



Strengthening Vocational Students' English Competence Through Technology-Supported Instruction

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received November 28, 2025

Revised December 12, 2025

Accepted December 14, 2025

Available online December 17, 2025

Kata Kunci :

Pembelajaran Digital, Siswa Vokasi, Teknologi Kelas, Motivasi Belajar, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

Keywords:

Digital Learning, Vocational Students, Classroom Technology, Learning Motivation, English Instruction

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berfokus pada pengkajian bagaimana teknologi mendukung pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dalam konteks khusus sekolah menengah kejuruan. Dengan menggunakan desain campuran (mixed-methods), data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara untuk menangkap persepsi dan pengalaman belajar siswa. Peserta penelitian meliputi 20 siswa kelas XI dan satu guru bahasa Inggris dari sekolah menengah kejuruan swasta di Batam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengungkapkan antusiasme yang tinggi terhadap pembelajaran berbasis teknologi, terutama dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis dan berpartisipasi dalam aktivitas berkelompok. Teknologi juga dilaporkan meningkatkan motivasi dan partisipasi, meskipun tantangan seperti keterbatasan perangkat dan peraturan sekolah juga dicatat. Penelitian ini menyoroti kebutuhan akan integrasi yang hati-hati terhadap alat digital dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah kejuruan dan merekomendasikan penelitian lebih lanjut yang melibatkan siswa yang lebih muda yang mempersiapkan diri untuk pendidikan tinggi.

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on examining how technology supports English language learning in the specific context of vocational high schools. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews to capture students' perceptions and learning experiences. The research participants included 20 eleventh-grade students and one English teacher from a private vocational high school in Batam. The findings show that students expressed high enthusiasm for technology-based learning, especially in improving their writing skills and participating in group-based activities. Technology was also reported to increase motivation and participation, although challenges such as device limitations and school regulations were also noted. This research highlights the need for careful integration of digital tools in English language learning in vocational schools and recommends further research involving younger students preparing for higher education. The implication of this research is that technology can enhance English learning in vocational high schools by increasing students' motivation, participation, and skill development especially in writing and collaborative tasks.

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern times, communication is at the heart of nearly every profession. While general English language skills are valuable for everyday life, they don't always meet the specific communication needs of specialized professions. This is where English for Specific Purposes (ESP) comes into play, particularly in vocational high schools, where students are training for specific careers. ESP is a branch of English language teaching that tailors content and lessons to the needs of specific industries, such as healthcare, engineering, IT, and hospitality. According to (Nurhasanah & Kurniawan, 2023), ESP teaching and learning based on the school program is needed in vocational high schools to improve English language proficiency.

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into education has revolutionized teaching and learning across the globe especially in vocational high schools, where students are trained in specific trades and professions, and stand to benefit greatly from ICT tools and applications. In a world that is becoming increasingly digitized, vocational students need more than just technical expertise in their field—they must also be equipped with the digital skills necessary to navigate modern workplaces. Based on the study of (Pratama et al., 2020), ICT implementation in vocational high schools has made the teaching-learning process more creative and beneficial for both English teachers and students.

The integration of ESP with ICT in vocational high schools is more than just a trend—it's a necessity. Students in vocational education are training to enter professions that require specialized knowledge and skills, which often include a strong command of both technical vocabulary and the ability to use modern digital tools. In summary, ICT in ESP is undoubtedly beneficial in modern teaching and learning process.

Unfortunately, implementing ICT in classrooms sparks some challenges among students. Challenges such as limited technology, school rules, or even parents' permission could potentially hinder ICT implementation in classrooms. Challenges associated with ICT integration in schools include distractions, excessive usage, exposure to false information, data theft, reduced human contact, and cyberbullying (Ogenyi et al., 2023). The challenges are not only limited to students, but also the teachers. School teachers face challenges in implementing ICT in teaching STEM subjects due to lack of computer access, internet connectivity, and ICT textbooks, as well as insufficient administrative support (Kibirige, 2023). In summary, both the students and teachers could face challenges while in class. The gap in this research is the limited understanding of how technology supports English language learning specifically in vocational high schools, particularly in Indonesia. Previous studies mostly focus on general secondary schools or higher education, leaving vocational contexts underexplored.

2. METHODS

This research used mixed methods for data gathering. Researchers chose this method to examine the process more thoroughly without any bias towards the teacher or students. Incorporating quantitative and qualitative data in mixed or multi-method studies can dramatically increase the accuracy and quality of analysis and conclusions (Vivek & Nanthagopan, 2021). The data was collected by conducting questionnaires as the main data and interviews as the supporting. The research was conducted in one of the private vocational high schools in Batam. Researchers chose this site because the researchers already familiar the school. The participants were chosen because all students learn English subject as preparation for internship work. The research involves 20 grade 11 students and 1 English teacher as sample for the research.

For the data gathering methods, the questionnaires were chosen because of the efficiency of the method. It was chosen because it allows researchers to gather data from a wide sample efficiently and in a relatively short time. After giving questionnaires, researcher conduct interviews from a sample of the participant and the teacher. The interviews then recorded using voice recorder as proof and Interviews were chosen due to the method aims to explore in-depth insights, understand complex phenomena, or obtain detailed personal experiences. Interviews allow researchers to gain deeper insights into participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The data gathered from the questionnaire then is sorted out manually and is made into charts by Microsoft Excel. After the data sortation, researcher process the data to determine what skills does the student needed and what learning materials that suitable for the students.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research involves 20 grade 11 students and 1 English teacher in a private vocational high school in Batam, Indonesia. Only the students were given questionnaires and interviews while the teacher only be given interviews. The questionnaires focused on students' perception on the English teaching in class. This includes the perception of the method that the teacher used while teaching, and the activities that the students already learned and implemented in English class whether inside of the class or outside.

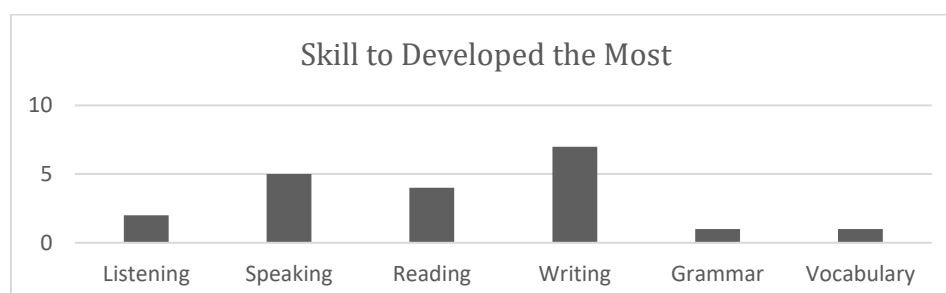


Chart 1. Skills that Students Wanted to Develop the Most

From the chart, it shows that most students wanted to develop their writing skills in class.

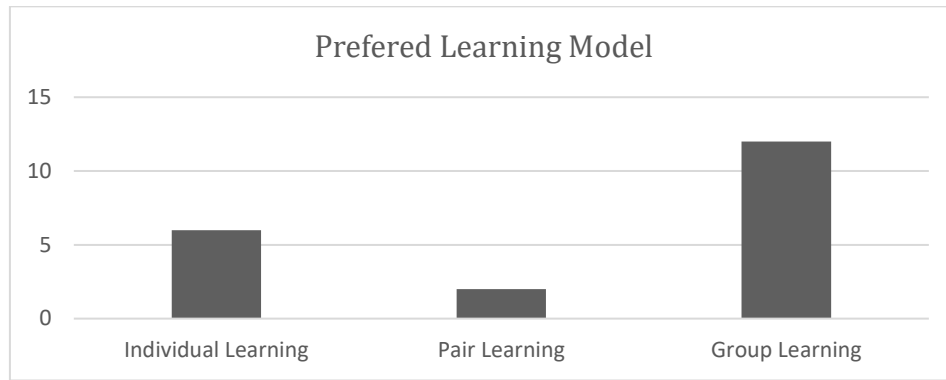


Chart 2. Learning Model that Students Preferred in Class Teaching

This chart shows that most students preferred group learning as learning model in English class learning process.

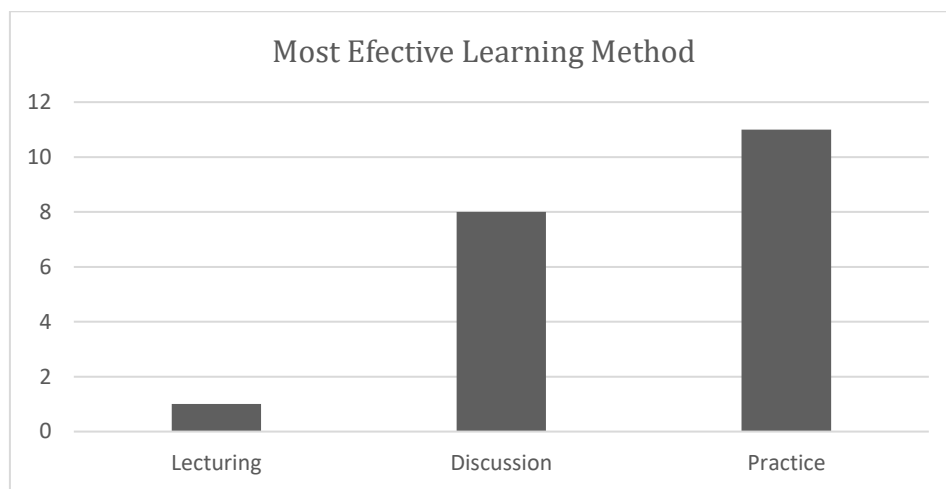


Chart 3. Students' View on the Most Effective Learning Method

Students view that using practice methods is the most effective method in learning.

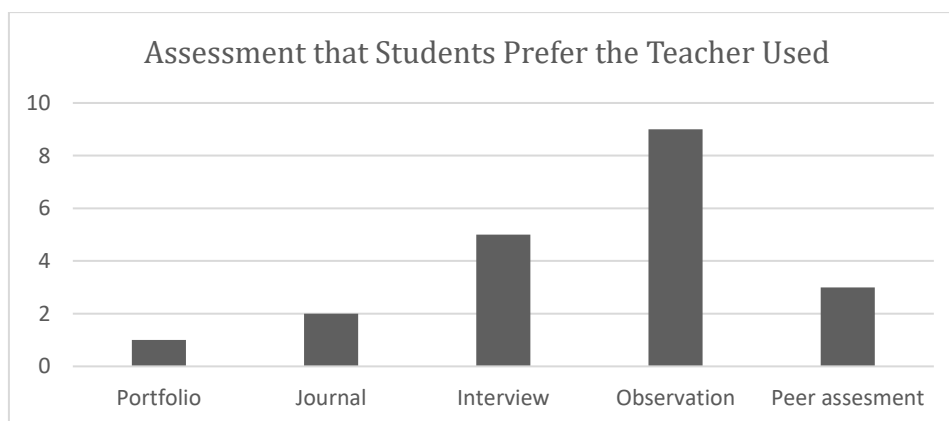


Chart 4. Assessment that Students Prefer Teachers to Use in Class

Most students preferred observation assessment that teachers used in the classroom.



Chart 5. Most Helpful Activities to Improving English for Students Major

From the chart, activities such as conversation is the most helpful activity to improving students' English skills related to their major.

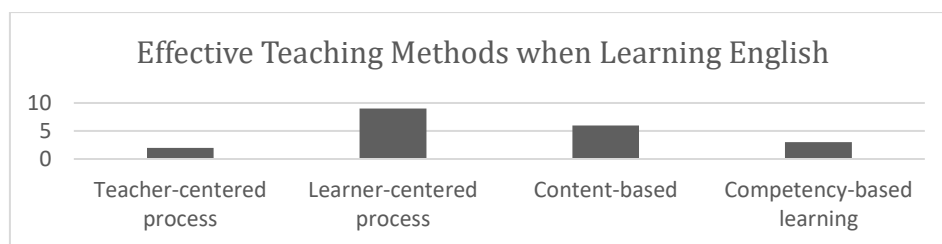


Chart 6. Effective Teaching Methods when Learning English in Class

Based on the chart, students view that the learner-centered process methods is the most effective method to use while learning English.

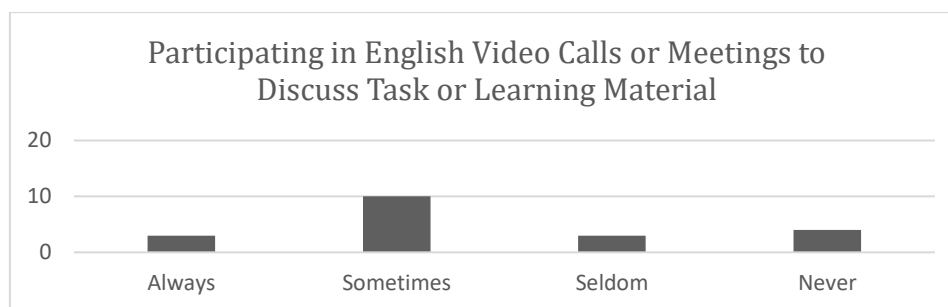


Chart 7. Students' Participation on Video Calls to Discuss English Tasks

From this chart, it shows that most students sometimes took video calls to discuss English assignments or tasks.

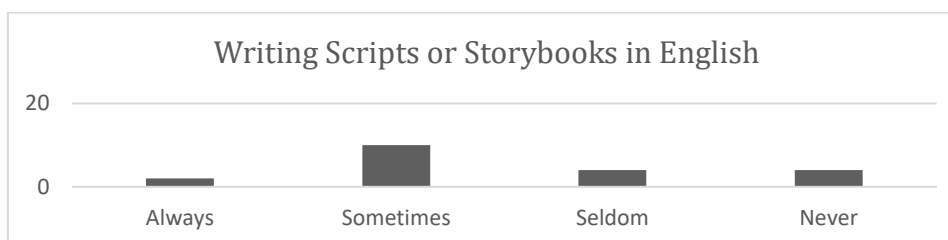


Chart 8. Students' Occurrence on Writing Scripts or Storybook Using English

According to this chart, most students sometimes writing scripts or storybook using English whether its assignments, or only as a hobby.

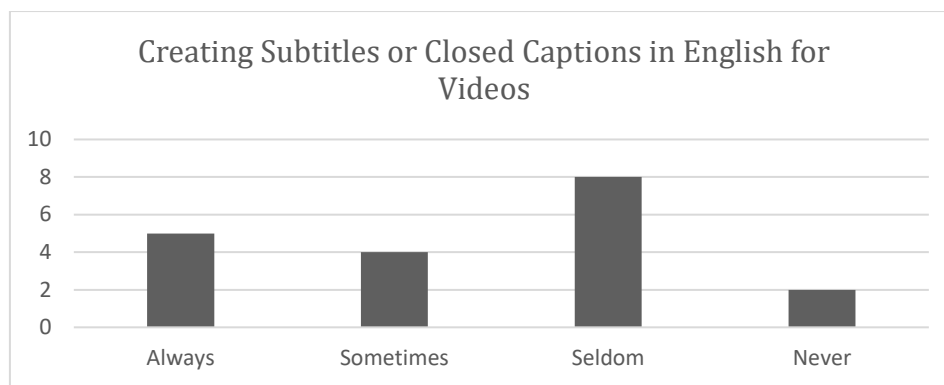


Chart 9. Students Writing Captions or Subtitle in English Videos

Based on this chart, most students didn't have much opportunity to create captions or subtitles in English videos.

Based on the interviews conducted from 3 students as a sample, all students have the same opinion regarding the students' viewpoint on English subject. The 3 students will be named student A, B, and C respectively based on the order they got interviewed. Student A stated that writing skills is the most important skills in English learning. Student B also stated that writing is the most important, while student C stated that speaking is the most important skill. Regarding their future job, student A reveals that working with foreigners outside of Indonesia, student B also stated to work with foreigner, but student C stated that speaking skill is the most important compared to writing skill. Students C used speaking skills to make it easier to find work. Student A, B, C agree that learners-based process is the most important learning process.

Discussion

Based on the results, writing is the most important skills to improve in English subject. Writing skills are crucial for the development of different language and metacognitive skills (Sheronovna, 2021; Costeleanu, 2024). This resulted in most students believing that grammar practice is the most helpful activity to improve writing skills. Students preferred group learning as learning model used in classroom because it encourages students to collaborate with their peers to solve assignments or tasks. Using group learning methods can improve student learning outcomes and learning experiences (Husein & Syah, 2020). As opposed to (Chen et al., 2020; Song & Elftman, 2024) stated that static grouping in collaborative learning results in disadvantages to students. It comes down to the teachers' approach whether the method is a success or failure.

Every student that has been interviewed has stated that English is important for their future. English language proficiency is important for personal and career development (Akther, 2022). Student A and student B wanted to develop English skills to be able to work with foreigners. (Teryokhin et al., 2023) find that English is a universal tool for international professional communication, facilitating communication and increasing career success. Student C stated that by using English speaking skills, it will make finding job easier compared to using writing skills. From the study of (Uong & Vu, 2023), English speaking skills are considered the most important to master due to of the primary mode of international communication. It can be said that speaking skills is important for English language learners to improve their communication skills and achieve success in their careers.

Implementing ICT in ESP class improves students' motivation in learning. When students were given instructions to pick up their phone from the school admission, they are eager and excited to follow the lesson. Integrating ICT tools and interactive activities in ESP instruction promotes students' communication skills and addresses traditional problems with traditional methods (Keshtiarast et al., 2022). Unfortunately, a different opinion comes from (BEŠIĆ & VUKAŠINOVIĆ, 2023) which stated the application of ICT tools in teaching ESP does not lead to significant progress in student achievement compared to traditional teaching methods in the context of hybrid learning. It can be simplified that traditional teaching such as face-to-face teaching between teachers and students in class.

4. CONCLUSION

It is no doubt that ESP combined with ICT is an important aspect in learning. Nowadays, students are encouraged to bring smartphones or laptops to school to find the necessary learning material that was unavailable in the textbook. Teachers should support and trust students with their gadgets to smooth out

the process of integrating ICT into classrooms without any problems. Other researchers are suggested to conduct research on ICT in English subject focusing on other skills beside writing.

5. ACKNOWLEDGE

Researchers would like to express our gratitude to Universitas Internasional Batam for providing the necessary resources and funding for this research. Without their support, this article would not have been possible.

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