

# The Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Teaching English Writing Skills

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## Abstract

Although there are many studies showing positive effects of using Information and Communication Technology (IT) in the process of teaching and learning in general, the use of IT in teaching writing skills English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are still not highly recommended. This study tries to find findings on using IT in teaching English writing skills at high schools in Vietnam. This article only reports one part of the findings from a major project carried out at secondary schools in Vietnam in five areas of Sai Gon. This study only focused on data collected from four English teachers at a secondary school person interviewed by researchers. This study revealed that the use of IT in teaching very low English writing. The advantages of using IT have been reported to attract students' attention and facilitate student learning process, help improve student vocabulary and promote meaningful learning. Disadvantages found include difficult classroom control, distraction and student tendency to use short forms in their text. It is also revealed that teachers are often weak in managing problems and planning activities concerning the use of IT in teaching English writing. The results of this study are expected to provide insights Ministry of Education in Vietnam to improve low IT use in teaching English writing skills.

**Keywords:** Information and Communication Technology (ICT), English as a Second Language (ESL), Writing, Teaching, Learning

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## 1. Introduction

Since the introduction of the first computer system in the 1960s, various measures and plans have been put in place was developed to enhance the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in all education fields. The concept of IT in the education fields refers to systems that allow collection, manipulation, management, access, and convey information in various forms. The first plan emphasizes that ICT recommended for all students, which means that IT is used as a supportive factor to close the existing digital gap between the second plan addresses the function of IT in education as a teaching and learning tool. This plan also emphasize the use of ICT as an educational tool to collect and transmit information. The third plan emphasis on the use of ICT to improve the productivity, effectiveness and efficiency of the management system. In this plan, IT can be heavily used to mechanize and update work processes such as financial management, lessons Information system planning and management. This study is specifically aimed at investigating the perceptions of English teacher at Vietnam high school on the use of IT in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) writting skills.

## 1. Literature review

Writing is an important aspect of language learning that addresses word coding. According to (Yunus, 2007), although IT can be considered an important tool to enhance the teaching of writing skills, there are some disadvantages when using this tool. Furthermore, teachers must be mindful of the issues of planning activities related to IT use and managing issues arising from planned activities. The following subsections discuss an example of ICT tools to show the advantages and

disadvantages of using IT in teaching writing skills. In addition, a number of issues related to issues management and operational planning with ICT tools were discussed and reviewed.

One of the common tools often adapted for teaching writing skills is to use blogs. According to (Kelly & Safford, 2009), blogs provide "a real-world digital means of communication". It is a multidimensional the tool not only provides a container for writing but also has many objects and access points. In their study of the effectiveness of using online writing in writing, (Kelly & Safford, 2009) carried out a research project at 6 different classes during the 2006 soccer World Cup for analysis students use complex sentence structures in their writing on a football weblog. They discovered how the effect of a short-term, popular, worldwide event and an online platform for contact has provided a opportunities to improve writing skills in which students begin to use complex sentence structures. This research show positive findings about students' interest in presenting ideas and responding to classmates idea by commenting on blog. Similarly, Owner founded online blogs that allow bloggers to receive feedback from many people, and this type of peer feedback is more effective than traditional self-tuning. Moreover, (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008) concluded that blogging is the popular platform for teens to show off opinion, and there's enough evidence to support that students who have personal blogs tend to proliferate writers in school. In fact, by using blogs in teaching writing, positive interactivity for teaching and study grammar sentences will be increased.

(Lawrence, McNeal, & Yildiz., 2007) suggest that teachers need to consider some issues in managing issues that may arise from planned activities. First, the teacher needs to explain to students how to perform tasks on the computer (for example, cut and paste, draw tables, change font size and change colors in draft). Second, when it comes to brainstorming, teachers must guide the brainstorming process to introduce students to work with an audience based on the type of text they want to share. Third, teachers cannot accept small things that students may not know. Teachers should try to model some expected behavior, for example, how to search the web for specific information and how to save it on a specific drive. The fourth suggestion is to provide students with research strategies to assist them in the writing process. Lastly, teachers should constantly ask some students questions to understand their needs and then guide them while carrying out their research projects. Appropriate instruction and scaffolding are needed to guide students in ICT-based orientation activities so that all learners can monitor and benefit from planned tasks (Lawrence, McNeal, & Yildiz., 2007).

On the other hand, the various activities related to ICT use can be adjusted to support instruction write. These activities or programs should not be limited to school activities (Lawrence, McNeal, & Yildiz., 2007) stated that youth participate in various literacy activities outside the school because they interact with different types of texts and sources of information, access and traditional media different cultures and interact with people from different backgrounds and perspectives using computers Technology. The different types of plans and activities involve IT in teaching reading and writing can be planned. The use of new technologies allows learners to communicate with each other people use a variety of non-traditional text forms and sources of information. Practical classroom teacher must be re-tested due to daily technological impacts on students practicing illiteracy eradication. Holiday Literacy programs including lessons on writing skills related to IT use can be planned to facilitate student learning process. Teachers can also used social networking tools like Facebook and create one groups to encourage learning sharing and discussion among learners.

## 2. Method

This article is only part of a large project. The overall aim of the study is to explore the effect of using IT in teaching English writing skills at secondary schools in Vietnam. To achieve the purpose of the study, a total of 33 English teachers were interviewed. Teachers are recruited from secondary schools from five different areas of Vietnam: Saigon, Hue, Da Nang, Nha Trang and Hanoi. This study is a qualitative research in nature because to better understand participants' perceptions, a semi-structured interview was used to explore teachers' perceptions and practice of using them. IT in teaching writing skills in English classes. Data collected from teachers interviewed for teaching in the Saigon area is reported in this article. All participants were selected practically and purposefully.

The goal of designing the interviews in this study is to get rich information about the participants. Awareness and attitudes toward using IT in teaching writing skills in English as a Second Language (ESL). The questions for the interviews were developed based on the nature of the research questions.

In general, interviews tend to provide insights and details about secondary practices in Vietnam. Our teachers really respond to the use of IT in teaching English writing skills. The interview questions were developed by the researchers and the initial modifications were made to adjust the questions to reflect the nature of the research question. In the process of developing interview questions, to ensure the content is valid, current researchers first look at the relevant documents and check the interview protocol designed for the same purpose. The first draft of the interview questionnaire was developed to consider the only problem in the document. Thereafter, the validity and validity of the content of the interview protocol is checked by a panel of experts. Experts comments and suggestions have been given to develop the second draft protocol. To ensure the reliability of the interview questions, a second draft was piloted on 3 English teacher. The pilot of the second draft of the interviews showed that all questions were clear and clear. Respondents did not encounter any problems due to the wording of the question. The interview questions are structured to find answers to the following research question:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using IT in teaching writing skills in the classroom?

How do English teachers at Vietnamese high schools manage issues and plan IT-related activities in teaching English writing skills?

Prior to conducting research, the necessary licenses were obtained from both the principal and teachers. Furthermore, the consent forms were read and signed by all four participants before conducting the interviews. All interviews were conducted in English in November 2012. Interviews lasted about 30 to 45 minutes and they were recorded. After conducting the interviews, the interviews were recorded verbatim. They are also organized, coded and analyzed. To analyze interview data, several steps have been taken. Immediately after each interview, the researcher recorded the recorded interviews and referenced his notes of what he recorded when the interview took place to avoid losing any important data come on. This may be important for the findings of this study. The researcher then contacted the research interviewees to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts and make notes as explained by the researcher. All participants were given a pseudonym for anonymous purposes.

### 3. Results

Table 1 summarizes the details of the interviewed teachers. Four of the six English language teachers in the school participated in the interviews. Teachers' names have been changed to ensure a high degree of anonymity and to protect their privacy. All four teachers are female. The interviewer cannot get any male teachers interviewed because all six English teachers in that school are female. This is a very common phenomenon because the teaching profession is always dominated by women due to the nature of work. All teachers are over 30 years old, meaning they have at least 5 years of teaching experience.

Table 1. Basic Information about Interviewed teachers

Area	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Teaching	experience (year)
Ha Noi	Lilly	F	36	9	7
	Mimi	F	40	13	9
	Lele	F	42	14	10
	Hanna	F	54	29	15

The main findings of the study are presented on the following topics:

When teachers are asked to provide their answers about the benefits of using IT in teaching writing skills, most say that IT tools can be useful and effective in deploying activities. write. They unanimously believe that the usual methods of teaching English writing make students bored during class. Lilly stated that:

Using ICT can motivate my students to be creative and learn in an enjoyable environment. For example, they can easily write their essays anytime because they can find a lot of information about each topic on the web.

Agreeing with Lilly's opinion, Hanna mentioned the benefits of surfing for students to improve their writing skills She added that:

Students can use the Internet to search for information they may need to write. For example, if they are going to write about a personality that they admire, they can find more information about the person they have chosen.

Moreover, Lele responded very positively to the idea of ICT used for the purpose of teaching writing skills. She emphasized how IT as a teaching tool can help make lessons more interesting, thereby keeping students focused in the classroom. When teachers can attract students' attention in class, lessons can be done more smoothly and when that happens, students will not get bored either. Agreeing with Lele's opinion, Lilly emphasized how the current generation of students is placed side by side with ICT. Students, as she says, are using IT tools even after graduation. Current twenty-first-century students, as (Sweeny) said, should be treated differently on teachers' teaching methods. There is an opinion that if students can use their own IT tools outside the school, it will really benefit them if ICT tools are integrated in writing.

Mimi commented on how the current generation of students differ in their creativity and self-discovery skills. She believes students can now do many things themselves, including searching for documents related to online education. She also added an example:

One of our teachers is not tied to the traditional way of teaching. The students are different now. Students are more creative now; They can search for documents on their own. I once gave

my 4th graders a writing exercise. It was an official letter. I did not explain to them the format or content they should include in the mail. I show them the topic. After school break, I expected to repeat the lesson but the students completed the exercise! I asked them how and they said they were just looking for a topic in 'Google'.

When teachers were asked about the disadvantages of using IT in teaching writing skills, most teachers mentioned students. Use abbreviations in writing tasks, with insufficient time and online plagiarism material. Lilly emphasizes the negative effects of using students' short forms. She believes that informal abbreviations discourage student writing. She added that:

Speaking from my own experience, I feel that when the students use too much ICT tools, they tend to use a lot of short forms like 'cos' to mean 'because', 'ur' to mean 'your' and many others. They were also liked to use this SMS language in their essay writing. That's horrible, isn't it?

Furthermore, Mini emphasized why it is necessary to use IT when non-IT lessons can do the same for her and her students. She also mentioned that there is not enough time to guide when using IT. She explained that:

I think a lot of time will be wasted when we use ICT. If you only have one English class, you only have 40 minutes. When you use the computer room, students need some time to get there. If you're lucky, the LCD screen is fine and it can detect your laptop. If you don't, you will lose time for technical issues. Even if you have double the time, you still don't have enough time to accomplish what you intend to do with the students. So sometimes I think why do we want to use IT when we can always do it directly with students?

Similarly, Lele pointed out that:

You can provide multiple inputs when you want to use IT. Suppose you give homework to your students to do. You let students write assignments in a blog or ask them to write a blog post. You cannot expect all 100% of students to get the job done through blogs. There will be lots of excuses when they can complete the mission. No internet access would be the main reason given. Although if you give them a task in hard copies like the distribution, there is no reason for them to escape the task execution.

In a similar way, Hanna worry about what students could actually gain from writing lessons with the use of ICT. She gave an example of how students may be unrelated to what they have learned through IT with the tasks they tried. She also put her views on the importance of teachers on the ability to use IT to ensure students can follow the lesson well. She specifically stated that:

When you want to use IT, you need to be good at it. You need to be competent. Otherwise, your lesson will not run smoothly. If teachers can use IT fluently, it is better that they should not use it. Otherwise, the student may not get what you are trying to teach. That is very dangerous. Suppose you use songs to teach them vocabulary before trying the writing part. After singing and enjoying the song, they may forget the lyrics and only remember the melody of the song.

Classroom managers often include action teachers to engage students in the learning process. Specifically, it includes actions such as establishing and maintaining ICT equipment, handling misconduct, providing guidance and attendance to students with needs and management of cognitive and emotional contact. Group activities (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Therefore, it focuses more on a positive environment that is conducive to student engagement and they are more satisfied in the learning process. To troubleshoot problems related to the use of IT in the English classroom, Hanna stated that:

Teachers can be more creative in thinking and more active in the classroom by giving students appropriate lessons for students, students or students. Therefore, issues related to student and IT management in English classes can be easily overcome.

Problem management is governed by people interviewed from the challenges faced. For example, Hanna stated that “If there are any problems, I will change my lessons. I will photocopy exercises from the reference books and teach using those materials”. Moreover, Mimi highlighted the way of assigning take-home tasks to students when there were problems for internet access in school. She added that:

With the problem of slow connectivity, I will assign students to search for reading materials at home and print them out. No problem, should not eat anything. The documents they find and print will be helpful in their writing process.

Lele also had something to say about this matter:

If I really want to use IT, I will consult with technicians or other teachers who are IT professionals to help me. If not, I would just use my own reading and writing method without using IT.

Lele implies that if there is a will, there is a way. For her, if she really wants to use IT, she will consult the school technicians or colleagues who are more competent in using IT. When that doesn't help, she will only return to non-IT teaching methods. For Nora, when she has problems with IT tools, she will ask for help from the school's technicians or students. She said I would ask the school technicians to help me with the computer. But sometimes they are busy and I will ask the students for help.

On the other hand, interviewees were asked to share their plans for writing activities related to the use of IT in teaching. However, not everyone interviewed used IT to teach writing. There are many activities that can be done using IT to teach writing. In writing, using the Word processor makes a big difference to many students learning to write in English. Students can write over and over again to create a neat piece of paper with ICT tools and present it to teachers in the form of neat work. To support this idea, Lele stated that:

In addition to web-based activities, as a teacher, I use computer word processing software for other phases of the classroom. For example, I use this software in brain activity. This is again an individual desire to try to teach a common class activity by IT. I want to see how students react to this activity. This is another attempt to integrate IT into the classroom by considering many ideas through web-based activities.

Teaching language learners using ICT has different advantages not only related to language education but also preparing students for today's information society. Computer technology and the Internet are powerful tools to support language teaching because Web technology is part of today's social needs, meaning language learners can now learn through writing e- mail and do online research by Wang. English teachers can collect instructional materials by viewing web-based English websites. This was agreed by Hanna, who pointed out that:

Teachers may only access the TESL website or any other relevant web site and simply select the appropriate materials or activities that can enhance students' interest in writing. This can be a reference or just to show evidence to students in gathering more information for future lessons.

Lilli mentioned her experience using IT in teaching English writing. She used IT in the pre-writing stage and added:

I use IT to search for information related to the writing topic that I will teach. Let's say I'm about to teach the reality of pollution. I will look for pollution information, types and details of pollution. I then print and copy the relevant documents for my students to refer.

Similarly, Mimi stated that:

My activities will focus more on the pre-writing sections. I will use the cartoon strips I get from the net, showing the strips so they attract their attention. In fact, we don't focus much on how to conduct interesting writing activities. We have no time for that. We focus more on how to score on exams. I know it's different activities that will benefit them but right now, exams are more important. We need to practice more with them so they can do it well.

It is important to remember that the teacher must ensure that the websites selected for learners to browse and search for information are checked to ensure that the language is simple enough for them to understand without having to translate text word by word. . First, the teacher can suggest websites that present simple basic information such as the meaning or pronunciation of good words for beginners. However, Rinie believes that teachers should not worry about technology and how to use it. She claims that they learn everything because they were brought up with this technology. She added that:

I do not feel worried about technically scared learners because they are young adult learners who have been nurturing IT at home. Therefore, the lesson will be quite ambitious in allowing learners to freely search online. This I hope will lead to greater learner autonomy, as they will decide in groups what to look for and to what depth. After the class, I hope to be able to reflect on and see how successful I have been in taking care of activities using IT in my English class, and what I need to do is reflect and think. One way to improve IT integration into my next classroom.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, there are many advantages and disadvantages associated with using IT in teaching English writing in schools. In terms of advantages, there is a report that using ICT can help meet teachers' teaching goals because IT supports the teaching process. This comment resonates with (Yunus, 2007) when realizing that IT can be a learning tool in education. Moreover, another finding is that IT is viewed not as a conventional method, but as a new innovative teaching method that researchers explain, as one that can enable active learning between students and (Mullamaa, 2010).

Incorporation of IT into the teaching of writing has been encouraged to encourage learners about their independence and self-discovery skills such as searching for relevant educational materials online. This data supports the discovery of (BLACHOWICZ, BATES, BERNE, TERESA BRIDGMAN, & PERNEY, 2009) found that learning technology allows students to develop independent work habits and build both skills and confidence in the use of knowledge and technology. Students may be responsible for finding answers that suit their learning needs (Choi & Ho, 2002).

As for the disadvantages, the only three findings are class control issues, distraction and improper use of short forms as in short messaging systems (SMS). The three main drawbacks can be overcome without many problems. With stricter rules before taking students into the computer room, teachers will not have too many problems with classroom control. In addition, with a

computer control center, students cannot access other unrelated websites that may distract them from completing certain tasks. For the tendency to use short forms in writing, students may be provided with tips and reminders constantly so they do not repeat mistakes in their writing. As Lee mentioned, it is important to set some basic rules about teacher expectations and appropriate language form in an online environment. This is also to avoid using harsh or inappropriate language in the online community.

Teachers seem to be weak at managing problems that occur while they are using IT in teaching writing skills. The response is that if they have problems with IT equipment, they will come back to advise the school technicians or other colleagues who are more competent in using IT. Student support is also one of the options used. The teacher's level of creativity seems to be quite low because the planned activities only involve people at lower levels such as using exercises in English textbooks. In fact, IT is mainly used to search for written material before teaching a lesson.

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