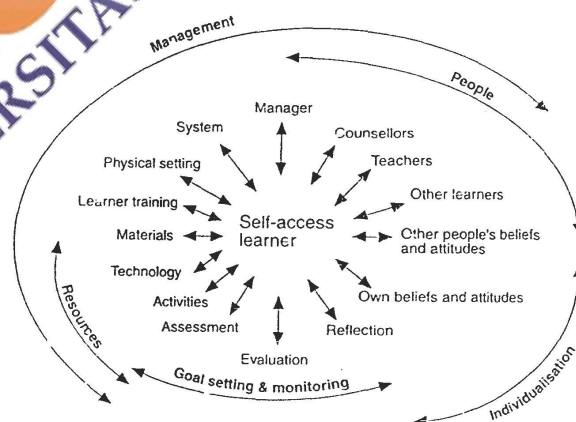


Figure 1
Background to Self Access Language Learning

Rationale for Setting up a Self-Access Center (SAC):

The rationale for setting a SAC originates from several principles of individualized instructional planning developed in the 1960s. George and Gagne cited by Tarjana [5], Sheerin [7], for instance, mentioned the followings:

1. Learning is a life-long process.

In the process of development, human beings are engaged in learning most of their life-times. Each individual needs to take responsibility for his own learning in order to become a representative member of the society.

2. Instructional planning must be for the individuals.
Instructional activities should be oriented toward the individual human development. Instructions are aimed to help individuals to learn. They should conform to the individual needs and study habits, their psychological, personal and motivational differences.
3. Learning takes place in both long- or short-range phases.
Instructions can be done by means of setting up separate learning tasks, which demand learners to put time, effort and intellectual challenge to accomplish them. Learning will expectedly take place after each task has been completed.
4. Learning takes place when materials are systematically designed.

Learning must be planned rather than haphazard. Although learning may occur in a natural situation without the imposition of any plan, a better nurturing condition for learning, challenging them in "an effort after meaning" situation, will enable learners to use and develop their talents to the fullest degree

3.3. The Role Of Technology And Its Implementation At SAC

The IT can be applied in the delivery of all materials used at SAC's activities. Some examples of IT usage at SAC are:

1. Computers as media for storing data, operating the software and also as communication tools.
2. Internet as media that can link the users to sites or to other users like other learners or teachers.
3. Software, TV, CD, DVD and camera

All activities that could be used at SAC refer to the four Language Skills, namely Reading, Speaking, Listening (Watching), and Writing, like below:

- a. *Reading/Study Corner*
Reading sources that are available not only in the form of hardcopy but also in the form of programs or software that are installed on the computer. It comprises: Predicting, intensive reading, short text, comprehension
- b. *Listening Corner*
All computers equipped with a mike and a headset that enable learners to practice the pronunciation and listening skills without disturbing other learners. It comprises: Intensive Listening, true/false questions, comprehension, matching exercises, information gap.
- c. *Computer/Multimedia Corner*
Besides the software installed, all of the computers or the workstations are connected directly to the internet, making it easier for learners to access the language sites provided. Here, IT becomes a compulsory to support the activities. The language sites might include facilities such as: Games, Tests, simulation, vocabularies, grammar, and writing.
- d. *Leisure Reading Corner*
The place is designed by using the individual approach, where each learner has different needs, so this place is provided for those who feel more comfortable with this situation.

- e. *Video Corner*
One of the SAC materials available in the form of movies. The learner can practice listening and speaking well in this section at the same time. It comprises: Comprehensions, summarizing, predicting, interpreting.
- f. *Speaking Corner*. In this section the learners are also able to make some small conversation/discussions with instructors or native speakers. It comprises: Pronunciations, sound, stress, games, problem solving activities, communication tasks

3.4. The Effectiveness And Efficiency of SALL at SAC

Effectiveness

Because the learner can determine themselves what they need and like, they can achieve a more optimal learning process. Self Assessment and Evaluation guided by the class teacher/SAC attendants are provided to show the learners' progress.

Efficiency

The study materials are available in various duration of 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30 minutes, so the break time between classes can be used to have some exposure. It is very efficient because there is no need to spend money for the course. If they find some difficulties while working with the materials, learners can be assisted by SAC Attendance

3.5. For Whom Is SAC?

Generally, SAC is for the entire academic community who want to improve English language skills, and for those learners who have difficulty in class and need extra learning. Especially, SAC serves English learners / prospective graduates who need to practice and prepare themselves to be more ready for the real world

3.6. Facilities required and Services provided by SAC

- **Learning Facilities (Hardware, Software, Furniture):**
 - a. Resources/References
 - b. Audio/video cassettes*
 - c. SAC materials*
 - d. Computer
 - e. SAC Programs (video show/speaking club/seminar/contest/outdoor activities)*
 - f. *Administration desk*
 - g. *Reading/Study Corner*
 - h. *Listening Corner*
 - i. *Computer/Multimedia Corner*
 - j. *Carpeted Leisure Reading Corner*
 - k. *Video Corner*
 - l. *Speaking Corner*
- **Services:**
 1. Courses (Conversation class, English class etc)
 2. Translation Services
 3. Text Book Reading

*These materials can be tailor made or downloaded from websites

4. LEARNERS TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT

Tarjana (2002) [4] said that learners are the SAC users and most of them are unfamiliar with the SAC learning approach. They need to be trained to learn towards autonomy in the proper manner, so that learning will take place as planned. With little knowledge about the SAC function, many SAC users seem to gain little or hardly any study progress at the SAC. Depending on the individual personality and attitude, there are many cases where learners are too shy to reveal their shortcomings and prefer to fall back to teacher dependence. In this matter, learners need some training to enable them to set up their objectives, to plan the learning program, to consult any problem they encounter, and to self-assess their progress.

Some issues in learners management for self-access learning include the followings:

- providing orientation sessions
- assisting learner to define their needs analysis
- encouraging learners to make study plan
- providing pathways through materials.
- providing workshops (such as in the application of technology)
- providing counseling services
- assigning learners to a tutor
- forming study groups of learners
- recording attendance
- doing (self)-assessments
- encouraging learners to report of what they have done

4.1. Management of SAC

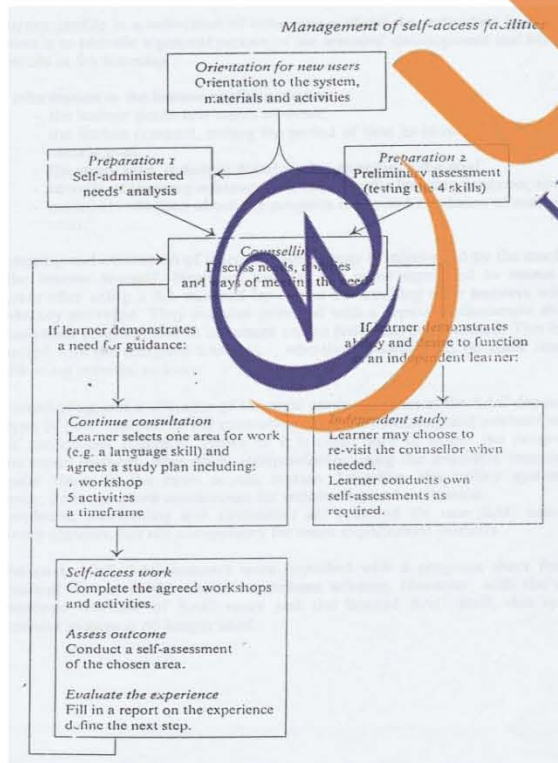


Figure 2. The management of SAC can be summarized as the above diagram

4.2 Monitoring And Evaluation SAC

In the conventional classroom, monitoring and evaluation of learners progress are usually measured based on their achievement test scores. This is difficult to carry out in Self Access (SA) learning. Therefore SA learning needs a different approach to monitor the learner's progress, namely by providing information on a learner profile.

A **learner profile** is a collection of information about the individual learner. The purpose is to provide a general picture of the learners' development and his future potentials in SA learning.

The information in the learner profile includes:

- the learner needs and wants analysis,
- the learner contract, stating the period of time he intends to achieve a certain goal,
- the study plan, indicating detailed plan to achieve the goal,
- records of learning achievement, showing the learning progress, and
- personal reflection about the progress made and condition of materials used.

Monitoring and evaluation of learner progress may be conducted by the teacher or by the learner himself. Beginner learners are often reminded to assess their progress after using a SA material by means of checking their answer with the answer key provided. They are also provided with a separate assessment sheet to indicate their progress and to comment on the problems encountered. This is then consulted with the assigned SAC tutor, who then recommends on some remedial or follow-up material to learn.

The monitoring and evaluation of learners' study progress at the SAC depends on the type of SAC system. At the controlled access, monitoring and evaluation need to be carried out regularly. However it is often hard to assess the progress of autonomous learners, who study independently using the available resources at irregular times in the open access system. Likewise, the trolley system, for instance, does not allow much room for monitoring and evaluation.

To rephrase, monitoring and evaluation are required for new SAC users and beginner learners, but not compulsory for more experienced learners.

5. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SALL AT SAC IN WIDYATAMA UNIVERSITY

One of the reasons why students visit SAC in Widyatama is related to the Widyatama Development Program (WDP) that requires the graduates to obtain a minimum TOEFL score of 475 for students of English Department and 450 for students of non-English department. With various software and printed references for the preparation of the test available in SAC, the visitors were able to practice their skills and monitor their progress. Internet connection allowed the students to access additional materials.

To date, most of the visitors are from the English department who needed to enhance their language skills and complete class assignments. Other users made use of the center to seek materials for their English-language related assignments. The monitoring and evaluation are mostly done by their teachers and occasionally by the SAC attendants.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

6.1. Conclusions

An IT-supported Self Access Centre should be considered as an important facility in a curriculum that bolsters independent language learning. It serves as a useful facility to allow a certain degree of autonomy for the learners to augment their language skills and conduct the learning activities synchronously or asynchronously.

Materials in the digital form can easily be updated for the purpose of procuring reliable information as well as methods of learning. Also, they can be adapted to the needs of the individuals in order to allow self-pacing, progression, and monitoring.

With the technology available, it is possible to establish a SAC as a less rigid yet efficient and effective teaching learning experience.

6.2. Suggestions

Although the use of technology may be considered to be costly and time consuming in the preparation of the services provided, SAC is relatively flexible towards the needs and ability of the institution. Thus an institution may want to set up a smaller scale facility and gradually increase the capacity.

Teachers may also take advantage of the facility by assigning students to complete assignments at the center with the assistance of the administrator in terms of coordination and monitoring mechanisms

7. REFERENCES

- [1]. Alwright, D. (1991). *The Death of the Method (working Paper # 10)* England: The Exploratory Practice Centre, the University of Lancaster.
- [2]. Kumaravadivelu, B (2006). *Understanding Language Teaching: from Method to Postmethod (2nd printing)* New York: Routledge.
- [3]. Krashen, Stephen, http://www.sdkrashen.com/SL_Acquisition_and_Learning/.pdf
- [4]. Priowirjanto, Gatot Hari & Aritonang, Mangasa, 2009, *Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Enhancing Language Learning? ASA CALL Conference, Indonesia*
- [5]. Tarjana, M. Sri Samiah and Sri Kustati S. 2006. *Establishing Self Access Centre*, Solo, Indonesia.
- [6]. Gardner, David and Lindsay Miller. 1999. *Establishing Self-Access*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, The United Kingdom.
- [7]. Sheerin, Susan, 1989, *Self-Access*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.