Chapter 11
ICT Integration in Second Language Writing: A Malay Language Case Study

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ABSTRACT
As the integration of information and communications technologies (ICT) in Singapore schools reaches a considerable level of maturity and stability, a pertinent question is: how has ICT integration impacted on pedagogy in Singapore schools? The present study attempts to address this question through interpretive, case-study research in two Singaporean secondary schools. The study found the use of ICT was limited in its perceived pedagogical value by teachers. A lack of appreciation and/or understanding of the complexity of the process or culture shift required for ICT to be implemented and integrated effectively into the Malay Language Curriculum along with conformity to policy directions resulted in underutilisation and uncritical use of ICT tools, and an adherence to the traditional method of assigning tasks and the maintenance of existing practices.

INTRODUCTION
The impact that ICT is having on the education sector is a pervasive issue. There is a need for research in this field, not least because governments worldwide are investing heavily in the provision of hardware and software to educational institutions as well as in the training of teachers and students of all ages in the application of ICT in teaching and learning (Loveless & Ellis, 2001). More children than ever are surfing the Internet (Net). They are the “Net-Generation” (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). This is the generation of children learning, playing and communicating in ways very different from that of their parents. It is now a challenge for educators to design and deliver programs that are optimal for current learners. While use of the Net has potential dangers
which include misinformation (Luke, 2000) and Internet addiction (Khoo, 2001), it nevertheless provides potentially unlimited opportunities for education, entertainment and enterprise (McNeely, 2005). The use of ICT therefore, provides countless multimodal opportunities for teachers and students to teach and learn with, if the technology is used appropriately. In many educational contexts, the application of ICT tools in classrooms has become an overt illustration of the application of theories about new literacies and multiliteracies. The case studies reported on in this chapter provide an example of the assumptions inherent in such a coupling, that is, that a multiliteracies approach to language and literacy education is essentially based on an integration of ICT into classroom practice.

BACKGROUND

ICT is integral to the overall vision for education as expressed in Singapore’s Thinking Schools and Learning Nation (TSLN) (Saravanan, 2005) initiative that seeks to make Singapore a nation of thinking and committed citizens. Under this vision, Singapore has shifted away from an efficiency-driven education towards an ability-driven one that aims to develop and harness the abilities of every child. The focus is on the creation of learner-centred learning environments, the nurturing of thinking skills and creativity through formal and informal curricula. ICT is viewed as a “mediating tool” but not as a subject of study for many of these processes in the schools. The focus in the TSLN policy is therefore not changing an understanding of literacy in favour of a 21st century version that is more closely associated with a multiliteracies approach, but the TSLN has focused on the integration of ICT tools and software in traditional curricula.

In Singapore schools students may study Malay as a second language, and the Malay Language Curriculum incorporates the National vision of TSLN and allocates 30% of curriculum time using ICT (MOE, 2003). The use of ICT in Malay writing classrooms was designed to develop increasingly independent learners who are confident users of ICT; exploring and finding out for themselves solutions to problems. With greater peer interaction in writing lessons using ICT compared to non-ICT lessons (Hennessy, 2000), the use of ICT is supposed to promote collaborative work among students (Towndrow, 2005). The use of ICT in mainstream schooling has been widely expected to penetrate and transform teaching and learning across the curriculum (Loveless & Ellis, 2001).

However, some scholars (Cuban, 2001; Hennessy, Deaney & Ruthven, 2003; Tearle, 2003) argue, whilst ICT use in education is increasing, this “transformation” has not yet occurred, and the extent and nature of ICT integration in schools is still very varied, and in many instances limited. Perhaps the high expectation of the role ICT could play in schools places both opportunities and challenges for those involved in its implementation and application for learning. The main focus in the present study is to explore how ICT impacts and extend learning in subject areas particularly in the Malay Language context, whilst also unpacking the connection between ICT and multiliteracies.

ICT AND SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING PEDAGOGY

Warschauer (2000) argues that ICT empower students and give them greater control over their own learning, thus increasing their agency. Indeed, agency is really what makes students so excited about using computers in the classroom that is the student has some level of control over their own learning. Most of the studies in this area (e.g., Parks, Huot, Hamers, & Lemonnier, 2005; Spires, Lee & Turner, 2008) conclude that the computer does provide students with a powerful means of placing their stamp on the world. For example, the word processing tool found with most office
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