Technology in EFL Classes: Google Teaches!

Nittaya Sanguanngarm[1]

Abstract

The leading age of technologies plays a vital role in equipping future generations with the skills they need to thrive in the workforce of tomorrow. To cater to the fast changing global situation, global education force needs to be changed and shift to self-access digital learning allowing digital native learners, no matter where they are, to access unlimited knowledge beyond the regular classes including EFL classes. This qualitative study investigates the effects of the Google search engine technology on the students' language noticing, perceptions, self-esteem and the search channels they employed. Eighty undergraduates at a university in Thailand participated in the study in a course in Socio-cultural Background of the English Speaking Countries. The teaching method applied was presentation-based language learning. Data were obtained through students' task performances, logs, and interviews. The findings illustrate that Google search engine with YouTube and Google Web Search highly enhances the students' language noticing. Also, the results of the study reveal that the students made use of Google search engine with a variety of search channels and gained more self-esteem and confidence to use the language. The analysis of students' perceptions reveals the students' feeling of challenges with learning motivation. However, the findings reveal some setbacks facing the students of insufficient ICT infrastructure and computing facilities.

1. Introduction

Technology revolution and cyber information access have had a high impact on people's lives and job opportunities and the demand for skills in local labor markets. The workers in the 21st century must have the skills of information -processing with literacy, numeracy and problem solving, interpersonal communication, self-management, and the ability to learn. Those skills will help people to cope with the uncertainties of a rapidly changing labor market. (OECD, 2013). Accordingly, Internet access is fierce for all purposes including education and also pervasive at home worldwide including Thailand (Internet World Stats, 2015).

Students in schools now are digital natives who are multimedia oriented. The digital natives favor the new massive knowledge, networking and collaborative knowledge (Cornu, 2011). Educational pedagogy may need to be revised and adjusted as the traditional curriculum can not cater to the digital native students' needs.The conventional method with the lecture-based environment may lower students' self-esteem which in turns can determine their learning motivation and achievement.

The latest Thai curriculum goals of 2008 coincide with 21st century skills. The curriculum aims to equip Thai students with knowledge and skills required for 21st century survivors together with the English language. However, in spite of some of the national efforts to meet this need, success still seems to be far off. Some of the factors may be the conventional teaching method, the teacher-center approach and the commercial textbook focus in class. Then what are the implications? Education together with a teacher is undoubtedly crucial to enhance students' non-routine skills to be qualified workers for the future economic environment. This study explores some interesting aspects of the use of search engine technology in English language learning. The focuses are the effects of the Google search engine technology on the students' language noticing, perceptions, self-esteem and the search channels they employed.

2. Method
2.1. Participants

Participants in this study were 80 undergraduate English major students at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University in Thailand. All of them are non-native speakers of English and enrolled in a third-year course on an English content course in English for Socio-cultural Background of the English Speaking Countries at a time this study took place. All of them were not familiar with the innovative teaching methods and had

[1] Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, Thailand

never been assigned to search for the knowledge and information and presented them orally before. Their English proficiency level was not satisfactory.

2.2. Research instruments

Research instruments were a recording of the focus group's presentation performances, a student log, and an interview. The participants' performance recording was aimed to provide the information about participants' language noticing and self-esteem while the student log and the semi-structure interview were aimed to obtain the in-depth qualitative data concerning participants' language noticing, self-esteem, perceptions and the search engine channels they employed.

2.3. Procedure

This qualitative study investigated the effects of the search engine technology on the students' language noticing, perceptions, self-esteem and the search engine channels they employed. As the participants were not familiar with independent learning, the course orientation was provided. The course goals were discussed. The teaching and learning activities were based on a group oral presentation. Each group of participants was required to finish five presentations of 5 countries with required sub-topics for a whole semester. The participants received feedbacks after their presentations. A Facebook group has been created as a knowledge share channel and for the real-time communication. Some useful related websites and YouTube clips including the effective presentation skills were suggested and posted on the group as choices by the researcher at the very beginning of the course. The participants' presentation performances of the focus group of 4 students (20%) were recorded three times with the first, third and fifth presentations. The average presentation time was 30 minutes. Each participant of the focus group was interviewed. The student logs for the whole class were collected. Then the data were respectively analyzed qualitatively for data analysis to obtain in-depth qualitative data concerning participants' language noticing, self-esteem, perceptions and the search engine and channels they accessed.

2.4. Data analysis

For the results of the study, the recordings of the focus group's presentation performances were transcribed, coded and analyzed for vocabulary, pronunciation and target structures which were beyond their abilities by means of content analysis using Hyper Research Computer Program. The student logs and the semi-structure interviews were translated, coded and qualitatively analyzed using Hyper Research Computer Program.

3. Findings

1. Participants' language noticing was investigated. The result of students' language noticing analysis shows the substantial language noticing of the participants. The participants' language noticing found in this study is based on textual enhancement with enriched visual and aural inputs. The analysis reveals that during their presentations, the participants made use of the target language they had been exposed to while searching for the information for the assignment. Moreover, they also noticed the language used by their peers during their presentations. The participants used of the noticed vocabulary, pronunciation, and specific structures during their presentation. They picked and chose the language features at their preferences and interests and used them together with their languages. Aspects of language features that have been noticed, were illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Aspects of language features that have been noticed

Aspect	More competent participants	Less competent participants
Language features		
Pronunciation	x	x
Vocabulary	x	x
Target structure	-	x
Sources		
Web search	x	x
YouTube	x	x
Peers' presentation	-	x
Content of noticing		
Assigned topic	x	x
Presentation skills	x	x

Table 1 above indicates that the participants noticed the language features of pronunciation, vocabulary and the target structures from Google search engine including Web search, YouTube and peers' presentation. However, the more competent participants noticed the pronunciation and the vocabulary while the less competent participants noticed the pronunciation, vocabulary, and specific structure. Regarding the content of noticing, all of them got the language from both the assigned topics and presentation skills.

2. Participants' self-esteem was analyzed. The analysis of all students' presentation performances and the interviews have been done. The results of the analysis indicate that the participants gained more self-esteem and saw their worth. During their presentation, they asked to use the laser pointer, approached the projector screen and did their presentations in a relaxing way. They also used nonverbal language features while presenting. During the interview, they mentioned that they did not need to wait for the knowledge delivery from the teacher, and they were able to search for and got whatever knowledge they wanted at their conveniences. They added that they could do the English oral presentation in front of people with their prepared materials and use technology devices along with their presentation. They said that they felt like they had a power and loved to show it in public. They mentioned that they were proud to share their invented presentation software on the Facebook group to peers. They added that they were knowledgeable and independent.

3. Participants' perception was investigated. The results of students' perceptions derived from the participants' logs and interviews. The analysis shows that the participants favored the way of the applied teaching method and perceived that it was challenging for their active learning. They pointed out that searching the knowledge and information for their presentation tasks enhanced their life-long learning and study skills. The learning strategy fostered their learning achievement and retention regarding the content knowledge gained and the ability to use the target language to finish the tasks. Also, they had a good

chance to use the technological devices including digital tools in a creative way, which in turns enhances their technology literacy. However, the analysis of this study reveals that the participants faced the difficulty accessing the Internet, and the number of computer set were limited.

4. The participants' search engines channels were explored. The analysis shows that the participants mainly accessed to Google search engine with a variety of search channels to obtain the knowledge and information for their presentation tasks. The channels of the search include content related Google Web Search and YouTube. The popular information sources were Wikipedia website, YouTube and presentation software including PowerPoint, SlideShare, and Prezi. They used the synthesized language and knowledge from those sources to finish their tasks. The search engine and details found in this study were illustrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2. The Google search engine, channels and sources accessed by the participants

Google Search engine					
Channel	Google Web Search				YouTube
Source	Wikipedia	PowerPoint	SlideShare	Prezi	
Number (n=4)	4	4	4	2	4
Percentage	100%	100%	100%	50%	100%

Table 2 above indicates that all participants made used of Google Web Search and YouTube. Regarding Google Web Search, they seemed for the information from website (100%),PowerPoint (100%), SlideShare(100%) and Prezi (50%) respectively.

4. Discussion
The results of the study have shown some interesting points. All of the participants mentioned in the interviews that the course activities provided them the knowledge of the English speaking countries, in the deep aspects, that they had never heard about before. Finding the information by themselves, they could dig down to the root of the information at their preferences. The freedom to create the presentations fosters the participants' creativity and challenges. They also learned and were challenged by their peers' challenging products. The analysis of the interview illustrates that they shared content knowledge and technology skills including how to make some wonderful presentations among themselves. Interestingly, the participants admitted that they were able to teach other groups of students of what they had searched since those content knowledge and language were the ones that they obtained by themselves. On the contrary, the other interesting issue is that the participants found that the teaching method was challenging but sometimes too demanding for them. They sometimes got confused when they were exposed to the extensive online information, and that means time consuming.

References
[1]   Bandura, A. "Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency", American Psychologist, American Psychological Association,Inc, 1982,122-147.
[2]   Cornu, B. "Digital natives: How do they learn? How to teach them", UNESCO Publishing, Moscow, 2011.
[3]   Internet World Stats. "Usage and Populations Statistics: Asia", (n.d), [Online]. Available from: http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm.
[4]   Marshall, J. D. "Michel Foucault: Personal Autonomy and Education", London: Kluwer   Academic

Publishers,1996.

[5] Osler, A., & Vincent, K. "Citizenship and the challenge of global education", Stoke on Trent:
     Trentham Books, 2002.

[6] OECD. "Skills Outlook: First Result From the Survey of Adult Skills", 2013, Online]. Available from:
     http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdfSENT

[7] Prensky, M. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants", On the Horizon,2001, 1–6.

[8] Rosenberg, M. "Society and the adolescent self-image", Princeton, NJ: Princeton University
     Press,1965.